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THE HISTORY OF BRITISH CIVILIZATION

THE HISTORY OF BRITISH CIVILIZATION

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"*This land of such dear souls.*"

"*Jerusalem*
In England's green and pleasant land."

"*Patriotism is not enough.*"

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PROLOGUE

It is the business of the historian to tell a story, and that with as little fuss and intrusion of his own opinions as may be. But I hope it may be forgiven me if I state, very briefly, what ideal I had in mind when, nine years ago, I took in hand the writing of this book. I am under no illusion of having attained it. But the most inaccessible peak may serve as a point of direction for a long day's march.

My object was to write the sort of history that since my undergraduate days I have wanted to have on my own shelves. I say this in no spirit of ingratitude for the treatises and compilations with which they are already loaded, and in which the results of modern research are embodied. But these, however valuable in themselves, strike one rather as disconnected, and proportionately meaningless fragments of a story that yet remains to be told, the story of British or of World Civilization, the biography of mankind, presented in all its length and breadth and depth as a living unity.

No doubt Adam was a gardener, but to exalt spadework into the crown of all human endeavour is not Scripture, but Bolshevism run mad.

The idea of depth lends itself a little to misunderstanding, as suggesting something vaguely pretentious, on the lines of those so called philosophic histories into whose framework of preconceived ideas the facts have to be rammed, slammed, jammed and damned, like the Croppies into a certain gun at Athlone. Which gun appears perfectly capable, according to the latest version, of smashing the whole of Western civilization, at no distant date, against the Rock of Blastation, which is quite in the spirit of the Christian toast from which the analogy is drawn.

Perhaps I can best express my meaning if I say that the historian is not only a story teller but a witness, bound, according to the prescribed formula, to tell the whole truth—within the limits of his space—and nothing but the truth.

To take the latter requirement first. Any use of the narrative as a vehicle for the author's own preconceived ideas, any attempt to put a case is a breach of trust that disqualifies him from the honourable fellowship of historians. To label him is to damn him.

Whether he be Tory Imperialist or Philosophic Liberal, Catholic or Bolshevik, Spenglerian or Bergsonian, his service is to the truth alone, whatever it may be and wherever it may lead.

Of all labels, perhaps the most foolish and constantly applied are those of optimist and pessimist. If we are bound inevitably for the stars or the dogs, the most sensible thing to do is to lie down and be carried there, without bothering to investigate a process which nobody has, or ever has had, the least chance of influencing one way or the other. Metaphysical hair-splitting apart, a working faith in free will is the first requirement of sanity. Modern thought is already too hopelessly clogged with "isms" to justify an addition to their number, but if I were compelled to it, my own coinage would be "potentialism", meaning that the future is in our own hands, to make or mar, however much the conditions under which we labour may be affected by what a Hindu would call the Karma of our past actions.

In this story of British Civilization I have done my best to take the facts as I have found them and let them speak for themselves, in the faith that the truth, followed humbly to the end, will be its own best interpreter. If, in spite of all my efforts, I have allowed my feelings or opinions in any way to colour the narrative, I hope that they will be set aside and, as far as possible, forgiven.

By telling the whole truth I mean not, of course, the impossible task of setting down everything that ever happened, but rather that of seeing beyond "*things that take the eye and have the price*" to the mental and spiritual processes of which these are but casual manifestations. It is not only the small boy who prefers seeing the wheels go round to watching the hands on the dial.

Such processes are not of the kind that lend themselves to analysis and definition. The ideal historian would, I imagine, identify himself with his subject as the dryad with the tree, and the artist with his creation. Only this supreme work of art, that unfolds itself now in thought as it did once in time, is the work of no human creator.

If history be regarded, in this sense, as a living unity, it is plain that no one can hope to understand it who devotes himself to one particular set of facts labelled political, economic, literary, artistic, and so forth. The daughters of Pelias, who thought to rejuvenate their father after cutting him to pieces, were attempting no more hopeless a task than those who imagine they can study any part of history except in the light and consciousness of the whole. The

private in the noble army of specialists, so long as he remains a private, can no more achieve history than Bill Adams could win the Battle of Waterloo.

It is creative activity, in direct proportion to its creativeness, that gives us the key to the understanding of the past. The function of art, taking the word in this widest sense, is to clothe with visible or audible form the spirit of its time. No doubt the driest of neglected documents cries aloud from its dust to be studied, but when all is said and done, there may be even more to be learnt from parish churches than pipe-rolls, and from poems than state papers. Who, for instance, after reading the fashionable type of disquisition that writes down our medieval forebears as rather commonplace and quite uninspired semi-barbarians, could retain that comforting faith were he to stand before the West Front of Wells or the Five Sisters Window at York and reflect: "These men of the thirteenth century desired and loved, and were able to create these things. And we of the twentieth . . . ?"

No doubt on a certain type of modern critic the very thought of inspiration awakes the reaction of a sword-hilt on Mephistopheles. To such a one the artist is a mere technician wrestling, usually for bread and butter, with technical problems. Gothic church building becomes a trick of the mason's trade, for extracting money from economic churchmen who have previously extracted it from a wretched populace. Shakespeare no longer refuses to abide our question; he has been brought to earth as a pushing actor-dramatist, who sedulously tickled the groundlings' ears in order, ultimately, to cut a gentlemanly dash in his native town. The time is almost ripe for the biographic genius who shall succeed in reducing Christ to the category of Elmer Gantry. But one needs to share the reactions in question to be properly serious about the resultant theories.

And after all the best test of a theory is the working. I trust that the story itself, if faithfully told, will show, precisely and continuously, that history becomes intelligible in the light of art and art in that of history. The reader can judge for himself, by the perusal of any standard political, literary or artistic histories, how much profit or interest there is to be extracted from a story arbitrarily sliced down the middle, as if by some invisible buzz saw.

But what profit, in any case, is there to be derived from the study of the past? If that past is dead and done with, the historian is more useless than the old resurrection man, who at least dug up corpses for the use of surgeons. But the past does not die; so long as

spiritual continuity is maintained, the present life of a community is its whole accumulated past, and only by understanding that past can it understand itself or determine its future. A people unconscious of its history is like a man smitten with loss of memory, who wanders about aimlessly till he comes to grief.

Even if we take a lower standpoint than that from which history is regarded as a means of social salvation, we shall find it not only the most fruitful but the most fascinating of studies. Its interest is inexhaustible, and increases as we penetrate beyond summaries and textbooks to documents and relics, through which the past speaks to us without intermediary. In these days when the motor car and push-bike are enabling ever increasing multitudes to know the face of their mother country, a knowledge of history is able to make the whole landscape alive, to render the exploration of the humblest village an adventure of thrilling possibilities, to give a voice to the downs and to enrich the waste with memories.

The need for history has been constant since the days of ancestor worship and the bards. And the ordinary man, who instead of the living past is offered the dry bones of co-operative specialism, will seek satisfaction through less reputable channels. What research and scholarship have failed to supply, enterprising journalism, possessing neither, is forward to offer. The idol of a by no means immortal hour has but to dash off a national or universal history to achieve fame and fortune beyond the wildest dreams of scholarship. There are now, in fact, two kinds of history, one based on the most painstaking research and compiled by specialists for academic circulation, the other, based neither on research nor knowledge, dished up, more often than not, in the form of biography, by enterprising potboilers for popular consumption. Whence it comes about that the immense accumulation and sifting of historical material during the past few years has been of singularly little avail to the world at large.

The barque of Clio will therefore steer a mid course between the Scylla of specialism, and the Charybdis of journalism. I am not presumptuous enough to claim a pilot's certificate. I have but outlined an ideal that I have done no more than a very imperfect best to realize.

It is because I believe history to be a practical and living art that I have brought the story as close as possible to the present day. If I have not dealt with the Great War and its sequel, as I hope to do in a subsequent volume, it is because considerations of time and space

have prevented me. To wait for the verdict of posterity is like waiting for a river to flow by before fording it. There is no more agreement about the personalities of Chatham and Cromwell than there is about that of Mr. Lloyd George. If there is a difficulty about placing Mr. Bernard Shaw, that gentleman's own writings reveal an equal difficulty with regard to Shakespeare. But the quick have this advantage over the dead, that whereas a kick at a dead lion is a comparatively safe proposition, one at a live dog is apt to be followed by a bite or a summons. It is, I think, a rather mean-spirited calculation that takes into account the fact that dead men have no weapons and few friends.

It is sometimes said that it is impossible to take a detached view of recent events. If this is really true, history ought not to be written at all, for the man who is so much the slave of his passions is utterly lacking in historical sense and conscience, and will be equally unfair, though less easily found out, when he deals with the men and events of past ages. There, is, however, a real and serious danger that the passions not of the story teller but of his audience may be aroused by anything like a candid account of occurrences that are habitually regarded from the standpoint of the advocate or the partisan. It is by no means inconceivable that what interest there is may be concentrated on the last pages of the book to the exclusion of all the rest, and that the writer may find himself and it condemned out of hand for blasphemy against some furiously worshipped fetish of the hour. Nothing that is worth attempting is free from a risk of some kind, and I have, foolishly or not, resolved to face this one.

And now I will ask leave to step aside and allow the facts—the essential ones as far as I am capable of presenting them—to speak for themselves.

BOOK I

CATHOLIC CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER I

BRITISH CIVILIZATION

1

The Stone Age

Of the History of our land, as distinct from that of our countrymen, the two thousand years or so of authentic record form an infinitesimally small part. If we force our imaginations to compress thousands and even myriads of years into as many seconds, we shall obtain an idea of a map whose outlines are as shifting and fantastic as those of a kaleidoscope, of a landscape on which the very hills rise and fall like waves, of a continual redistribution of land and water in which these British Islands are sometimes almost wholly submerged, and sometimes indistinguishably continental. Nor, until comparatively recent geological time, was it apparent whether Britain was to form part of an Eastern or a Western world, for a great Laurentian Continent at one time reached from North America across the Atlantic, and just managed to include Britain in its South Eastern corner. Then this American Continent recedes across the Atlantic, and Europe, in its turn, thrusts forward its coasts far to the West of Ireland and North of Scotland, until the English Channel is part of the Seine Basin, and the North Sea a swampy plain, through which flows the mighty Rhine, curving round the low hills of the Dogger, and receiving all the rivers of Eastern Britain.

Our soil, no less than our people, is mixed. Every geological age is represented on the patchwork of its surface, from naked, protarchean gneiss to the latest deposits of the Ice Age. Hence our abundance of minerals, a natural investment that only began to bear interest with the growth of civilization. Hence the zigzag of the coast line, with its wealth of harbours. Moreover, our islands are blessed with an excellent, if somewhat misty climate, neither too hot in summer nor too cold in winter, the result less of the Gulf

Stream of school geographies, than of our lying across the main track of the Atlantic cyclones.

It was long after the coming of man that the waters of the Channel finally swept away the land bridge of chalk that joined the Kent and Sussex Downs to the hills of North Eastern France. But even so, the white English cliffs remained full in view of the opposite shore, and, once men had mastered the art of putting to sea in ships, beckoned an invitation to merchant and invader. Until a British navy arose, capable of ruling the British seas, the South-Eastern door remained temptingly open for Celt and Roman and Teuton. For practical purposes the Southern and Eastern lowlands of England might, in these early days, be considered as an outlying part of the Continental mainland, and it is significant that, before the Roman invasion, we have the record not only of Continental peoples with English branches, but even of the same King exercising sway on both sides of the water. Thus the breaking of the land bridge was less decisive than might at first have been imagined and it is only many centuries after the physical event that Britain becomes effectually insulated. The celebrated, after-dinner speaker who said, "Britain is an island, and long may she remain so," was recording a fact and expressing a wish by no means so platitudinous as might at first sight appear.

There is, in fact, a historical geography, or what perhaps one might call a "geography for practical purposes", that by no means always corresponds to the physical facts. Looked at from this point of view, it may be said that right down to the end of the Middle Ages, Western civilization grew up in a flat world, whose centre bordered somewhere on the Mediterranean, and on the extreme edge of which stood the British Isles. They are so represented on all contemporary maps. Until in the sixteenth century they came swimming into the centre of the world, these islands constituted the very outpost of civilization, an ultimate and at times almost fabulous land, reputed, as late as the fifth century, to be the dwelling place of dead men.

And yet from the earliest human times, long before she had taken recognizable shape or become separated from the Continent, Britain had her part in the building up of civilization. At Piltdown, in Sussex, has been unearthed the skull of so primitive a human being that some authorities have even posited a chimpanzee to account for his presumptive lower jaw. Some of the earliest attempts at tools, flints chipped so crudely that it is hard to distinguish man's

work from that of nature, have been discovered in England, largely through the assiduity of that indefatigable field-worker, Benjamin Harrison, of Ightham in Kent. We know that our forests were at one time disputed with the hyena and mammoth by an extinct breed of wild men, with beetling brows, bull necks and gross jaws, and that these somehow melted away before the advance of magnificent broad-faced and long-headed giants, of a brain capacity by no means inferior to our own, who had walked from Africa to Italy, or according to another theory had escaped Eastward from a submerged continent in the Atlantic, and who had ranged at will, after their game, between what are now France and England. These men, though living in caves, without the knowledge of agriculture or any tools save those of flint and bone, had yet the mastery of speech and fire, included artists and craftsmen of no mean capacity, and appear to have had at least enough religion to believe in the survival of the dead, whose bodies they plastered with red ochre, the colour of life. But we have no certain evidence of their having left any direct heritage of blood or culture, and in recording the continuous development of our civilization we are compelled, though regretfully, to pass them by.

We reach firmer ground, and the consciousness of kinship when, after an uncertain period of transition, which does not necessarily involve any breach of continuity, we find our island, now really an island and past the rigours of the last ice age, tenanted by a new race of stone-using men, dark, long-headed and short-statured, of the Iberian or Mediterranean stock, or stocks. By this time a change has come about in man's way of life as revolutionary, though not as sudden, as any recorded in historic times. The old cave dweller had been a hunter, pure and simple, his hand against every beast, and every fang and horn against him. Now, however, man makes the ox his slave and the dog his ally. While his polished stone axes and arrows along with his hounds render him a mightier hunter than before, he is also a herdsman.

And not only a herdsman, for, at a time which our evidence does not permit us more than to conjecture, he learns to supplement his bag by the proceeds of a primitive kind of agriculture. It can have amounted to little more than a scratching of the soil with hand ploughs of wood or horn, and a hacking off of the light and scanty ears by dint of incredible labour with stone sickles, but the number of mouths was proportionately few and digestions tough. Sooner or later, the art of cooking follows in the wake of fire-making, and

man puts another stage of development between himself and the animal.

Compared with the splendid breed of Nimrods that had preceded them, the swart, wiry hillmen of the new age might seem to be of a less attractive, or at anyrate a less romantic type, for the artistic impulse that adorned cave walls is now lost, or diverted to craftsmanship such as " ripple-work " in stone, or pattern markings on earthenware. But if old stone man is the father of painting, new stone man may claim with equal justice to be the father of architecture. His creative energy has moulded the very landscape to his desire, and it may well be that some of his colossal earthworks will outlast the proudest monuments of subsequent ages.

To understand the greatness and limitations of his achievement, we must first realize within what a very small area it was confined. Where we now see tilled fields and spreading pastures, where towns smoke and villages nestle, were vast tracts of green or brown forest, dreary expanses of fen, and the broad swamps and bogs that filled the river valleys, at a time when rainfall was heavier and springs higher up than today. The lord of the Lowlands was not Man but Wolf. Parties of hunters might penetrate, not without fear of more than mortal terrors, into the darkest woodland recesses, but the active hostility of fangs gleaming through the brake, and the resistence, exuberant yet passive, of massed vegetation, drove man, with his cattle and his seeds to the comparative safety of heath and moorland and downside, a safety that he set himself to secure by a toil and ingenuity hard for us to imagine. Or when he did descend, it was most often to some sheet of marshy water, where he could construct his dwellings on piles, and come and go in dug-out canoes, not a farmer but a fisherman.

Difficult as it is to reconstruct the experiences of these our forefathers, there is one, and that the most impressive and pregnant of all, that we can to some extent realize. This was when the light faded out of the sky, and the beast was abroad in the forest. Those who have ever passed a night in the jungle can realize what weird and threatening cries must have arisen from that vast No-man's-land below. And in the long nights of what are still known as the wolf months, you could never tell when a rush of grey forms might not debouch from the trees, mad with cattle-hunger, and the watch-fires would throw their ruddy flicker on man's struggle, along the top of his earthen rampart, to hurl back the beast's constantly renewed counter-offensive.

Some such vision as this we must acquire if we want to grasp the meaning of that civilization of the hills, when man's paths were ridgeways with the great earthworks dotted along them like beads on a string. It is a subject full of pitfalls for the historian, for written evidence we have none, and the record of the hills has been scored over again and again, so that while on the one hand experts may be deducing things about neolithic man from the evidence of Victorian dew-ponds, on the other, a white horse, of obviously modern design, may prove to be a symbol of immemorial antiquity brought, with fiendish ingenuity, up to date.

Of one thing, however, we may be certain. These men of the downs and meres, whatever may have been the precise means by which they solved the many problems of their daily life, did, with their limited means, evolve a civilization in the fullest and noblest sense, that is to say, they not only contrived to live, but had the means and leisure to live well according to their lights and ideals. How else can we account for the stupendous phenomenon of the stone temple at Avebury in Wiltshire, with its neighbour, the man-made hill of Silbury, the most stupendous of all man's constructions out of the earth from which he springs?

Take your stand, for choice, on the ramparts that surge like petrified waves over the crest of Oldbury Down, and there beneath you, lying like Metz amid its ring of fortresses, Barbury, Rybury, Martinsell and the rest, lies what must have been a capital[1] in days when London was a forest and a swamp. Standing, as it did, at the union of the watersheds and chief nodal point of the ridgeways, and containing rich supplies of flint, to be had for the quarrying, it may fairly be called not only the London but the Manchester of that upland civilization. The enormous stones have nearly all disappeared, thanks to the skill of one of those progressive eighteenth century farmers, who first heated and then chilled them in order to crack them up into something useful. But a few of that titanic company remain to testify what manner of men they were who could plan and carry through so stupendous and, from a material standpoint, so profitless a task as that of their erection. Here, in presence of these awful stones, pilgrims and barterers, who had tramped the ridgeways from fastness to fastness, could perhaps relax their vigilance and dream and worship in peace.

It is not to be believed that this civilization, of which

[1] Though, of course, not of England, nor more, necessarily, than of some part of the Southern Uplands.

Avebury was the centre, was a purely native product. It would have been at its height, according to what seems the most probable conjecture, some time during the third millenium B.C. This was the golden age of the great peaceful kingdom of the Nile valley, which Bedouin conquest had not yet turned into imperialist courses. We need not follow those adventurous theorists, who make a King Charles's head of the Sun Child Pharaoh's, when we mark the traces of Egyptian influence round about Avebury. Silbury Hill strikes you at once, even at a distance, as a literal translation of the great Cairo pyramids from stone into earth. Hard by are two of that family of long, chambered barrows whose likeness to the Egyptian mastaba tombs seems too exact to admit of coincidence.[1]

Avebury stones would appear to be symbols of a cult more widespread, even, than the Catholic Christianity that inspired the Gothic cathedrals. We can trace its path, in great stone monuments, round the Mediterranean and Atlantic seaboards, to the Orkneys and, much more doubtfully, across the Pacific to Mexico and Peru. But to talk of direct Egyptian influence, or even to dogmatize as to the route by which the new civilization was brought to our shores, would be to go beyond the limits of our evidence. It is most probable that Egyptian culture was transmitted, in a more or less diluted form, by those bold mariners of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Cretans and Phoenicians. And even in these early days, it may not have been necessary for it to have come all the way round by the sea route. There was, as there is nowadays for Biscay-fearing voyagers, a possible short cut across the mainland by way of the Rhône gate, and a longer route by the Danube and Rhine valleys. The big-stone monuments of the Île de France present sufficiently striking analogies with those of England to make it plausible that one of these and not the sea route was the main path by which the higher civilization reached our shores.[2]

It was obvious what was the attraction of Britain for these early adventurers. Flint for the stone age, copper and tin for the bronze, gold and pearls, lead and jet, were among its products, and the rough stone monuments are usually found in the neighbourhood of one or other of them, though the dolmens of Ireland are a conspicuous exception.

[1] It is just possible, in view of the linear trend of Egyptian culture, that in the stone rows and avenues of Dartmoor and Brittany we may have a faint reflection of what Herr Spengler calls its "rhythmically ordered sequence of spaces". But this is a long shot, which experts may signal a miss.

[2] See T. D. Kendrick, *The Axe Age.*

Our ancestors cannot have taken from those mysterious and perhaps uncommunicative traders from overseas more than hints for improving the way of life that they themselves had to discover. The problems of the English downs were not those of the Nile valley, and necessity is an exacting taskmaster. How hard the conditions of life must have been is evinced by the dwarfish stature of the female as compared with the male skeletons. It is evident on which sex the brunt of the hard times must have fallen.

And yet, in spite of all, our ancestors were able to provide such an overplus of resources and labour, after keeping the wolf from the door in the literal, as well as the metaphorical sense, that some of them, at any rate, were able to take more thought for their eternal habitations, in the humped magnificence of chambered long barrows, than for the branch-roofed dug-outs in which they slept and cooked. It must have been a rare grandeur of soul that demanded expression in Avebury.

A recent investigator, Mr. H. J. Massingham, has laid stress on another aspect of this downland civilization. It was, he maintains, eminently peaceful, and implies a unity of social control, centring probably at Avebury. No doubt he has grasped the root of the matter, in that organized war is a diseased growth upon civilization, that unless cut out, will prove ultimately fatal, but we must beware of colouring our story, even for the best of purposes, and the evidence of earth and stones is enough to prove that even the Downlander was fully alive to the necessities of defence. His camps are almost invariably sited with the eye of a military engineer, with a view to taking the utmost advantage of the ground. When I visited Cadbury Camp, that enormous, quadruple-ringed hill fortress that is the traditional site of Arthur's Camelot, I was informed that an artillery officer, who had just been there, had remarked that nobody in the last war could have taught these fellows anything. Maiden Castle, near Dorchester, is as elaborate a defensive work as any of Vauban or Brialmont. And that war was no new invention is proved by the evidence of an arrow, well and truly shot into some poor fellow's spinal column, in Southern France, before ever the New Stone Age had dawned.

But that our dark hillmen were on the whole peaceful fellows is the most probable conclusion. For one thing, organized war must have been almost a physical impossibility when the only tracks were along the top of the downs, and these were blocked at frequent intervals by earthworks practically impregnable. That the tracks

were used for commerce between different parts of the country is suggested by finds in tombs and elsewhere. How late the fortifications may have been completed, how far they were intended to make assurance doubly sure against the beast, what mystic or symbolic meaning may have been attached to the circles, are things at which we can only guess. Certainly the great metropolitan cathedral of Avebury, with its ditch on the inside, was something worse than unfortified, and on Dartmoor, Devonshire commonsense has not erred in calling its ancient enclosures "pounds" instead of camps.

We believe that if we could transport ourselves back to what we know as the Neolithic Age, we should find our fathers occupied from day to day with tasks the very reverse of military. The tracks worn by countless generations of cattle,[1] the lynchets or hill terraces, of which you may see the precise counterpart in use today on the sides of the Himalayan valleys, the dew-ponds by which the problem of water-supply was so ingeniously solved, the first specimens of British pottery—these things tell their own tale of a long, laborious struggle with the most primitive appliances, not of man against man, but of man against nature, a struggle not without its rewards.

Celtic Britain

Some time in the first half of the second millennium before Christ, the use of bronze, which is an alloy of copper and tin, puts out of date the stone craft of our Iberian-skulled ancestors. And the Bronze Age in these islands lasts until bronze is supplemented by iron some time about the fifth century before Christ. More precise, in the absence of any written contemporary record, it is impossible to be.

During this time, the population of Britain was becoming ever more mixed by dint of successive new arrivals. Here again the evidence is so scanty, and what happened, in all probability, so far from simple, that any attempt at a precise statement would be misleading. We know that the Neolithic Age saw the arrival of a round-headed breed of men who deposited the bodies or ashes of their dead in round barrows, mere anthills compared with the stately long barrows of the ancient inhabitants. These men of the Alpine race, as it is called, seem to have been absorbed, in the course of time, amid an obstinately long-headed population. It was by some of these

[1] See *Neolithic Dew-ponds and Cattle-ways*, by A. J. and G. Hubbard.

round-heads, though perhaps not by the first arrivals,[1] that bronze appears to have been introduced to our shores.

The next great wave of immigration, according to most orthodox authorities, is that of the " Q speaking " Goidelic or Gaelic vanguard of the Celtic peoples. Who the Celts were and where they came from are questions on which most experts disagree, and in the sense in which that most elusive word was used in Roman times, it probably covers a heterogeneous assortment of Barbarian tribes, fair-haired in Central Europe and mixed up with darker elements further West. But as in Hindustan the inhabitants, in spite of every formal diversity, possess a certain unmistakable similarity of outlook which differentiates them from other peoples, so, however misleading may be the term Celtic Race, the Celtic temperament does undoubtedly connote an important, even if an undefinable, reality. The Britons whom Caesar found, with their mystic Druid rites, their wild rushes and lack of staying power, may from the ethnologist's standpoint have constituted an inextricably mixed stock, but Celtic they were, if not in skull and only partly in ancestry, at least in heart and disposition.

Another wave or series of waves, this time of " P speaking " Cymric or Brythonic Celts, began to arrive about 500 B.C. These were of the same stock as the Belgae, who occupied the North Eastern of the three parts into which, according to Caesar, Gaul was divided. Armed with iron weapons, they appear to have mastered the country south of the Tweed, up to the foothills of what is now known as the Celtic fringe. The connection with the tribes on the other side of the Channel seems to have been fairly intimate, to judge by the coincidence of tribal names, and by the fact that the Gauls looked to Britain, much as Catholics nowadays look to Rome, as a fountain-head of religious lore.

All this time a pretty continuous progress had been made in the business of mastering nature and raising the standard of living. The decisive advantage conferred on man by his new command of metals was that it armed him against beast and tree to undertake the gradual conquest of the plains. When the Romans arrived, the ridgeways had ceased to be the main highways of communication, and the hill forts, though not all of them deserted, had lost their importance. The battle between man and beast had been practically decided, and man was now able to make his dwelling and pasture

[1] The so-called Beaker men. The first of them were acquainted with copper, if not its alloy.

his cattle in the lowlands without too much fear of what Mr. Kipling has so happily named "Shepherd of the Twilight", "Feet in the Night", "Dog without a Master", and "Devil in the Dusk". By the time the Romans arrived, quite a high standard of material civilization had been attained. The Briton had not only learned to feed, clothe and house himself, but he was beginning to acquire a taste for comforts and even luxuries. Towns, of a sort, were springing up at centres of government and trade, and roads linked them together. Not only were there the ancient hillside trackways, like the Icknield Way and the Pilgrim's Way, but it is at least arguable that main Roman roads, such as the Watling and Ermine Streets, were more often than not British roads that the Romans found and no doubt improved out of recognition. Corn was grown not only for home consumption but for export; exchange value had ceased to be reckoned in iron bars, and coins were struck in quaint and often beautiful designs. A small but significant phenomenon is the extent to which the art of make-up had been mastered by the ladies of the time, who might have furnished some useful hints even to a modern *débutante*.

With the coming of the Celt, and particularly of the iron-using Brython, civilization enters upon a new and more ominous phase. In contrast to the peaceful folk of the downs, the Celts were thoroughly acquainted with the business of organized war, and Caesar, writing of those in Gaul, describes how, year in, year out, the tribes were engaged in injuring each other or defending themselves from injury. The art of war kept pace with that of working metals. The bronze dagger lengthened into the sword, and swords and shields were worked with a loving care and elaboration of ornament that marks them as their owners' dearest possessions. The warlike horse joined the peaceful ox in a common servitude, and it is not unlikely that man's pride in this latest acquisition is commemorated in at least one of the white horses on the chalk downs. As a natural sequel came the war chariot, thoughtfully provided with scythes for the cutting of hostile flesh.

What this habit of war brought in its train we can gather from one or two indications. The ghastly rites of human sacrifice appear to have been an essential feature of the prevailing religion, though the evidence for it is chiefly by Gaulish and Irish analogy. And we know, by the mute witness of the spade, the fate that, with fearful suddenness, must have overwhelmed the lovely and highly civilized lake village of Glastonbury, a tragedy probably typical of countless others, and as piteous as the one enacted on the same

holy ground more than fifteen centuries later at the dissolution of the monastery. The dwellings burnt, the inhabitants murdered, skulls cloven, heads tossed about, the fruits of art and industry sunk in the mere,[1] things the like of which we know only too well must be under war time conditions.

So far we have merely been repeating what is to be found in every textbook on prehistoric Britain. But of recent years there has been a tendency to suspect that this orthodox and comparatively simple story of stone to bronze and bronze to iron, of Iberian to Alpine, Alpine to Goidel, and Goidel to Brython, though true as far as it goes, leaves out an essential, perhaps the most important part of the truth. The index of the skull is not that of the soul, but the spiritual life of our remote ancestors has been hard to reconstruct owing to the absence of written records, whereas such solid things as skulls, pottery, weapons and ornaments are comparatively easy to collect and classify. An excess of caution is beyond doubt a fault on the right side in a historian, but to concentrate on the material or econonic aspect of any age to the neglect of the ideas that are to economics as the driving power to the machine, is not only to resign oneself to superficiality, but to create a dangerously misleading impression.

To our Celtic and Iberian ancestors, there is no doubt that the merely business side of life, though important enough, was less important than the spiritual, or, if you will, magical. The most solid relics they have left us, the temple of Stonehenge, the stone circles of Avebury, the colossal earth pyramid of Silbury, the innumerable barrows, cists, menhirs, and dolmens, can hardly have been the work of economic men, determined to compass a practical object with the utmost economy of means.

The same remark applies to the many equally remarkable constructions not above, but beneath the earth. There are the mysterious dene-holes, so frequent in the South East chalk country, underground caverns burrowed deep into mother earth, entered by cylindrical shafts, and almost invariably on the same hexagonal pattern of apsed side-chambers. There is the yet greater marvel of the vast, artificial cave system in the chalk at Chislehurst, of which some twenty to thirty miles have as yet been identified, but whose full extent defies conjecture, a maze of lofty corridors with a uniform summer and winter temperature of some fifty degrees and an atmosphere that the porous chalk keeps fresh and sweet.

[1] See Ault, *Life in Ancient Britain*, p. 233.

Here there are found what were to all appearance altar slabs, carefully oriented, with side chambers curiously suggestive of the sedilia in churches, and designed with such acoustic forethought that a voice from the altar will resound through the whole adjacent system of corridors. The materialist school, that will accept any miracle to explain away man's spiritual nature, will have us believe that our ancestors were such abject fools as to burrow shafts, when they could have hewn the chalk out of the hill-side, and tie themselves, for no conceivable reason, to a hexagonal pattern of mining passages. And those who like to believe that such a system as that of Chislehurst was a mere corn store, had better go on a Thursday evening, to trudge, with a lantern, through some three miles of it, and think what their theory implies. Neither the men nor the facts were quite so simple as some learned experts believe, and are.

These visible and tangible witnesses are by no means the only ones. More and more of recent years has it been recognized that our Celtic ancestors (if we may use "Celtic" in a spiritual and cultural, though not necessarily in a racial sense) created for themselves a world of symbolism, one in which the symbol had frequently greater importance than the reality. Thus in Celtic art the tendency is to eschew any attempt at imitating nature, to find expression not in the likeness of things seen, but in patterns and curves that give visible form to things apprehended inwardly. And of this symbolism, so rich and so fantastic, we have the tokens, could we but interpret them aright, in a multitude of place names, in numerous quaint customs either surviving or only recently extinct, in the traditions of the common people and even in the rhymes and fairy stories of the children. It was not so long ago that the maypole was a common sight on village greens, that Daddy Death was carried out of the village, and the Spring, the Man in Green, brought in, that the wren was hunted on Christmas Eve and folk leapt through Beltane or Baal fires on May Day. Not by any means all of these survivals were merely quaint and picturesque, some of them were cruelly and hideously wrong-headed—the burning of animals, for instance, to stop murrain, and of human beings to circumvent the black arts.

Unfortunately it is the grotesque and monstrous side of the ancient British faith, or faiths, that has made the most vivid impression upon the imagination of modern Britons. First impressions are notoriously the strongest, and the earliest authority on the Gaulish Druidical cult, which was said to have been derived from that of

Britain, is furnished by the memoirs of the Roman pro-consul, Julius Caesar. A soldier-politician, writing up his own career as conqueror of Gaul, was not likely to be the most sympathetic commentator on his victims' religion. It is as if the young Arthur Wellesley had inserted into an account of his campaigns two or three paragraphs dealing with Hindu religious philosophy. Would not he too have summed up the matter in a sentence, "The nation . . . is exceedingly devoted to superstitious rites?"

Of recent years enough has come to light to make it apparent that our ancestors had a very real faith underlying their symbolism, though, like their cousins in India, they were too apt to take the symbol for the reality and act accordingly. It is at least a possibility that hundreds of years before Christ, some of our dying fathers may have turned their eyes to the cross, the cross of the sun-god, which we now know to be a symbol of immemorial antiquity, and of whose presence in Britain relics remain to testify. And was not this very sun-cult, that the cross typified, a reaching after some divine and transcendent power, the source of all life, of all energy? The Druid doctrine, which was passed from mouth to mouth, has perished with the Druids, the priestly and educated caste, but the tantalizingly meagre scraps of information that have come down to us point to its having included the belief in one Supreme Being who is manifested and known by the phenomena of nature, in a number of subordinate deities and a spirit world, in an immortal soul and its transmigration after death. It is not improbable, considering that the evidence points to the fact of the Druid religion having been imposed or grafted on more primitive cults of the aborigines, that this priestly caste, like that of the Hindu Brahmans, had its own esoteric doctrine which it kept pure and separate from the more barbarous ritual with which it awed the uninitiated.[1]

The best proof, after all, that a lofty faith did exist in England hundreds of years before the coming of the Roman, is that such a faith is still able to speak to us in language more direct and conclusive than that of any book. The great temple of Stonehenge, whether it be Druid or pre-Druid, represents an advance in constructional technique beyond the larger and probably even more imposing Avebury. Stonehenge is as eloquent, even in ruin, as Amiens and

[1] The parallel with the Brahmans is, to say the least of it, suggestive, and the words of Saint Chrysostom to the effect that the proudest kings were subservient to the Druids, and Caesar's description of the priestly and military orders among the Gauls, might equally have been written of India. We have even the mention, in Caesar, of funeral ceremonies embodying the principle of suttee.

Westminster, and he must be dull indeed who can stand in the shadow of those enormous trilithons, and fail to realize that the men who compassed the immense achievement—so immense that even modern writers have been found who attribute it to magic—of transporting and erecting this, for all mundane purposes, quite useless edifice, must have had dreams and aspirations, and a leisure to indulge in them, that we, of a hustled and nerve-racked generation, may well envy them.

Recent research and speculation—for it is not always easy to say where the one ends and the other begins—have made it increasingly apparent that these cults, from that of the great stone monuments with their Egyptian inspiration, to the Druidism reported on by Caesar, were no insular or tribal developments, but have their close analogies among those peoples of the Near East who were in the van of civilization during the two or three millenniums before the rise of Rome. This is a field that has hitherto been largely left to freelances, and it is perhaps a pity that a closer liaison has not been maintained between orthodox historians, and imaginative pioneers, the boldness of whose conclusions is apt to take one's breath away, and demands from the reader exercise of the critical faculty not always apparent in the author. The argument from words, of which the freelance is so glibly prolific, is one that ought to be used with the utmost caution, considering how easy it is, with a little ingenuity, to make out a philological case for the wildest absurdity. But after we have sifted mere guesswork from reasonably established conclusions, enough, we think, will remain to convince the unbiassed reader that some part of the civilization of the East was transmitted, by one means or another, to these islands, and that the evidence for this, in place-names, monuments and folk memory, is too overwhelming to be gainsaid.

If this be so—and space forbids us to set out the evidence in detail—it follows that if new blood came to Britain principally by the South Eastern Gate, we acquired what is even more important, new ideas, from Mediterranean traffickers, no doubt mainly recruited among those Phoenician dwellers on the coast of Syria who are usually described as Semites, but whom Dr. L. A. Waddell [1] adduces reasons for believing to be a branch of the Aryan-Hittite or Khatti stock.

It is certainly remarkable that Dr. Waddell has deciphered an inscription on the Newton stone, in the North of Scotland, in

[1] In *The Phoenician Origin of the Britons, Scots and Anglo-Saxons.*

parallel Celtic Ogham and Phoenician lettering, which states that a sun-cross or swastika is erected to Bil (or Bel or Baal) by a devotee calling himself Ikhar of Cilicia, the Prwt or Briton, of the tribe Khilani, a word signifying Hittite palace dweller. Moreover, this same investigator claims to have deciphered the language of "cup-markings" which is common to British and Hittite coins and inscriptions, and to have found, among other similar identities, that the mysterious Tascio of British coins, to account for whose existence a King called Tasciovanus has been conveniently invented, was, in fact, none other than the Hittite corn god Teshub, distinguished by five cup-markings, and the original of the Archangel Michael. And if Mr. Harold Bayley,[1] working on wholly independent lines, can make good his claim to have discovered all over Britain evidences of the worship of the Cretan Varvara, or Barbara, this would not contradict but supplement the Hittite theory, and in fact strengthen it, in so far as Dr. Waddell can maintain his thesis that Crete was colonized and civilized by the Phoenicians.

We can say then that a strong, though not yet an overwhelming case, has been established for the permeation of Ancient Britain by ideas and culture from the Eastern Mediterranean. But when writers like Dr. Waddell go on to assert an ancestry not only of ideas but of blood, they seem to be pushing conclusions further than their own evidence warrants. The fact of our being a Bible-reading people does not make us children of Abraham, nor would the cult of a Phoenician sun-god and a Hittite archangel afford the slightest proof of Hittite-Phoenician descent. It is natural to men of all ages to love the highest when they see it, or think they see it, and just as the Kentish pagans cheerfully scrapped their old gods at the preaching of Augustine, so, we may well imagine, the Iberian or Celtic inhabitants of Britain allowed themselves to be conquered by the superior culture that came to them from the unknown lands beyond the seas. The physical difficulties of transporting any but a very few immigrants by a long sea voyage must have been well-nigh prohibitive, though, on the other hand, there is certainly reason for believing that the Goidelic conquerors of Ireland set sail from the Continent. But the Dover crossing is so obviously fitted for invasion or immigration in force, that the probabilities are almost overwhelming that the great majority of new-comers arrived this way.

It is, however, quite conceivable, even if it cannot be proved,

[1] In *Archaic England.*

that small parties of adventurers, endued with superior cunning or armed with superior weapons, may have arrived by the South-Western route, and established the same sort of political mastery as Pizarro and his handful of Spaniards did over the empire of the Incas. There is a definite tradition, believed for centuries throughout the length and breadth of the land, that Britain was conquered by a Trojan adventurer called Brutus, who was the founder of a line of kings. This story, which is told in the chronicle of Nennius towards the end of the eighth century, and repeated, with much elaboration, by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth, has been altogether scouted of recent years, and certainly as Geoffrey tells it it seems wild enough, but perhaps historians have been too sweeping in assuming that there is no foundation for it whatever. Mr. Bayley may or may not be right in discovering countless references to Troy in place-names. Dr. Waddell is certainly going too far in accepting the story practically as it stands, and identifying Brutus with the Homeric Peirithoos; but that some Mediterranean conquistador may have established his sway over a considerable part of Britain, and imposed his native religion and culture on his subjects, is a story by no means improbable in itself, however much the tradition of centuries may have fogged it with absurdities.

Even if we persist in treating the whole Brutus legend as a palpable invention, we shall be on safe ground in saying that for centuries before the coming of the Roman, Britain, in spite of her remoteness from the main centres of civilization, was the home of a culture by no means contemptible. Thanks to the overseas trade-route from the Mediterranean, her inhabitants were kept in touch with the leaders of human progress, and they at least profited enough thereby to attain a very fair standard of material well-being, together with a faith and symbolism fired with poetic imagination, and not improbably having its source in an elevated philosophy.

3

The Coming of Rome

During the Iron Age in Britain, the centre of the civilized world was shifting Westward. Just as the Egyptian and the Mesopotamian Empires had grown up in river valleys, so now the Mediterranean Sea formed the main highway of communication and bond of unity for an enormous Empire that came to include all the countries round its shores, and pushed out its frontiers, to the utmost limit of its

strength, in every direction. This Mediterranean, or Roman power came nearer to realizing the ideal of a world Empire than any other political organization before or since, because for most practical purposes of that age, Rome occupied the centre of a flat world. The civilizations of India and China were out of the picture and America might as well have been on another planet. To the Roman citizen of the first or second centuries, the boundaries of civilization were those of the Roman Law and Roman Peace. All beyond was a wilderness of waters or of barbarism.

Were we less in the habit of accepting everything that has ever happened as a matter of course, the mere fact of such a power maintaining itself for centuries would be a perpetual wonder, and would go far to justify the terrible price exacted. When mechanical transport was unknown and communications were slow and difficult, the problem of exercising one continuous and orderly sovereignty over vast tracts of territory was almost insoluble. The Greek city states were prudent enough to refrain from the attempt, the secular governments of the Middle Ages generally found it beyond their strength. Assyria had been more a raiding than a governing power, and the great kings of Persia had been hard put to it to control the satraps to whose sway they had committed the provinces of their unwieldly empire.

Rome faced the problem and solved it. From the Euphrates to the Atlantic, from the Pennines to the Sahara, men enjoyed the same peace, obeyed the same law, and shared in the benefits of the same civilization. This was maintained without the need or display of military force; away from the frontiers and the capital a soldier was a comparatively rare sight, and the idea of throwing off the Roman yoke was one that never occurred to anyone, even as a possibility. The slowness of communications was compensated for by a magnificent system of roads, and by the fact that the Mediterranean was so effectively policed as to form a reasonably safe highway. Ideas and commodities passed freely throughout the length and breadth of the Empire.

The crowning achievement of Rome was her realization that human affairs could be ordered on rational and scientific lines, without more than a polite show of mystic or fundamental sanctions. The Greeks had already attempted this in the limited sphere of the city state, but the limits of Roman Law were those of the Western civilized world. Only the accident of her having to strike an average among the laws of the peoples, nations and

languages who flocked to trade with her, revealed to Rome the possibility of man ordering his relations with his fellows according to the dictates of reason and commonsense. Thus the Roman Law marks an important advance towards what we may take to be the ultimate goal of civilization, the assumption by mankind of conscious control over its own destinies.

The price paid for these benefits was enormous. Every expansion of her circumference into the void was like increasing the span of a bridge—the strain on the structure increased in geometrical proportion. The old republican spirit had been bled to death in the process of expansion, the individuality of the conquered peoples was crushed beyond the possiblity of revival, and the government became a vast, centralized taxing machine, a dead weight upon the soul. Roman Law, as it took shape under the great jurists of the Empire, was determined by these conditions. It was the law of a sovereign power trying to impose its will on the world from a centre. Everything, except in matters of local government where the Empire countenanced a certain elasticity, was centred in the person of the divine Emperor. Every consideration was subordinated to the smooth working of the machine. The sovereign conducted the vast business of keeping the world in order nominally according to his will, but really by an elaborate routine of which he himself was the slave. The so-called palaces of the Caesars that hid the Palatine were for the most part hives of government offices. The machine, already strained to the utmost limit of its capacity, could not afford to let individual rights, or the rights of corporate bodies, interfere with its functioning. Roman Law was therefore careless of liberty and still more of what in England were to be known as liberties; it worked from the top downwards, and it aimed at a logical uniformity in ordering the relations of men with each other.

Such was the spirit of the Roman rule. There was one standard of civilization, and everywhere, where the writ of Caesar ran, that standard was imposed and maintained so much as a matter of course that no one dreamed of non-conformity. With very trifling variations, dictated by the difference of local resources and perhaps dying vestiges of tradition, the Roman town, the Roman land system, the Roman way of life generally, is the same at Silchester and at Carthage, at Verona and at Timgad. The same very solid, very pretentious, and slightly vulgar corruption of Greek architecture, the same pretty and utterly soulless painted and sculptured gods and mythological incidents, the same circular arenas for the perpetration

of the same devilries; the same solidly efficient drainage and aqueducts and central heating. No doubt it was civilization that Rome had imposed on her world, a reign of elegance and grandeur, of law and the free interchange of ideas, but in striving to gain the whole world, Rome had necessarily sacrificed her own soul and that of the peoples on whom her rule fell. It was not life she gave—for life is individuality and thrives by difference—but euthanasia. One can feel something of the weight of Rome even in those grim ruins of hers, those vaults and columns that weigh upon the mind with an almost palpable oppression.

It has been necessary thus to digress from our story of British civilization, because, once the shadow of Rome fell upon any people, it ceased to have a history of its own. Considering how advanced was the state of material civilization in that part of our island which came under her full sway and peace, it is remarkable how few records have come down to us from nearly four centuries of occupation. The fact is that Roman Britain was a geographical expression applied to a corner of territory at the back of the Mediterranean Hinterland, and as such, with no particular history worth recording. Behind the screen of the legions there was no British people or even group of peoples, but just Roman provincials, rather less advanced in the way of civilization, as being more remote from the centre, than the average of provincials.

Even before the first landing, it was evident that England was beginning to be drawn into the sphere of Roman influence. The use of Latin words and classical mythology on coins, of dice and water clocks, point in this direction. But until the proconsulship of Julius Caesar in Gaul, Rome must have seemed to the Britons much as Carthage and Tyre had seemed to their ancestors, something vast and magnificent, but comfortably remote. And then, with terrifying suddenness, an army, that appeared invincible, began overrunning Gaul, and made its appearance on the opposite coast of the Channel. Now the lowlands of Britain were a natural continuation of those of Northern Gaul; the two were like the gradually sloping sides of a vast, shallow valley, whose river had widened into a sea channel. And it was the obvious thing for a conqueror of Gaul to round off his task by taking in the English lowlands as well. The one thing that could have altered the situation, and cut off England from the Continent, would have been a fleet capable of holding the Channel.

When Caesar arrived in Gaul, he found a sea power already

in being that he must needs destroy before there could be any question of invading Britain. This power consisted of a confederation of Gaulish tribes scattered along the coast of France, and these, when the crisis came, were joined by an uncertain number of ships from Britain, the whole fleet mustering the formidable total of 220 sail. But they were no match for the trained seamanship and discipline of the Romans, who, with a much smaller fleet, succeeded in crippling the enemy by tearing down their sails, and then boarding the drifting hulks at their leisure. The first sea-fight in which British ships took part—it was not far from the mouth of the Loire—thus ended in an annihilating disaster which left the island naked to invasion.

But Caesar had undertaken a task too great for his resources. To conquer and hold Gaul, from the Atlantic to the Rhine line, was as much as even he was capable of accomplishing with the few legions under his command. Perhaps he only dreamed of a plundering or a punitive expedition, perhaps it was less calculation than sheer excess of energy that determined his action. Twice in successive years he forced a landing on Kentish soil, not without a good deal of difficulty in negotiating the Channel tides, and got more hard fighting and less loot than he had bargained for. Having saved his face by a Pyrrhic victory he returned for the second time to Gaul, which, by flaming out in a final attempt to shake off the Roman yoke, gave him enough to do for the remainder of his pro-consulship. After this, for nearly a century Rome left Britain alone, contenting herself with a tariff on her exports to Gaul.

It was only a respite. Britain suffered from the characteristic weakness of Celtic peoples in being hopelessly divided against herself among a number of local chieftains. One of these, Cunobelinus or Cymbeline, did indeed succeed in extending his sway from Colchester over the whole of Southern England, and he was enough of a diplomatist to keep on good terms with Rome, but his success only earned him the hatred of the other tribes, and, as in the Ireland of Henry II's time, there was a dispossessed member of the Royal House ready to call in the common enemy on behalf of his claims. Thus, after the death of the one strong man that Britain could produce, Rome had her pretext for finishing the task of adding the fertile British lowlands to the Empire, that Caesar had begun, and his nephew, Augustus, been twice on the point of undertaking. The fourth Emperor, Claudius, not incompatibly with being a weakling and a bookworm, was a strong expansionist.

The task, once decided upon, was carried out with Roman

thoroughness. After the elimination of her Gaulish allies, Britain had been without the rudiments of naval defence. A landing was easily effected, and the lowlands of the South and East were quickly overrun by an ample and well equipped force, who passed on to deal with the more difficult country and wilder tribes beyond the Trent and Severn, leaving the new province to be organized behind them by the civil power. Eighteen years after the first landing, the corrupt tyranny of a local governor culminated in a filthy outrage on the daughters of a friendly chieftain and the flogging of his widow. This produced a terrible rebellion, in which the young and flourishing Roman colony was practically wiped out. Fortunately for Rome, after one legion had been destroyed, and the commander of another had lost his nerve and disobeyed orders to co-operate (he afterwards committed suicide), Suetonius Paulinus, who had been engaged in destroying the Druid headquarters in Anglesea, proved equal to the emergency and, hurrying back, demonstrated against enormous odds that the Celtic fire and fury in attack stood no chance against the rock-like discipline of Rome's veterans.

After this, saner methods of administration reconciled the lowland Britons to what they evidently considered a step forward in civilization, and the work of assimilation was crowned in the reign of Domitian by one of the most enlightened of all Roman administrators, Cnaeus Julius Agricola, who deliberately set himself to divert the people's minds from warlike activities by the amusements and arts of civilization, coupled with a little judicious flattery—the Britons had so much more natural talent than the Gauls! So that the Roman costume and way of life became as popular as Western customs to-day among a certain section of educated Indians. "This," remarks Agricola's biographer, Tacitus, not without contempt, "among an ignorant people was called civilization, while it was really an element of slavery."

4

The Roman Province

Before the Industrial Revolution, there was a natural line of division between more and less civilized Britain, which would have run from York to Exeter, with a slight bulge towards the Severn valley. To the South and East lay a land of gentle undulations, easily traversed except for the forests and the Eastern fens, a land that in Roman times formed a detached part of Gaul in the sense

that the Isle of Wight forms a detached part of England. To the North and West stretched a difficult and barren country, easy to defend, stubborn to hold or to civilize. Thus it is that tide after tide of invasion has flooded over one half of England, to spend its strength against the foothills of the other.

The Britain which Rome organized into a province, whose resources she exploited and on which she imposed her civilization, is the half of England to the South East of this dividing line. North of Isurium, which is a few miles beyond York, and west of the Severn, we find few villas or other evidences of peaceful occupation. The lowland territory was all that Rome had any reason to covet, and she would no doubt have left alone the fierce tribes of the outer lands, could she have had any guarantee that they would have kept within their own limits. But to hardy mountaineers, the attraction of fat and smiling plains, tenanted by an unwarlike population, has ever proved a temptation too great to be borne. So Rome had to deal with the wild Britons as well as the tame, and she set about the task with a measure of success which was not to be repeated for a thousand years after the breakdown of her system.

She had already absorbed the most civilized elements of the native population, and taken the heart out of the Druid faith by the massacre of its chiefs at Anglesea. The three legions of her garrison army made their headquarters at York, at Chester, and at Caerleon at the gate of South Wales. Wales itself, a thorn in the side of our medieval kings, was controlled by a system of roads and fortified posts, and no serious trouble was thenceforward threatened from the West. But in the North the hill country stretched on and on, and no forces that Rome had to spare would have sufficed to garrison it. Agricola himself penetrated as far as the Scottish Highlands, and fought one great battle at a place he called Mons Graupius, a tactical victory that gave him the ground he stood on, but not the means of maintaining an army so far from his base or of cornering the enemy in his fastnesses.

It was Hadrian, perhaps the ablest of the supremely able Antonine Caesars, who devised the system of defence by which the Empire could best be maintained until the final crash. He had the wit to see that every outward push into the void imposed a fresh strain on Rome's resources, and he decided to fix a final limit to her expansion. From henceforward, she is to dig herself in against the outer hordes of barbarism, and behind these lines, sustain a

gigantic siege. Her permanent garrison of legionaries and auxiliaries was to be strung out all round the frontier line which, where there was the possibility of attack, was marked by a continuous wall and entrenchment, strengthened at frequent intervals by fortified posts. Thus far and no further was Roman rule to extend; beyond the lines the barbarians were to be left to their own devices.

The necessity for some such scheme of defence in the North of Britain had been emphasized by a rising of the tribes that had annihilated the legion posted at York and compelled Hadrian to replace it by another. Accordingly the permanent line of defence was sited between the Tyne and the Solway, and a wall was built strong enough to defy the rush of any Caledonian or Pictish horde. In Northern England, thus effectually isolated from Scotland, Rome could proceed to carry out the same policy of policing the wild tribes as had already succeeded in Wales. Under Hadrian's successor, an ill-advised attempt was made to take in the Lowlands of Scotland, and construct a new wall along the shorter line between the Forth and the Clyde. But here Rome had allowed her reach to exceed her grasp. She was incapable of holding down the hill tribes North of the Tweed, or of securing her exposed flanking line of communications along the East coast. It was not long before the new wall had to be abandoned, and a futile and ruinously expensive attempt of the Emperor Septimius Severus to conquer or terrorize the country closed the chapter of Roman ambitions in Scotland.

Henceforth, we have to reckon with three kinds of Briton. Beyond Hadrian's wall were the untamed Caledonians, a name which afterwards gives place to that of the Picts, who seem to have been an offshoot of the Pictones or Poitevins in the West of France, and to have established themselves, Viking-like, in the Orkneys, and thence spread southwards. However this may be—and the origin of the Picts is a question on which every expert has his own theory—the fact remains that the Romans who manned the wall in the fourth century no longer talked of keeping out the Caledonians, but the Picts. Behind the wall were the disarmed but unromanized tribes to the North of York and West of the Severn, with Exeter as the outpost of Romanization in the South West. And behind this Celtic fringe lay that fragment of the Mediterranean Empire that the sea happened to have detached from its Gaulish mainland.

Of this peaceful and civilized province, even if we could pierce the darkness of time that envelopes it, there would be little to record, because its history is not that of Britain but of Rome. The Celtic

civilization had not the strength of the Greek and Egyptian, that enabled them to preserve some sort of emasculated individuality even after their absorption into the Empire. Speaking broadly, Lowland Britain became a province like any other province in the Empire, of which the towns at least had the same laws, the same amusements, the same beliefs, the same standards of art and living. There is no British style of architecture or decoration, nothing British about the tesselated mosaic pavements, or the pretty Samian ware pottery that was used even in the villages, or the images of the gods—Father Thames might just as easily have passed muster for Father Tiber or Father Nile, and if our British fields and springs had their deities, they were no more than the standardized products of the Mediterranean firm.

And yet as Haverfield, the supreme authority on Roman Britain, has pointed out, there is evidence that the Celtic tradition still persisted to some extent. It is notable that the two examples of sculpture he particularly cites, a lion from Corstopitum, by the Wall, and the terrific bearded Gorgon, from Bath, with their realistic and unrestrained vitality, both occur in places not far removed from the influences of the outer Celtic fringe. But these, with the evidences of a similar spirit in New Forest and Castor ware pottery, are but exceptions to the general rule of whole-hearted Romanization on the part of a people who desired nothing better than to be accounted good citizens or subjects of the Empire that to them was synonymous with civilization. Rome was not, as a rule, intolerant; ghosts of the old beliefs may well have walked among the rural population.

Being on the outer fringe of the Empire and so near the still active forces of kindred barbarism, it is doubtful whether the British province was ever quite so thoroughly and efficiently Romanized as Gaul, for instance, or Spain. Haverfield exactly hits it off when he remarks that Romano-British life was normal in quality but defective in quantity.

"We find towns," he says, "in Britain as elsewhere, and farms, and country houses. But the towns are small and somewhat few and the country houses indicate comfort more often than wealth. So too the costlier objects of ordinary use, fine mosaics, precious glass, gold and silver ornaments, occur comparatively seldom, and such as do occur, seem to be almost wholly imports."[1] And he compares Romano-British civilization to a man of sound, but not strong constitution, who might perish quickly from violent shock.

[1] *The Romanization of Roman Britain*, p. 27.

On the whole, we get the impression of a rather second-rate civilization, judged by Roman standards, in this not very important province. Perhaps the veneer of Romanization was apt to wear rather thinner in such close contact with the untamed forces of a kindred barbarism. At any rate, Britain is remarkable for the number of military pretenders to imperial honours who arose from among the frontier garrison—for it cannot be too emphatically stated that there was no idea of rebellion against the Empire itself.

None the less, credit must be given to the Romans for what, as workers and employers of labour, they achieved during the centuries of their rule. They brought to Britain traditions, already centuries old, of scientific farming and engineering. Their first care was to build up, in the most literal sense, a system of roads, superior to anything that survived their departure down to the end of the eighteenth century. For this, as we know from Tacitus, they conscripted the labour of the natives. Their roads were even more expressive than their buildings and statues of that invincible, unimaginative will-power that enabled the Roman, in the words of his greatest poet, to rule the nations with his sway. They did not, like the old trackways, allow their course to be dictated to them by the accident of the ground. They drove a bee-line, over hills and through forests and across marshes, raised, wherever necessary for gradient or drainage, on causeways.

Drainage was an art which the Roman had inherited from his Etruscan forbears, and which Virgil enjoins on farmers in the Georgics. The men who built the roads were not likely to tolerate swamps, and such works as the Car Dyke in Cambridgeshire are evidences of their prowess in this direction, though—possibly because they had enough fertile land for their needs—they left the fens of the East country to the wild-fowl and the greater forests to the wolf.

Perhaps the most impressive of all the monuments of Roman efficiency is the Pharos, or lighthouse, that stands, though in ruin, solidly octagonal on the cliffs of Dover, reminding us that even in these remote days the skipper kept his course through the Straits between the familiar lights of Dover and Grisnez.

From a business point of view, at least, Roman civilization can claim to have made good. In its palmy days Britain was able to export the products of her farms and mines and even of her looms on a considerable scale. The face of the countryside must have been transformed by the working of the more or less scientifically managed villa estates. But the life is more than meat, and the best that can

be said for the elegant and standardized mediocrity of most Romano-British remains that have come down to us is that it may at any rate be preferable to the positive hideousness and squalor of modern town life. But of such remains, those that make the most direct appeal to us are the few that preserve some lingering and rebellious traces of the old Celtic spirit.

Christianity and the Celtic Revival

The Mediterranean Empire, of which Britain was a part, was undergoing a gradual transformation in the third and fourth centuries, which was ultimately to have the effect of overwhelming the British province with barbarism, or of restoring Britain to herself —whichever way we like to put it. During the century that followed the golden age of the Antonines, the Empire wallowed in an orgy of corruption and civil strife, in which one puppet Emperor followed another, and only the extraordinary strength of the governmental machine, whose bureaucratic wheels ground on unaffected by the change of Emperors, and the tenacity of the Roman idea, kept the structure from collapsing. Then came a rally. The process of centralization was carried to its logical conclusion; the Divine Caesar became an oriental despot in a semi-oriental capital; every form of constitutional check on his supreme and centralized authority was swept away; and the centre of the Empire shifted Eastward to Constantinople, leaving Britain more remote than ever, and creating an inevitable tendency in the Western provinces to break loose from a power that was no longer essentially Mediterranean, but a half-way house and a barrier between East and West.

At the very moment they were making their sway formally absolute, the Cæsars were forced to compromise it by alliance with a power, an *imperium in imperio*, that might easily prove a formidable rival. This power was the Christian Church, which, starting as an obscure sect at Jerusalem, and with the impetus behind it of the unique personalities of its Founder, Jesus, and its missionary organizer, Paul, became a vast and disciplined organization, with its ramifications all over the Empire, and in which the fitful persecutions of the reasonably alarmed government only seemed to awaken a more invincible devotion. Having failed to destroy this Church, the Caesars attempted to deal with it in the only other way possible, by capturing it and putting themselves at its head, assimilating

it to the rest of the State machinery. This was well enough as a temporary, and perhaps as a permanent expedient, so far as the Eastern part of the Empire was concerned, but in the West it was possible that the Church might one day find an empty throne which God would command her to fill.

Of how Christianity came to Britain we know little for certain. We have the legend which may well be founded on fact, of the proto-martyr, the soldier Alban, and we know that as early as 314, three British bishops left their sees to attend the Council of Arles. But British Christianity has left few traces, and the solitary church, the foundations of which have come to light at Silchester, is such a poky affair that it makes one doubt whether, in that flourishing centre, the average congregation could have equalled that of the smallest country hamlet nowadays. On the other hand, we have the evidence of "old Christian Wales" to prove that the Faith must have taken firm hold upon British people some time before the severance of the Roman connection.

The golden age of Roman rule in Britain is the period between the final establishment of the Northern defences at Hadrian's Wall and the first forcing of the defences by the Northern enemy, in other words, roughly the third and the first half of the fourth centuries. Even then it must have been apparent to any far-sighted observer that Rome held her British province on a precarious tenure and that dangers were gathering that she might hold at arm's length, but was powerless to remove. There was the Northern Hinterland against which the great Agricola and Severus had spent themselves in vain. There was Ireland, whose continued liberty had been, in Agricola's opinion, a bad example to the Britons, and which he believed he could have conquered with one legion and a few auxiliaries. And finally there were the pirates of the North Sea.

Now Rome, though with a great deal of difficulty, had managed to make the Mediterranean a fairly safe highway for commerce; but effectively to police the outer seas was a task in which she never succeeded, either to the North or the South East. The North Sea was not only a happy hunting ground for the Picts, but also for the Nordic tribes along the coasts of Frisia and Denmark, who were at first lumped together under the name of Saxons. Rome was unable to deal with these pests, as she had done in the Mediterranean, by the simple method of occupying their coast line. The next best thing to do was to maintain a fleet powerful enough to command the seas against them. This fleet was based upon Boulogne, for

it must be remembered that the Gaulish coast suffered even more severely than that of Britain from continual harrying. Unfortunately in the troubled times towards the end of the third century, the admiral of this fleet, a former Belgian pilot called Carausius, was suspected of being in the pirates' pay. Knowing what fate was in store for him, he boldly, and with the backing of his fellow sailors, proclaimed himself master of a not unwilling Britain, and maintained himself there by his command of the sea. He was, of course, setting up to be Emperor not of Britain, but in Britain. Carausius was soon murdered—the lives of imperial candidates in the third century would have broken the back of any insurance company—and the idea of commanding the seas was allowed to drop. Rome made the coasts of Britain her frontiers, and fell back upon a system of coast defences under an officer called "The Count of the Saxon Shore".

In the seventh decade of the fourth century a terrible disaster fell upon Roman Britain. The whole of her enemies, Northerners, Irish and Saxons, seem to have banded together, and in 367, after several years' fighting, the Wall was stormed or, more likely, turned from the sea and taken in reverse. The Count of the Saxon Shore and the Commander-in-Chief in the North were both killed, the legions melted away, and down came the barbarians, flooding into the peaceful province, harrying and looting the prosperous villas, and penetrating so far that when at last the Count Theodosius arrived with reinforcements strong enough to clear the country of the invaders, he had to fight his way from Richborough up to London.

This catastrophe, though the evidence is very scanty, cannot but have dealt a deadly wound to the civilization of the British province. A peaceful country cannot be overrun from end to end, and quietly pick up the threads of its old life. Despite the brief respite obtained by Theodosius, the barbarians were soon again thundering at the gates, at the very time when the dry rot within, more than any pressure from without, was destroying the grand old fabric of Roman power in the West. Out of the darkness that is gathering over Britain, we catch glimpses of a military organization going to pieces, of usurpers taking the cream of the forces to follow them on adventures abroad, of mutiny at time of darkest crisis, all the symptoms of a power that has ceased to be true to itself. And yet the Roman organization died hard, much harder, in fact, than anybody had imagined until Professor Bury discovered that at least as late as 428 the connection with Rome was being maintained,

and the normal machinery of government was still functioning in the province. It must have been very soon afterwards that the final separation occurred, and Britain was left to defend herself as best she might.

We are much in the dark as to what was happening in Britain during the years that intervened between the great combined invasion of 367, and the first permanent settlement of the North Sea rovers about the middle of the next century. But judging, with all diffidence, from such fragments of evidence as we possess, we can hardly doubt that the tide of Celtic influence had begun to flow back into the lowlands with the weakening of the Roman power. It must be remembered that Rome had never attempted to do more than police the hill country to the North and West, though she had weakened and emasculated the native civilization by imposing her own on the richest and most advanced tribes and rooting out the Druid religion. But when the power and prestige of Rome were visibly on the wane, it was only to be expected that Celtic civilization should take on a new lease of life, even in the Romanized lowlands.

Towards the end of the fourth century the Celts of Ireland began to leave their shores in considerable numbers and plant settlements on the British coast, particularly in Wales and Scotland. Professor Oman has plausibly conjectured, from the apparent absence of Roman troops on the Welsh border and their concentration in the North, that Rome had already decided to leave the Welsh to work out their own salvation, and it seems that a powerful British chieftain, called Cunedda, came from the North into Wales and rallied the tribes to a successful counter-offensive against the Irish.

The Celtic revival, if we must use the term, was by no means a reversion to the state of things that had existed before the conquest. While the Roman State was getting weaker and weaker, the Christian Church was establishing and confirming its hold upon the people. In the night of desolation that was darkening over the land, men's eyes naturally turned towards the Cross, no longer of the sun-god, but of the Man of Sorrows. In such times, the heart demands some surer anchorage than that afforded by a moribund paganism, but at the beginning of the fifth century we find what we may well imagine to have been a peculiarly Celtic development, in the form of the Pelagian heresy, in other words, an uncompromising assertion of the freedom of the will. A man's salvation, according to this doctrine, was in his own hands rather than those of the Church.

Such a tendency to react against the centralized discipline of Rome was for centuries characteristic of the hot-blooded and unruly Celt.

Despite the waning of Roman civilization, the Christian Britons of the Celtic revival managed to put up a surprisingly long and good fight against the hordes of invaders. The direct threat from Ireland seems to have been countered by the strong hand of Cunedda, and for the first half of the fifth century the most pressing danger was from the North, where the Picts had been reinforced by Irish immigrants into South-Western Scotland. Against these enemies the Christians put up a gallant defence. We have the record of one striking victory under the leadership of Germanus, the missionary bishop from Gaul who had come over to bring back the Pelagian heretics to the orthodox fold. It is said that he succeeded in throwing the enemy into a panic by a cunningly devised ambush, causing his men, at a pre-arranged signal, to leap up on all sides with a mighty Hallelujah!

We have, at any rate, no traces of such a disaster as had occurred on the bursting of the Northern defences at the full height of the Roman power, and the Britons seem even to have improved their position, if we may judge by the fact that in the middle of the century Saint Patrick found a strong British King or chieftain, called Coroticus (Caradoc or Cerdic), established beyond the Wall in Galloway. But we should be mistaken if we thought in modern terms of an organized national resistance to an equally organized invasion. What did occur was probably something far more confused. Even before the shadow of Roman authority was withdrawn, it is probable that the Celtic tendency to split up into disconnected tribal units was beginning to re-assert itself, at any rate in the North and West. To a Caradoc or Cunedda, the Christian chief of the next district may well have seemed as natural an enemy as the heathen Pict or Scot.

The Coming of the English

The Western and Northern invaders were thus held at arm's length. But the third enemy from across the North Sea, who had not to break through the resistance of the unromanized hillmen, was at last equal to the invasion of those lowlands that the Romans had tamed, but which they had ceased to defend. What turned the pirates into invaders and settlers we cannot know for certain, but we may conjecture that it was not unconnected with the Westward

advance of the Baltic coast-dwellers called the Angles, who appear to have mastered the original Saxon pirates early in the fifth century. But the first move in the invasion was taken by the Jutes, who dwelt in the Jutland Peninsula to the North of the Anglo-Saxons, and it was quite conceivably part of a pre-arranged scheme of conquest between the two peoples. The Britons, like their ancestors of the first century, had no fleet to challenge the command of the seas, and since the pressure from the North seems to have driven them to the time-honoured Roman expedient of using barbarians to fight barbarians, it was perhaps by British permission that the Jutes were able to make the safe and correct preliminary to invasion by establishing their advanced base off the Kentish coast on the Isle of Thanet. The traditional date is 449, but we may possibly place it a few years earlier.

This was the beginning of the end for whatever was left of Romanization in Britain. The invaders, having command of the sea and a secure base, could choose their own time and place for each successive blow, and could draw reinforcements from their fellow tribesmen and any fighting bands who could be enlisted in the ventures. It is highly probable that there was some concerted scheme of operations, but from the fragmentary and late records we can only guess at the course of the invasion. It seems to have followed the usual course of overwhelming the lowlands and being checked at the foothills. The Britons put up a desperate resistance, and at first found a leader in Ambrosius Aurelianus, "a modest man, who alone, as it happened, of the Roman nation had survived the storm." As the fighting swayed backwards and forwards, the remains of Roman civilization gradually disappeared; even Bath, in the West, was a deserted ruin, the haunt of wild fowl, long before it was finally captured in 577. By the beginning of the sixth century the contest was between the heathen conquerors of the lowlands and the Christian Celts of the North and West.

Then occurs a surprising reversal of fortune. The British tribes rally under a leader whose name, Arthur, is Roman, and whose title would be probably more accurately "general" than "king". So much legend has grown up around this heroic figure, that Arthur's very existence has been disputed by the same sort of reasoning that reduces Christ to a myth, Homer to a co-operative society, and Shakespeare to the bold illiterate who feared not to be saddled with the guilt of Lord Bacon's plays. Without entering into a rather futile controversy, we may content ourselves with stating

that the Celtic tribes did unite in a supreme effort, presumably under a leader, and among other successes ("Nennius" reports twelve battles, one of them at the "Town of Legions", either York or Chester), gained such a smashing victory at a place called Mons Badonicus, that Saint Gildas, in 546, who is here recording events in his own life time, tells us that the land had peace for forty years.

It was only a respite. The medieval story that Cador, Duke of Cornwall, took up the pursuit after Mons Badonicus, and drove the heathen back to Thanet, where they surrendered, is a romantic exaggeration. The hold of the invaders on the lowlands was too strong, and Arthur, unlike Alfred, did not find a successor to carry his work to completion, but rather, if we may trust the legend, a traitor to ruin it. How far the heathen were pushed back we may judge from the fact that, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Aylesbury and Bedford were only taken or re-taken by them in 571, more than 120 years after the first landing. By this time they were strong enough to resume their advance, and found a leader in Ceawlin, of Wessex, the second to bear the title of Bretwalda, meaning wielder, or perhaps we should say generalissimo, of English Britain. Mons Badonicus was avenged, in 577, by a victory at the ancient earthwork of Deoram, or Dyrham, a few miles north of Bath, which cut off the Britons of Wales from those of the South West, and gave Ceawlin possession at least of the sites of Bath, Cirencester and Gloucester. Thirty years later Wales was cut off also from the Britons of the North by a victory of the Northumbrian King Ethelfrith at Chester. The Christians were now not only driven back into the hills, but were split into three parts having no land communication with each other.

A word of caution is necessary. In any summary account, it is hard not to convey the impression of too great simplicity. But if we had any accurate contemporary record, we should probably find that the struggle of Celt and Anglo-Saxon was complicated by so many vicissitudes and cross-currents that even a contemporary observer could have had no very clear idea of what was happening. That the pirate chiefs, though they might be united now and then under some commanding personality, always hung together is not to be believed. In 663, only twenty-six years after the Battle of Chester, we find a Christian King of North Wales forming an alliance with that staunch old pagan, Penda of Mercia, to make an end of the Christian King of Northumbria, and the Welshman was even more "hunnish" in his methods of war than his ally.

It is hardly likely that this was the only, or the first time, that among so many fierce and independent chieftains, race and religion had been set at nought in the feuds that must have been perpetually arising between neighbours. We have the curious and hitherto unexplained circumstance of one of the pirate fathers, the first king of Wessex and the ancestor of our own Royal House, bearing the Celtic name of Cerdic (Caradoc or Coroticus), which is identical with that of his younger contemporary, the British ruler of Galloway. And even if we get round this difficulty by ruling out Cerdic's existence, we have yet to account for a Caedwalla and a Mul among his descendants. Perhaps there was as much of sheer anarchy as of racial or religious feeling in the struggles of this time—tribe against tribe, band against band, chieftain against chieftain, with only occasional combinations on a grand scale of Christians under an Arthur or heathens under a Bretwalda.

What was the fate of the Britons in the conquered districts? A little time ago it was the fashion for expert historians to talk as if the invaders had set about exterminating them with a thoroughness that not even a Timour or Joshua could have rivalled. Such vulgar motives as that of getting other people to work for them were not to be attributed to these austere champions of pure Teutonism. It was only when events brought Teutonism out of fashion, that this cheerful theory, so wildly improbable in itself, was seen to rest on not a particle of evidence. The tendency lately has been to go to the other extreme, as if to maintain the historical continuity of Romano-British life were in some way to do one's bit against the Boche, or perhaps to curtail one's time in Purgatory. But to the dispassionate enquirer—and they have been curiously few—it must be evident that both exterminators and continuators are simplifying facts beyond all reason and probability.

The idea of a persistent and merciless slaughter of the whole of the native population who could not get away into the hills is a product of academic sadism of which a savage would be ashamed. The slightest knowledge of human, let alone of Anglo-Saxon nature, would reveal its absurdity. Our ancestors were neither fiends nor brutes. When they emerge, 150 years after the first landing, into the light of history, they are no doubt hard and rough fighters, but more inclined to a lazy good-nature than a deliberate cruelty. Their epic hero, Beowulf, like the Kings who first received Christianity, was a gentleman, and the great champion of heathenism, the Mercian Penda, was not only a cleaner fighter

than his Christian ally, Caedwalla, but tolerated the missionaries in whom he did not believe, and admired them for sticking up for their principles. In the whole of Anglo-Saxon history, though we find instances of violence and revenge in plenty, there is nothing that indicates a cold blooded implacability such as that which found satisfaction in the amphitheatre or auto-da-fé. The Anglo-Saxons, unless we believe them to have reversed their nature in half-a-dozen generations, are the last people whom we should cast for the part of universal butchers.

Nor is there a shred of evidence for such a supposition. Even the monk Gildas, writing of the horrors of the invasion in the true propagandist spirit, allows that the heathen took slaves. The Anglo-Saxons were a practical folk, eminently alive to the main chance, and they were no more likely to waste valuable labour than they were to throw money into the sea. The evidence of place-names is also conclusive for survival.[1] With only a few exceptions, the important towns of the Roman province survive under their original names, and what is even more remarkable, the petty kingdoms or tribal districts of the conquerors have not Teutonic but British names, such as, for instance, Deira, Bernicia, Elmet and Craven. Most of the rivers and a great many of the hills keep their Celtic names, and though nearly all the villages are called after their Teutonic settlers, the survival of British or Welsh communities is recorded by such names as Walcot and Walton,[2] and still more strikingly, by the Norse Bretby, Birkby, and Brettgate, which prove that such British communities retained their identity even after the Danish invasion.

The evidence of the agricultural system is more open to dispute, but a case has at least been made out for seeking the origin of the English manor in the Roman villa. And even in the more prosaic Eastern districts, one can plausibly cite survivals of local custom and folk-lore that survived Saxon and Roman alike.

But to show the absurdity of the extermination theory, there is no need to rush to the opposite extreme, and talk as if the invasion had amounted to nothing more than the settlement of a few pirates on the coast and up the rivers, with no very great breach in the continuity of British life. That the invasion was a terrible and devastating calamity is established by every particle of evidence,

[1] This is excellently stated by Messrs. Stenton and Mawer, in *An Introduction to the Survey of English Place Names.*

[2] Though even this is not undisputed by certain philologists.

direct and circumstantial. The monk Gildas, the Jeremiah of Celtic Briton, may have been piling on the agony in his account of cities sacked and desolate, of " the miserable remnant " of the people, hunted and starving, giving themselves up into slavery or fleeing overseas, but he was evidently writing of events that had burned themselves deep into the British soul, and it is known that there was a great emigration of Britons into that North Western province of France that took the name of Brittany. The Angles, fresh from the Baltic shore, would be the least likely of all Teutonic peoples to respect the civilization bequeathed by Rome, and the invaders had then, and for long afterwards, a thorough distaste for city life. A prolonged and desperate struggle with a folk they probably despised as effeminate, and whose way of life was repellent to them, was not likely to have been conducted with kid gloves.

The religion of the natives can at best only have survived in a few holes and corners of the conquered districts, the language was superseded, save for a few words likely to have been useful to slaves, the arts of Roman Britain perished utterly, even in the matter of personal adornment where female influence might have been expected to have preserved a certain continuity. To judge from the scales of Weregilds or Blood Money in the code of the Wessex King, Ini, the Briton was as much the inferior of the Englishman as the Englishman, in his turn, was to be of the Norman. He could, in fact, be killed at about half-price. Even if there were nothing else to go by, the difference in temperament and human atmosphere between the conquered territory and its Celtic fringe, would be enough to show that the Anglo-Saxons did succeed in setting the stamp of their personality and tradition upon the subsequent course of our history. Only prejudice can be blind to the distinctively Anglo-Saxon character of pre-conquest England, or imagine a Welsh Alfred and an English Taliesin.

The first effect of the invasion was to sever communication between England and the Continent. The horror of a great darkness descended upon the land, so completely cut off was it from what survived of European civilization that it was believed to be, literally, an island of the dead. Every night—so the story ran—a fleet put off from the coast of Gaul, weighed down with an invisible complement of passengers, whose names were called out loud, the obituary list of the preceding day. And when they had touched the shores of Britain, the ships rose out of the water, as the weird emigrants disembarked into the Unknown.

CHAPTER II

ANGLO-SAXON CIVILIZATION

1

The Anglo-Saxons

The old inhabitants of England, waging a bitter but losing struggle against successive bands of invaders, naturally regarded their dispossessors with no more sympathy than a fugitive from Louvain might have been expected to entertain for a Pomeranian grenadier. Even their Church made no effort to spread the gospel of Christ among the invaders, but held sullenly and absolutely aloof.

We, however, who have less excuse for prejudice, need not hesitate to admit that the term barbarian is misleading as applied to those Nordic tribes who, after centuries of war, burst the frontiers of the Roman Empire. Children they may have been, compared with the more fortunate among the subjects of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, but they had their own ideals of honour, of courtesy and of government, which made no less an exponent of Roman culture than the historian Tacitus hold them up as an example for his degenerate fellow-citizens. It is owing to this very fact that certain modern critics, taking the hint from Rousseau, have been inclined to throw doubt upon the candour of that little masterpiece of his, the *Germania*. That Tacitus was biassed in favour of his Germans no less than Macaulay and Froude in favour of their Whigs and Elizabethans is probable enough, but that he was a competent and scholarly investigator, telling the truth to the best of his ability, should be sufficiently evident to anybody who reads him. He is perfectly frank in painting the dark as well as the bright side of his picture; laziness, gambling and drunkenness are qualities he attributes to the tribes. Besides, if he had merely wanted to write a political squib, he would hardly have wasted so large a portion of his treatise in so painstaking a description of the different Nordic peoples.

Tacitus, who had ample sources of information from soldiers and civilians along the frontier, gives a not unpleasing impression of the future Empire-breakers. He shows us a folk courageous, with a high sense of honour, a rough idea of liberty and a still rougher kindness to slaves, men mindful of respect to their women-folk, who, in turn, guarded jealously their own and their husbands' honour. But this treatise of Tacitus was as far separated in time from the age of the Saxon invasions as is our own age from that of Queen Bess, nor have we certain knowledge that any of the tribes of which he treats were the ancestors of our invaders.

His witness is, however, roughly substantiated by the state of society revealed in the first English writings of which we have any record, as well as from such indirect evidence as we may glean from the remains of old English art. The most important historical document of the Heptarchy is the *Beowulf*, an English epic, dealing with Danish and Scandinavian events, its heathen substratum being faintly and superficially touched by monkish Christianity. That an old English epic should be concerned in no way with England is highly characteristic, for early Anglo-Saxon civilization takes thought not of the country nor any abstract idea of the State, but of the man himself and his kindred, real or fictitious. Cerdic or Ini is not the King of Wessex, but the "cuning" or "tribe man" of the West Saxons. This is where the so-called barbarian differed most essentially from the Roman, nor is the difference a merely transient one between civilized men and savages. It subsists to-day, it is what most distinguishes the modern Anglo-Saxon from the modern Latin, it is at the roót of the opposition between the world's two main legal systems. England starts from the man, Rome starts from the State; the Frenchman may deify *La Rèpublique*, but the Englishman is going to have his rights, not the rights of man, but those of Smith, Brown and Robinson. His ideal of good government is sufficiently personal to-day, it was almost wholly personal in the time of Beowulf.

Many nations have their Beowulf, their helper of men who goes about quelling the monstrous enemies of mankind, and is invested with a power so mysterious and formidable as to impress simple men with the notion of something demonic. Greece had her Hercules, though, to the Greek, Hercules never seemed to have the epic attractiveness of an Achilles or an Odysseus—even in his statues he is something a little heavy, half hero, half brute. The Indian Rama stands at the other end of the scale, he is so highly-spiritualized, so much the incarnation of the divine Vishnu, that we find it hard to think

of him as a man at all. But Beowulf is at once magnificently a hero, and wholly human. True to the personal standards of his folk, he is of noble blood, and a redoubtable warrior. He has no other object in life than to perform noble deeds nobly. These ancestors of ours had hardly yet begun to conceive of thought, except as an immediate stimulus to action. Of such heroes as the subtle Odysseus and the spiritual chiefs of Indian legend they had neither the conception nor the desire. As was Julian Grenfell, so was Beowulf, the fighting man who took life from the sun and warmth from the earth, and whose supreme happiness was in the burning moment when

> "Only joy of battle grips
> Him by the throat and makes him blind."

As in every society where personality, and therefore status plays a large part, there is a high standard of courtesy. Beowulf is an atheling, a gentleman, and wherever he goes expects and receives the same respectful urbanity from his equals as, in Velasquez's masterpiece of the taking of Breda, we see the Marquis of Spinola display towards the defeated Prince Maurice. King Hrothgar's reception of him is a model of kingly delicacy; Beowulf, who is no amateur in the trade of killing monsters, makes no stipulation about reward; the business side of the transaction is perfectly understood between the two, but gentlemen avoid overt discussion of such matters. Waltheow the Queen, skilful in courtesies, is as tactful and gracious a hostess as adorns any modern country house.

As might be expected from this, the most important quality of all in the eyes of our ancestors was that of personal loyalty. Such a chieftain as Beowulf would go about accompanied by a band of chosen companions, whose highest ideal was to live and die for their lord. "Such should a man be," says the poet about the faithful Wiglaf, "a thegn at need." But for the man who fails his lord in battle there is not only scorn and loathing; he even loses his rights as a free man. Not only he, but his very kindred become tainted by his unfaith, he wanders forth deprived of land-right, an outlaw. To the old English mind the tenure of property was thus largely dependent on the worthiness of the person. Beowulf merely confirms what Tacitus has said, that it is lifelong shame and degradation for the companions to fall short of the valour of their chief.

The relations between the chief and his followers are of the tenderest. Beowulf takes his companions into his confidence, tells them, before encountering his last and fatal dragon, how much

he should have liked to encounter him unarmed, as he has fought Grendel, and why he does not do so. There survives a short poem of almost intolerable pathos, the lament of a poor old seafaring wanderer, recalling the days when he sat with his lost friends in the mead-hall, and thinking of the feast his dear, dead lord, his gold-giver, once made for him. Even so the companions of Beowulf mourn their lord's fall, and say that he was the mildest and kindest of men, most gracious to his folk, and most wishful for praise.

An intensely earnest people were these Anglo-Saxons, of an earnestness tinged with a profound melancholy. It is said that on the landing of our Expeditionary Force, what struck the French most about our troops was the melancholy of their songs. It is what might equally have struck a Romanized Briton, had he been in a position for dispassionate judgment on his invaders. What served them principally for religion was a sense of overshadowing fate, the Wyrd, blind and pitiless, that lays low strength and youth together, and ever leads sorrow upon the heels of joy. There is a sad, stoical poem by an old minstrel called Deor, who has been supplanted by a rival, and sits, broken-hearted, with his head bowed over the strings, revolving in his mind the stories of old heroes and heroines, whom fate has oppressed with sorrow and shameful wrongs :

" Yet these strove on and overcame, nor shall my strength be less." [1]

It was perhaps this seriousness of temperament that made the Anglo-Saxons so intensely practical. Their literature is one of the most matter-of-fact ever known ; its charm is its downright sincerity, not any flights of fancy or graceful dreams such as we meet with in Celtic literature. Beowulf himself has the commercial instinct ; he is no amateur warrior, and even when he is dying he asks to be carried to where he can see the dragon's glittering hoard, which he has conquered for his own people. A delight in honest and beautiful craftsmanship is testified by relics that have survived to our days. Weland, the first and greatest of smiths, is among the heroes. A helmet, adorned with gold and circled round with curious bands " just as the weapon smith had wrought it ", a sword with the semblance of a boar on the hilt and, like Excalibur and Durendal, with its own name, are among the equipment of Beowulf. Our ancestors were no strangers to the dignity of sound work well done.

They have bequeathed to their posterity a priceless heritage in their love of the sea and of seafaring. Herein they differed from

[1] Charlton M. Lewis's translation.

the Greeks, to whom, as in the Odyssey, the sea was a painful necessity, and from the Romans who, against their natural bent, improvised a fleet for beating the Carthaginians. Over the Anglo Saxons the sea exercised a positive fascination. We have the song of an old sailor, describing in moving terms the hardships and loneliness of a voyage, and yet confessing, half regretfully, that he is unable to resist the spell. The very cuckoo's song calls him forth. This is a love that has suffered many vicissitudes of faintness, but which burned as pure and intense at Scapa Flow in the twentieth century as off the Isle of Thanet in the fifth. Travel and the lure of foreign countries were as attractive to the Anglo-Saxon as to the Dane, his first conquëror. There is a strange old ballad, supposed to be recited by one Widsith, a wandering gleeman, who might be supposed to be the direct ancestor of that music-hall hero who proclaims :—

"I've travelled everywhere, nowhere and anywhere."

He has, by his own account, been with the Greeks, the Finns, the Israelites, the Hebrews, the Scots, the Rugs, the Gloms, the Rumwealhs, and scores of others, including Alexander and Caesar, and he is careful to record how the very best people have always been the most liberal in rewarding minstrels, and how many a stately man, who well knew what was right, declared that he had never heard a happier song than that of Widsith. He concludes by admonishing those who wish for a settled glory underneath the stars to get on the right side of the minstrels.

Widsith affords us another instance of the extremely businesslike instincts of the primitive Englishman. A shrewd observer might have predicted that this would be no folk to despise trade, as the Greeks did. The "nation of shopkeepers" was already in embryo ; melancholy, practical men, kindly and courteous by nature, independent, and yet with a deep-rooted respect for persons and loyalty to the right kind of master. Such an ideal observer might have forboded that the besetting weakness of this people would proceed from the same source as its strength, from that essential matter-of-factness the obverse side of which is a sluggishness rather than a lack of imagination. If we hold that a Vere de Vere landed at Pevensey with the Conqueror, we must not forget that a still more distinguished passenger stepped from the beaked galley of Hengist. His name was John Bull.

Political Origins

We know little about the fortunes of the invaders for the first century and a half after the seizure of Thanet. The limitations of sea transport must have made their bands small in comparison with the immense hordes of Huns and Goths on the Continent. However they may have been co-ordinated for the common purpose of invasion, such bands must each have gathered, in the first place, under the auspices of some distinguished or high-born adventurer, of whom Beowulf is the idealized type. Such a man would constitute himself the promoter of a rather speculative undertaking. No doubt the matter would, in the most literal sense, be "mooted", in one of the moots or tribal assemblies of which Tacitus has given us an account. Our would-be hero would unfold his prospectus with such eloquence as he could command; he would speak of new homes, rich with corn and pasture, to be had for the taking, of effeminate natives, of loot galore, and perhaps throw in a little sentiment about the tribal honour and the gods. If the scheme or the proposer did not happen to please, murmurs of dissent would arise on all sides, but if the folk approved, they would clap their spears on their shields and a sufficiency of volunteers would be forthcoming.

Unlike the modern recruit, these warriors, or the greater part of them, would not have joined up as individuals. This was no mere plundering expedition, like the old time piracy, but a project of settlement. Not only the warriors, but women, grey-beards, children and portable wealth had somehow to be got on shipboard and transferred to the promised land. And thus the recruiting unit would not have been the man, but rather the family or the enlarged family that went by the name of the "maegth" or kin, folk who naturally stood together and dwelt together both in their old and new lands, Billings or Birmings or one of those numberless other "ings" whose names are borne to this day by the village homes or "hams" in which they established themselves. No doubt, the first successes, the advantages of the newly-won homes, would lose nothing in the telling in Schleswig or Jutland, and just as happens with a successful company, those who had hesitated before would now be tumbling over each other for a share in the business, so that, as Bede tells us, the country of the Angles was at last quite depopulated. Very

probably other adventurers were drawn in from the neighbouring lands, as happened when William the Conqueror got together his host for the invasion of England.

A tremendous task of organization must have been imposed both on the supreme and the subordinate leaders of the invasion. It was not only a question of dealing with a well-armed, numerous and formidable enemy, who had, up till recently, held his own against all comers, but of keeping body and soul together in a strange land. What one is apt to forget, even in talking of modern wars, is that everyone, combatant or non-combatant, carries about a belly that daily demands to be refilled. Throughout the Middle Ages the business of getting through a winter on salted meat and stored grain was arduous enough even in time of peace, and therefore, even if the ships came over in the spring, it was necessary not only to beat the enemy, but to improvise some scheme of settlement and social economy before the fall of the leaf. Looked at from this standpoint it seems doubly incredible that such eminently business-like prospectors should wantonly have " off-slain ", as they would have called it, the men who could have reaped the harvests and looked after such beasts as had not been driven away.

Now we reach one of the most vigorously disputed territories in the whole realm of history. What were the relations of the invaders to the conquered people or to their own lords ? Did they borrow or introduce their agricultural system ? Are we to think of them as free or semi-feudalized communities ? How did the manor originate, and representative government ? It is exceedingly improbable that such questions will ever be finally decided, partly owing to the insufficiency of evidence, partly because the questions themselves are incapable of any simple answer. It is natural to look for a system even where there was in all probability no system at all, but innumerable expedients varying from time to time and place to place and only gradually evolving something coherent. We know that the different family groups were settled in more or less self-contained agricultural units, each with its group of dwellings, its fields of arable land portioned in strips, its " waste " for pasturage, probably its smithy and its mills. These units would have been grouped in " hundreds ",[1] either of " hides " of land, or more probably, of families, at first, one conjectures, for mutual support against the

[1] Though direct evidence for the existence of English hundreds does not occur till, roughly, 500 years after the first landing. There are, however, Roman and Teutonic analogies.

natives, later for administrative and judicial purposes. And above all these came the independent chieftainships, or kingships, many more at first than the traditional seven, over which the promoters-in-chief of the invasion and their successors maintained such sovereignty as they could by the help of their personal or family prestige, the need for military combination, and the loyalty of the personal followers that constituted their bodyguard or household.

This, or any other simple generalization, can, however, only convey an imperfect impression of the rough and ready arrangements that were probably improvised in practice. We suspect that a good deal of the difficulty in interpreting Anglo-Saxon conditions arises from the fact that scholars, with their logical and systematic minds, are incapable of getting to the level of so illogical a folk as the Anglo-Saxons. The countrymen of Bede and Alfred were no doubt capable of rising to heights of genius unsurpassed by any contemporary people, but the slowness of their mental processes was constantly apt to degenerate into the slovenliness that made the alert and incisive Norman despise them as a race of boors, and which we can easily see by contrasting the clean-cut efficiency of Norman architecture with a certain uncouthness that mars even the best Saxon construction.

The idea that the Anglo-Saxons brought with them, from their Teutonic homeland, a full-blown system of democratic government by assemblies of free men, is one that originated partly in the admiration for everything German that obtained under Victorian auspices, and partly in the habit of thinking in terms of laws and systems rather than of the spirit by which they are inspired. To talk of the constitutional system of Heptarchic Kent or Northumbria would be to use language that would have been unintelligible to a subject of Ethelbert or Ethelfrith. But certain mental habits were already implanted that would form, as it were, the soil out of which a constitution could grow.

From the first, the Anglo-Saxon had no idea of passive submission to authority. Loyalty he could understand and practice, but it must be freely given and for adequate reasons. There was little mystical in his temperament, and religion sat upon him but lightly. In consequence his kings, even when they could claim descent from Woden, were hedged about with none of that mysterious divinity which is the king's chief asset in most primitive societies. In the first codes of law, or statements of custom, a king's life is priced in the tariff at the head of the list; killing him is in no sense treason,

but merely the most expensive of all kinds of manslaughter. A king's life, as we may gather from the records of the time, was held on a precarious tenure. Like the gods themselves, he was expected to make good, to justify his existence or to end it.

To seek for constitutional or democratic institutions in the records of Heptarchic England is to anticipate centuries of mental development. What we do find is something more intangible, but in its essence simple. The Anglo-Saxons were a people with a natural instinct for combination but a chronic impatience of dictation. They were not, like oriental peoples and the Romans of the later Empire, content to resign all their wills to that of the person, or persons, to whom they entrusted the business of government. The trend of our history, both in Anglo-Saxon times and for centuries after, has been in flat contradiction of the Roman and Renaissance doctrine of absolute sovereignty. The difficulty of the ruler was not to think out the best line of policy in the abstract, but to hit upon one likely to chime in sufficiently with the inclinations of his subjects, or the most powerful of them, to be put into practice. The king or chief, Tacitus tells us of his Teutons, speaks at the assemblies "rather with influence to persuade than power to command".

This was not a constitutional problem in the modern sense. What was practicable or even safe to decide would depend largely on the circumstances of the moment, and still more on the personality of the ruler. But from the very nature of the case, it would be necessary, before deciding upon anything important, to get together the people who mattered and in some way to ascertain what they wanted. Even as early as the time of Tacitus, the Nordic tribes were in the habit of assembling themselves together, though no doubt the historian, with the natural bias of a Roman, exaggerates the formality of the proceedings, when he talks of a committee of chiefs who deal with minor business and refer important matters to the whole body. One of the hundreds of Middlesex is called after the Spelthorne or Speech Thorn, no doubt the sacred tree from whose shade a Hengist or an Aella would hold forth to his thegns on the eve of an expedition.

In these "things" or "moots" would be determined the first primitive elements of law. This law was the practical expression of the commonsense of the community. We have no evidence of its being hedged about with any religious sanctions before the coming of Christianity, except that lucky days and sacred places

(like the Spell Thorn) would be chosen for the assemblies, and that, according to Tacitus, order was kept by the priests. This law had none of the scope or science of Roman law, but was, in fact, a rough-and-ready, but thoroughly businesslike way, of stopping blood-feuds between the different families or " maegths ". We know how in the Highlands of Scotland, up to the eighteenth century, and among the frontier tribes of India to-day, murderous vendettas between family and family, clan and clan, would be waged for generations, and that once a crime had been committed, a regular interchange of vengeance would go on which nothing, short of the day of judgment or foreign conquest, could bring to a stop. To the practical minds of our ancestors, this state of things constituted an intolerable nuisance, and some means had to be found of stopping vendettas. On occasion the assembly, to which the matter was referred, might decree some settlement of its own devising, as when Gunnar, in the Icelandic saga of Burnt Njal, is ordered to clear out of the country for three years, or take the consequences of a not inexcusable homicide.

But the expedient that most appealed to the Anglo-Saxons was that of commuting the blood-feud for cash down. As it was impossible to assess every man on his personal merits, there must be some sort of a customary tariff—so much for the king, so much for a " twelfhynde " man, the nearest equivalent to our " gentleman ", so much for a twyhynde, or ordinary free man, and so much, payable to the master, for a slave. The first codes of law are, in fact, statements of a tariff, sanctioned by custom, which the king records, but neither initiates nor materially alters.

It is probable that no machinery at first existed for carrying out the decisions of an assembly. Sometimes the king, or ealdorman, with his followers, might ride to the offending " burh " or farmstead, and execute rough justice there and then, sometimes a contumacious offender would be left to the vengeance of the injured family. This was what happened to Gunnar. He had fair warning of what would come upon him if he stayed at home instead of fulfilling his three years' exile, but the attraction of home was too great—he stayed. For a time nothing happened, but one night his house was surrounded and himself slain. There was no more to be said; he had, as we should say, asked for it.

This system of commuting blood-feuds was not, of course, peculiar to the English nor even to the Nordic peoples. The Celts of the West also practised it, and in fact there are close analogies between

the Welsh and English tariffs. But the affections of Englishmen were less rigidly confined within the circle of the family or clan. There was therefore greater scope for development in England, for the creation of such artificial groups as the tithing, or association of ten men, and the gild, and for the gradual supersession of family vengeance by justice administered in royal or local courts, and depending for its execution upon the whole body of free and law-abiding men.

3

The Second Coming of Rome

The Anglo-Saxons and kindred tribes are distinguished from other peoples in a similar stage of development by their comparative lack of superstition. Here the contrast is not only with the Celtic tribes, but with Rome herself. No student of their history can fail to remark how the Roman people, though conspicuously lacking in the spiritual feeling that is the essence of true religion, were swayed in every stage of their career, from the grotto of Egeria to the pontificate of Augustus, by a belief in magic which we may attribute to the Etruscan strain in their ancestry. The development of Roman institutions, with the glorious exception of their cosmopolitan jurisprudence, is constantly determined by some form of divine or magical right, the Sybilline Books, the pronouncements of the Augurs, the "imperium" or taboo under which the army was placed. It is small wonder that upon this basis came to be founded the thorough-going autocracy of the divine Constantine and Justinian.

The Nordic tribes certainly had their gods and magic, but in comparison even with Rome they strike us as a utilitarian folk, devising practical expedients for practical ends. The cult of Nerthus, the Earth goddess, and that of Woden, seem to have sat but lightly upon them, and the followers of a chief had few scruples about changing their religion when the chief happened to be converted. But the fact that the chiefs were so much less gods than men deprived our ancestors of what has usually been the main, cohesive force of primitive peoples, and made a proportionately heavy demand upon the personality of the ruler and the good sense of the ruled. But to weld into a nation so independent and undisciplined a folk as the English, something more than mere native commonsense was required.

Up to nearly the end of the sixth century, Britain, a theatre of confused war, was left almost entirely to her own resources.

Europe herself was in little better condition; the Western Empire had gone down beneath a succession of attacks from without and mutinies from within—the two are almost indistinguishable. A great military effort from Constantinople succeeded in winning back for the Empire Italy, Northern Africa, and a foothold on the Spanish seaboard, but the success was transitory. Rome herself was a wilderness of ruins, among which a handful of wretched inhabitants, yellow with malaria, eked out some sort of an existence. The great aqueducts had been cut by the Goths and the water flowed out into the Campagna, which became a mosquito-breeding swamp. It was amidst this desolation, and in the teeth of these desperate conditions, that a successor of Augustus in the pontificate was preparing for the re-conquest of the Western Empire, and of lands where the legions had never penetrated, by means of which Augustus had never dreamed. Never has such an instance been known of the supremacy of an idea over brute force. Even in the hour of conquest the invaders were vanquished, vanquished to their own uplifting and salvation.

When we think of the Church we must not confuse it with Christianity, in the sense of the original teaching of its Founder. This may or may not have been the inspiration of the Church's doctrine, but the Church itself is not a spirit, but an organized society, sharply defined as to its personnel, its dogma and its discipline. When we talk of Christianity coming to the English we are describing a very complex and hardly definable process, which some people might maintain has never even yet been brought to completion. But we are on sure ground when we say that in the year 597 the Church of Rome, in the person of her missionary Augustine, came to England and received official recognition from Ethelbert, King of Kent and nominal Wielder of Britain.

The Pope who inspired this mission, the first Gregory, was one of the most remarkable who have ever occupied the chair of Peter. A Roman gentleman of wealth and culture, he became a monk and turned his palace on the Coelian Hill into a monastery. He was not only so accomplished a theologian as to be recognized as one of the four Doctors of the Latin Church, but a statesman of vision and iron courage. Though most of Italy was in the hands of the ferocious Lombards, he saw the opportunity for the Pope, as head of the Church, to assume the place left vacant by the Western Caesars, and to found a spiritual empire. It was in pursuance of this grand project that he despatched Augustine, a monk like himself, to follow the old path

of the legions, and with no other weapon than the sword of the spirit, win back for Rome the lost province of Britain.

This Augustine appears to have been cast in an altogether smaller mould than his master. The very legends that have gathered round him are of a sternness that contrast vividly with what we hear of the British Patrick or the Irish Columba. Bede has preserved for us a series of questions that Augustine put to Gregory before setting out, with the replies. Herein the characters of the two stand out clearly, the Pope large-minded and conscious of essentials, the missionary troubled with niggling conundrums more fitted for an attorney than a saint.

"Ought a woman with child to be baptized, or how long after she has brought forth may she come into Church?" "Why should not a woman with child be baptized?" is the reply, with just a suspicion of gentle rebuke, "since the fruitfulness of the flesh is no offence in the eyes of God."

Christianity at least came back to Kent with Augustine, in the sense that the cult of Christ Crucified, as interpreted by the Roman and Trinitarian Church, was now officially substituted for that of the old pagan gods. But it would be quite as much to the point to say that with Augustine Rome came back to England, the new spiritual in place of the old temporal Empire, but more Rome than ever in the spirit of her centralized discipline, the absolute subordination of all the members to the Apostolic Head. This was, and is, the ideal which the great Gregory and his successors have constantly held before them, even though they have not always been able to realize it in full.

But the Empire of the spiritual Caesar was a more subtle creation than the old imperialism of brute force. Gregory had no legions, not a solitary cohort to back him in a policy of expansion that was to bring the lost provinces, and provinces against which the legions had broken themselves in vain, to the Roman allegiance. His assault had to be directed against the minds of those he wished to conquer, and it was a warfare in which a martyr's passivity might avail more than the will of a Marius or a Caesar. The Church had to make a business proposition of the benediction pronounced on the meek. Her armies and the garrisons, which she dotted all over her conquered territory, were composed of men trained in the school of meekness and obedience.

Gregory was remarkable not only for his vision of the spiritual Empire, but also for the means he employed to realize it. He was

the first Pope who was also a monk, and it was only natural that he should have realized what a fund of strength the Church possessed in communities of men withdrawn from the world in quest of salvation. The first monks had been little fitted to be a source of strength to the Church, except by the prestige of their example and austerities. It was to save their own souls that they forsook the world and the society of their fellows. They were monks in the true sense of the word, " monachi " or solitaries. Gradually, however, the habit of living together and according to rule began to be cultivated, and in the West, at any rate, the tendency was for the " monachi " to become " coenbites " or dwellers in communities. Early in the sixth century Saint Benedict, improving on the precedent of those early monastic legislators, Pachomius, Basil and Cassian, devised a rule which was to become practically universal throughout the monasteries of Western Europe. The many earnest souls, who, despairing of a world the old civilization seemed crumbling into ruins, set their faces towards the Celestial City, were bidden to work out their salvation, not alone with God and by almost superhuman austerities, but in service to a community and according to a strict, but not unreasonably severe discipline.

We have said that we ought to think of the Church not so much as the embodiment of Christ's teaching, as of a clearly defined and immensely powerful society. We may now go a step further, and describe it as a mind-training society, on a vast scale. And herein lies the contrast between the Catholic ideal of the Dark and Middle Ages, and the humanism which after the Renaissance gradually tended to supersede it. For the Church was at least consistently true to her Lord's teaching in holding that the life is more than meat, in other words that the end of all human endeavour ought to be the perfecting of man himself and not the increase of his possessions or the extension of his control over nature.

We are accustomed to think of the Church as essentially obscurantist, a foe to science and progress, whereas the founders of her great monastic orders, such popes as the first and seventh Gregories, her fathers and doctors and mystics, were aiming at a different kind of science and progress from that of the last feverish century and a half since the Industrial Revolution. The achievement of turning out clothes by machinery a hundred times faster than they could be by hand would have seemed less important to Saint Benedict than that of teaching men to adorn their souls and cut down their sartorial requirements to a minimum. As for

the problems discussed at the annual meetings of the British Association, they would have seemed to one of these old Churchmen of negligible importance compared with that of turning the uncivilized and fallen soul into the path of salvation and the peace that passeth human understanding. And our medieval Churchman, could he come back to life, might argue not unplausibly, that in such things as, in the eyes of himself and his contemporaries, alone counted, the Church could show a record of progressive improvement that puts our own to shame.

"And what," he might conclude, "have you to compare with our monastic rules or with the blend of discipline and persuasion which embraced every parish and weaned the Goth and the Viking to civilization? Somebody's mind-training system, at ten guineas for the same course that enabled a salesman in Huddersfield to quadruple his income in six months? Or perhaps the analysis of infantile lusts?"

4

The Conversion of the English

The Bretwalda Ethelbert, to whom Augustine first purposed to deliver his message, and who was already married to a Christian of the Frankish Royal House, was one of those grave and courteous pagan gentlemen whom we might expect to find in the saga of Beowulf. He gave audience to the strangers, after taking due precautions against magic, but he was not going to be rushed into forsaking the gods of his fathers. Like a prudent sovereign, he took his time to consider the matter in all its bearings, meanwhile allowing the missionaries to reside in his capital, Canterbury, with liberty to preach. And when at last he was converted, he saw to it that the choice of his subjects should be as free as his own.

The still more famous incident, related by Bede, of the conversion of the Northumbrian King, Edwin, thirty years later, makes us realize, as nothing else could, what manner of men our ancestors were. Before Edwin came to the throne, when he was an exile and in danger of his life, an unknown messenger had appeared in a vision to answer his forebodings with a promise of deliverance and a throne, but making him engage that when these things came to pass, he would submit thereafter to be counselled by his helper. When King Edwin had happily come to his own, the messenger of the vision revealed himself as the Roman missionary Bishop,

Paulinus, who claimed the fulfilment of Edwin's side of the bargain by his acceptance of the faith. But Edwin, though answering that he himself was both willing and bound to do so, had yet to consult his friends and counsellors before he could answer for anyone's conversion but his own.

The first speaker at this remarkable debate was the pagan chief priest, one Coifi. This worthy Angle, with the practical business instinct of his race, professed himself thoroughly sick of the old gods who, if they had been good for anything, would have brought rather better luck to their faithful servant. He was followed by one of the leading thegns, who made the famous comparison of the life of man to the flight of a sparrow through the King's lighted hall as he sat at supper in the winter time—a moment of warmth and light between the darkness that went before and the darkness that came after, of both of which we were utterly ignorant. If therefore this new faith could afford any greater certainty, it was worth following. And to this effect spoke others, until Coifi, having requested Paulinus to give some further elucidation of his doctrine, at last relieved the tension by mounting a horse, hurling a spear into his own temple and having it burnt to the ground for a sham.

There is a Roman word *gravitas* which has no exact English equivalent, but which denotes a weightiness of soul, a sustained moral earnestness that is the corner-stone of national greatness. It is her possession of this quality that explains why England has gone further, in the long run, than other nations of greater superficial brilliance. Edwin or Ethelbert will not rush into the arms of his Saviour, but will sit with knitted brows among his counsellors, gravely deliberating the pros and cons of conversion. Even in our own day there is talk about the Englishman being averse from ideas, when the fact is that he prefers to test a new idea very thoroughly before deciding exactly how much of it he means to accept.

Rome and the discipline of Rome were not destined to make such an easy conquest of England as might have seemed probable from the success of her first missionaries. A pagan reaction was bound to set in, once the first glamour of the new faith had dimmed and the first royal converts were dead. Paganism was firmly entrenched in the centre of England, now consolidating into the Kingdom of Mercia Christianity was in a fair way to have been driven out of the island, had not help come from another quarter than Rome.

When Augustine had landed, he had found an active and enthusiastic Church already in being in the still unconquered West. Celtic Christianity was to all intents and purposes an independent faith, developing on its own lines. In matters of doctrine there was no marked difference from Rome, but in matters of discipline the Britons had their own time of celebrating Easter, their own way of baptism, and their own fashion of tonsure, points insignificant enough from the standpoint of primitive Christianity, but of vital importance from that of Rome, which could no more tolerate such differences than a general could allow two different codes of discipline to obtain in his command.

So far as the Welsh Church was concerned, the dispute soon came to a head. Augustine naturally made a point of meeting its representatives with a view to co-operation in evangelizing the heathen, a task which by no means appealed to the Britons, who had not got to the stage of regarding their dispossessors as men and brothers, and would probably have preferred to see them damned. They were also suspicious of this proud, spiritual empire that threatened to bring them under its yoke, and they thought out a simple method of gauging Augustine's saintliness. Would he have the courtesy to rise and receive them ? When they arrived purposely late at their second conference with him, Augustine was sitting under an oak, and he remained seated. From that moment the British churchmen decided to turn him down, and as he proved as stiff in his demands as in his posture, he met with nothing but flat negatives, notwithstanding his victory in a miracle competition, until the last shreds of his saintly temper were gone, and he proceeded to threatening that if they would not join with him, they would be warred upon to the death by the English.

The Christianity planted by Roman missionaries suffered a terrible setback when, in 633, the Bretwalda Edwin of Northumbria, a tract which comprised the East coast lowlands from the North to the Humber, was overwhelmed by the alliance of heathen Mercia and Christian North Wales. For a time it seemed as if the merciless Caedwalla might have some chance of fulfilling his ambition of cutting off the whole English race within the borders of Britain, for the most powerful of the English kingdoms had been shattered and the whole of the North was once again in British hands. The work of Paulinus was undone, and he himself, esteeming discretion the better part of martyrdom, made a somewhat ignominious escape. But within two years, by one of those swift reversals of fortune

so characteristic of the warfare of that time, Caedwalla himself was slain and Northumbria in the hands of an Anglian prince, a converted pagan, known to subsequent generations as Saint Oswald.

The second conversion of Northumbria, which had backslid to paganism as quickly as it had forsaken it under Edwin, was undertaken by Irish monks who, from their spiritual centre of Iona which they always affectionately referred to as HY, or *the* island *par excellence*, planted another monastery on what was thereafter known as Holy Island, just off the royal fortress of Bamborough. The interest of the next thirty years was less in the struggle between Christianity and an already moribund paganism—for even that last great champion of Woden, the Mercian Penda, could not keep his own son out of the fold—than between the two competing forms of Christianity emanating from Ireland and Rome. But here too the issue could not really be in doubt. For sheer saintly fervour, for Christian gentleness and love, there is no doubt that the Celt bore away the palm. The champion of Rome militant, the proud, litigious and intriguing Wilfred, presents a less lovable figure than that of the mystic and saintly Aidan or any other of the saints of whom Celtic Christianity was at this time so prolific. But individual merit was powerless, in the long run, against the prestige and organization of the Holy See, and Rome was finally victorious when, in 664, a synod was held at Whitby to settle those points of ecclesiastical discipline about which Augustine had quarrelled with the British more than fifty years previously. The Northumbrian King Oswy, like the hard-headed Northcountryman he was, decided that it would be best to come down on Peter's side of the fence in order to avoid trouble later on at the gates of Heaven. Accordingly Wilfrid was appointed to the see of York, and the Irish monks quitted Northumbria. It must be remembered that at this time Northumbria was the most enlightened and powerful of all the English kingdoms.

At the end of the seventh century, England, as distinct from Celtic Britain, was not only Christian but Roman Catholic—if we may use a term that only came into use long afterwards. If Wilfrid was the fighting champion of Rome, her statesman and consolidator was the aged Theodore, who, like an even greater organizer of Christianity, came from Tarsus in Asia Minor. This Theodore, who was appointed to the Archbishopric of Canterbury in 668, achieved what was almost as important from the political as from the spiritual standpoint when he succeeded in uniting the

whole English Church under his leadership, and even arranging for periodical meetings of her leading men at a place which has been, not quite indisputably, identified with Cliffe-at-Hoo in Kent. Thus, if England was divided into several independent states, she was at least united as one Church, and where the Church led, it might safely be predicted that the State would follow.

The Church in Being

The fact of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms being brought into the fold of the Church was of profound importance in the development of our civilization. A new significance was imparted to life, and this not only in the courts and halls of the great, but in the humblest villages. As the parochial organization gradually developed, in the centre of each "ham" or "tun" arose a building with which the whole life and even death of the inhabitants was intimately bound up. This building, like the little world that, in medieval philosophy, mirrors the universe, was called by the same name as the whole body of the faithful, the great society of God's kingdom that included every man, woman and child if not as full, at least as associate members. The building was called the Church, a word that we must strip of many modern associations if we would realize the full depth of its significance for our ancestors.

Perhaps it was not everywhere new, either in structure or idea. Our all too scanty evidence, one way or the other, does not warrant our leaping to the conclusion that the Christianity of the Roman occupation was everywhere stamped out even in the occupied territories. The Walcots and Waltons, assuming them to have been "Welsh" and not "wall towns", not unlikely clung with pride and affection to the religion that was their last link with the old civilization, and the Anglo-Saxons were not of the stuff of which persecutors are made. It is at least arguable that the various place-names compounded of the word "eccles", the Roman "ecclesia", testify not only to the existence of pre-British churches, but to the fact that they continued to be recognized as such. And if this is, after all, guesswork, there is more solid evidence for believing that at least the structure of old churches was sometimes capable of being repaired and restored to its original function.

The process of transformation from paganism to full-fledged

Christianity must in any case have been slow, and was probably far too various to admit of any plain generalization, even if we knew the facts. With Professor Baldwin Brown, who is incomparably the greatest authority on these times, we may conjecture that long before a church was built or a priest appointed, Christianity would have come in the guise of an itinerant missionary, a benign yet awe-inspiring personage, who would perhaps mark the place for Christ and Rome by setting up a cross, the old symbol of the sun-god. And perhaps the building of God's house would often have been preceded, for an indefinite period, by the marking out of God's acre. For the Church taught men to see this present life against the background of eternity, and it was a very human though perhaps a not altogether rational desire to know that one's mortal part, at least, would find a holy resting place.

In the first half of the eighth century we may safely assume that in all but a few very backward spots a church of some sort, with a churchman to minister therein, was part of the regular equipment of every village. Rude and wooden structures many, and indeed most of them must have been, of which all traces have long since vanished, but the change which each one of them signified for the life of the Billings or Birmings, or whatever the real or fictitious family group of villagers might be called, was nothing short of revolutionary. Here at last we may venture on generalization, for we are dealing with an organization whose very essence it was to impose one centralized faith and discipline on the whole world, or failing that, on as much of it as the statesmanship and devotion of the Roman Church could master.

We may nevertheless be ignorant of what compromises had to be made between the old order and the new, and in what various ways the staff of priests, or, as they were significantly called, mass-thegns, were at first recruited. One ingenious speculator[1] has actually propounded the theory that the lord of the village and the priest were originally the same person, and the original church-warden the lord's reeve or bailiff. This is one of those generalizations, so frequently made about Anglo-Saxon England, which would be valuable if reduced to the suggestion of an occasional possibility. We have no reason for supposing that every village, or even for asserting positively that most of them, owned a lord at all at this early period, and certainly as late as William the Conqueror's Domesday Survey we have instances of churches not only in towns,

[1] Mr. S. O. Addy in *Church and Manor*.

but in the country, which appear to have belonged to groups of free men. It is certain that the Church would have set her face in England, as she did on the Continent, against God's house becoming part and parcel of the great man's hall, though even this she may have winked at here and there as a temporary arrangement. It is far more probable that where there was a lord of the village, he generally assumed something not essentially different from the modern patronage, that he appointed the priest and no doubt in practice, if not in theory, kept him very much under his thumb as a member of his household.

As to the priest's or mass-thegn's most important function, the thing that rendered his church and office terrible and dear in the eyes of the people, there is neither the need nor the room for conjecture. If we want to realize precisely the change that had come over life with Christianity, that which the Church implied and signified for the Anglo-Saxons, we can hardly do better than betake ourselves to one of the few Saxon churches that retains some semblance of its original aspect, and there spend a couple of hours in the attempt to bridge the gulf of centuries, and see it through the mind's eye of one of its earliest worshippers. Let us take the little Church of St. Laurence at Bradford-on-Avon, which, though some critics have tried to place it at a later date than that of the missionary Saint Aldhelm, who is credited with having built it by William of Malmesbury and Freeman, is nevertheless sufficiently typical of Saxon architecture to serve our purpose.

The longer one remains in this building, the deeper is the impression conveyed of the sadness, in the word's old sense of sober earnestness, that is the dominant note of the Anglo-Saxon character at its best. So small is the aisleless nave as to have more of the intimacy of a room than the spaciousness of a hall of public worship. The dim light and the extraordinary height of the walls in comparison with their breadth enhance the atmosphere of solemnity, which is entirely different from any effect of Norman sternness or Gothic aspiration. The worshippers as they strode or shambled in would naturally turn their regard to the Eastward, where a high wall, adorned with the figure (since destroyed) of the Son of God enthroned on the Rood and attended by two angels, shut off a small and sombre chamber, a Holy of Holies, only to be entered by the mass-thegn and his assistants through a portalled or curtained archway barely wide enough for a man to pass through. It was here that the most awful of all miracles was to be consummated, for by virtue of the

power passed to him through the hands of the Bishop, and to the Bishop, in a regular chain of succession, by the Archbishop, and the Holy Father, and Peter, and Christ Himself, the mass-thegn could change bread and wine into Christ's very Body and Blood. So long as this miracle was literally believed in—and to believe in any magic involved no intolerable strain on medieval credulity—the power of the Church, for good or evil, was incalculable.

It was only when armed with such credentials that she could have secured enough influence and prestige to assume her true function, that of the greatest mind-training society ever known. The notion of what certain savages know as "manas", that fund of magical power which resides in certain individuals and things, and can be communicated by them to others, was too strong to be eradicated, and the Church did not dream of doing so. Her missionaries took the same ground as their opponents and fought them on it. They did not, like such refined sceptics as Lucian, scoff at the very notion of the old gods; they recognized them, but as devils; they admitted their opponents' magic, but they pitted against it a superior magic. Saint Patrick could beat the Druids at their own game; Saint Augustine could settle a controversy between Christians by curing a blind man. Even so masterly a historian as the Venerable Bede is constantly interrupting his narrative to record miracles. Relics of saints were talismans, and the saints themselves enjoyed a sort of posthumous existence by virtue of which they could be said to own property that legally belonged to corporations of churchmen, practice healing, and retaliate very effectively on those who annoyed them. If anyone who died in the neighbourhood of a monastery could, by hook or by crook, be elevated to sainthood, his name and shrine became assets of incalculable value. The trade in relics was, throughout the Middle Ages, as keen as that in old masters to-day, and at one time the corpse of Saint Dunstan was simultaneously at Canterbury and Glastonbury, with signs following, until the monks went to law to decide which was the official Dunstan.

The magical background was an absolute necessity if the Church was to have any chance of effecting the transformation or development of human nature at which she aimed. And it must be said of her that in dealing with the Teutonic tribes her influence was, in almost every respect and in so far as we may assume an agreed standard of moral values, an elevating one. Many of the worst features of paganism she did away with altogether, and where she

did not set her face absolutely against such evils as slavery and the ordeal, she gradually modified and humanized them till they became moribund.

The basis of her psychological method was to give a new orientation to life. Henceforth it was no longer the flight of a sparrow across a lighted hall into the unknown, but the preparation for an eternity of which the Church could give a lucid and, to her children, entirely satisfactory account, of which she could even paint pictures on her walls. The choice was offered to every believer between passing an eternity of bliss with angels, or an eternity of torture by devils. And it was made very clear that there was no escaping from the less desirable alternative save by the good offices of, and through obedience to, the Church. The Sacraments, and particularly the perpetually renewed miracle of the Holy Eucharist, were the only means by which the saving grace of Christ could be communicated to naturally damned human beings, and the Sacraments could only be administered by Churchmen to whom the requisite "manas" had been communicated by the laying on of hands. The disciplined organization which was believed to possess the keys of eternal life and death was thus placed in a position of immense power.

Such a society could not function without funds, and it was only natural for the Church to use her great powers in order to enforce the payment of subscriptions. She could do what no king could have attempted in claiming first as a spiritual and afterwards as a legal obligation the payment of tithe, equivalent, in modern terms, to a permanent income tax of two shillings in the pound. The direct tribute to Rome known as Peter's Pence followed towards the close of the eighth century, and by the beginning of the tenth had become a regular imposition of a penny on every hearth. The piety of kings induced them, from time to time, to "book" lands to religious bodies and free them, wholly or in part, from the obligation of contributing to the expenses of government and national defence. Finally these monasteries, by dint of organized labour and particularly of sheep farming, attracted an ever-increasing proportion of the general wealth into their own treasury chests. Thus the spiritual power of the Church quickly reinforced itself by a no less formidable money power.

The Church of Christ was also the Church of Rome, and so well had Christianity been grafted on to Roman organization that it is hard to say where Christ's part ends and Caesar's begins. No doubt the spirit of His Excellency Pilate and His Holiness Caiaphas were

sometimes at least as much in evidence as that of the irrepressible Revolutionary from Nazareth. But it is arguable that without such an infusion Christianity must, by all human calculations, have been overwhelmed in the West and have lingered on, if at all, under the auspices of the Eastern Empire in forms certainly not more Christlike. It needed all the experience and administrative tradition of Rome to enable the Church to accomplish the tremendous task of civilization that but for her must have been postponed indefinitely.

One of her first cares was to educate at least a sufficient number of the population to enable her services, both in her parish and monastery churches, to be competently performed. The mere fact that her Roman traditions impelled her to impose one universal language, caused her to set up grammar schools for the teaching of Latin, and hence to keep up some sort of acquaintance with the classics. Again the choral part of the ritual created a demand for what were known as song schools. It was one of the first tasks of Augustine to establish a grammar school at Canterbury, and this was soon followed by a song school at Rochester. But the fame of these Southern schools was soon to be eclipsed by the great Northumbrian foundations of York and Wearmouth. These centres of higher education were, in effect, training schools for what Coleridge would have called "the clerisy", but the needs of the laity were not forgotten. It was the aim of the Church that her parish priests should provide free instruction of an elementary kind for the children of such parents as chose to send them, and this not only in letters but, sometimes at any rate, in manual arts.

The parish church [1] was thus the centre round which the whole spiritual and no small part of the temporal life of the neighbourhood revolved. It was the mind or soul factory in which raw human material was taken in hand and civilized. To its present-day functions the parish church, including the churchyard, added those of a school, a club, a centre of business, a court-house and even a theatre and place of amusement. Mother Church, already with centuries of experience behind her, knew how to handle her souls not only with firmness but with tact. She did not insist on a violent break with habits consecrated by centuries of paganism; she knew too much of human nature to trust to crude repression; her way was that which modern psychologists know as sublimation. She gradually Christianized the old pagan magic. The fire festival

[1] See the chapter on "The Church and the People" in the first volume of Professor Baldwin Brown's *Arts in Early England*.

at midsummer became Saint John's Eve, and the return of the sun at midwinter the birth of the Saviour whose Cross was the old sun-cross. The ritual dances and junketings she allowed to continue, in a modified form, in the churchyard, though under a gradually lowering cloud of official disapproval, until she had substituted her own pageants and mystery plays. Even the appeal to judicial magic, in the form of the ordeal, was taken under her unwilling patronage—it took her more than seven centuries to get rid of it.

Perhaps the crown of her achievement was the intensive training she gave in her monasteries. In the parishes she had to deal cautiously and gradually with men in whose minds the time-honoured cares and ambitions of this world competed constantly with the desire for salvation in the next. But her communities of monks were composed of men who had deliberately abandoned the world in order to concentrate all their energies on the one object of perfecting themselves according to the Church's rules. The monastic rule of the Roman Church in the seventh century was to all intents and purposes that of Saint Benedict, and the Synod of Whitby definitely decided the question that the English monks should conform to this and not to the more individualistic standard of the Celts.

Viewed in the light of a mind-training society, it must be admitted that the Church accomplished her mission of turning pagans into civilized Christians with an organized efficiency compared with which our modern efforts to turn men into supermen must appear blundering and half-hearted. It may be argued that this was because she was dealing with very simple souls and setting before herself a limited ideal. The kind of man she aimed at turning out would probably be incapable, at any rate intellectually, of coping with modern requirements, and in certain respects fell short of the standard set up by the intelligentsia of Greece and Augustan Rome. But considering the fact that the Church was engaged in salvaging Western civilization from the flood that threatened to sweep away its last vestiges, and that she was composed of and working with the very human material she sought to improve, we can only wonder at her almost miraculous achievement in leading Europe through its Dark Age to that of chivalry and the gilds, of the universities and Gothic cathedrals.

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The Golden Age of Northumbria

Any student of the seventh and eighth centuries can hardly fail to be struck by the unimportance of political as compared with ecclesiastical history. To say that England was united politically under this or that Bretwalda has about as much meaning as to say that Europe in 1913 was united under Germany and in 1923 under France. But that England was united spiritually under Archbishop Theodore as a province of the Roman Church is an event of definite and far-reaching importance. To the average man, engaged in tilling the soil in some almost self-sufficing village community, and only occasionally called out for service in his lord's retinue or with the "fyrd" or tribal militia, the Church was a more intimate and living reality than ever the King could be. There was no national flag or national anthem to foster a Northumbrian or Kentish patriotism in such a village, but there was constantly in every man's sight the Cross of Christ and His Church, and even when he was working in the field, the sound of the sanctus bell would float to him, and he would drop his tool and fall on his knees to partake for a moment of the comfort and refreshment that emanated from Christ's altar.

Such spiritual unity throughout England must needs pave the way to unity in the less important sphere of politics. The little tribal kingdoms had not deep enough roots in the past, and were too much exposed to attack, to possess the elements of permanence. The one thing that kept them independent was the impossibility of setting up any adminstrative organization to control more than a limited area. Even conquest had not much more meaning than that one King and his followers had succeeded in slaughtering another King and his followers. To a churl in one of the Northumbrian dales it probably signified little that his own King Oswald had been killed by Penda of Mercia, unless it happened that one of Penda's bands succeeded in raiding his particular village. But no Mercian tax collector was likely to demand a percentage of the year's harvest, nor would King Penda's reeve administer Mercian law in the local court. Life in the village would go on much the same until, in a very few years' time, some successor of Oswald would beat up an army and start the game over again with as fair a chance of turning the tables on Penda as a cricket team of winning a return match.

Amid these loosely organized communities with their inconsequential squabbles the Church succeeded in setting up a highly developed administrative and fiscal system, embracing the whole of non-Celtic England. Rome was teaching her converts, from the kings to the humblest free men, the advantage of doing things by fixed rules, and she was imparting some notion, however rudimentary, of ordering life scientifically. Augustine's convert, Ethelbert of Kent, is the first Anglo-Saxon King who is known to have attempted the codification of his own law or tariff of blood-fines, while Edwin of Northumbria was so taken with the notion of imperial dignity that he used to go about among his subjects preceded by a standard bearer with the Roman tufa, and he conducted his administration with such new-found efficiency that during his short reign it was said that a woman, with her baby, might have walked unharmed from sea to sea. From this time forth it becomes steadily less of an anachronism to talk about Anglo-Saxon institutions.

It was in Northumbria that during the second half of the seventh century the fire of newly awakened Christianity burned with its brightest radiance. The earnest Angles, weary of gods in whom they only half believed, and oppressed by the sense of an almighty wyrd from which there was no release, eagerly accepted the good news of salvation, and bent all their energies to giving it practical expression. It was not only for the heart that Rome had brought food. The learning of the empire—such of it as had survived—was brought to England by such men as Archbishop Theodore, who spoke Greek as his native tongue, and his devoted friend, Abbot Hadrian, an African scholar who had refused the archiepiscopal dignity for himself and recommended it for Theodore. "Forasmuch," writes Bede, "as both of them were well read both in sacred and secular literature, they gathered a crowd of disciples, and there daily flowed from them rivers of knowledge to water the hearts of their hearers; and together with books of holy writ, they also taught them the arts of ecclesiastical poetry, astronomy and arithmetic . . . nor were there ever happier times since the English came into Britain; for their kings, being brave men and good Christians, they were a terror to all barbarian nations, and the minds of all men were bent upon the heavenly kingdom the joys of which they had just heard; and all who desired to be instructed in sacred reading had masters at hand to teach them." [1]

There is a childlike freshness about the English reception of the

[1] Translation, *Temple Classics*.

new faith. We hear of Aldhelm, a scholar of European fame, who became Abbot of Malmesbury in Wessex, standing on a bridge and singing like a wandering gleeman to attract converts. For there was music in the heart of the English people. It is Bede who tells us the story of Caedmon, a shy herd-boy in the service of Whitby Abbey, who, when folk agreed for the sake of mirth that all present should sing in their turn, seeing the instrument come his way, got up from the table and went home. But afterwards in a dream one appeared to him, who said, "Caedmon, sing me something," and when Caedmon asked "What shall I sing?" replied, "Sing the beginning of created things." Forthwith the poor herd-boy burst, like one of the morning stars, into praise of Him "who first, as almighty preserver of mankind, created Heaven for the sons of men as the roof of the house, and next the earth". Hilda, the great abbess, instantly recognized his genius and made him join the brethren. Thenceforward "whatever was interpreted to him out of Scripture, he afterwards put the same into poetical expressions of much sweetness and humility in English, which was his native language".

Christ was intensely alive and very human to these men, the divine Beowulf, the good prince who toils and suffers for his folk. On the cross at Ruthwell we can just decipher the words, "I, the powerful King, the Lord of Heaven, I durst not bend." Like to their master were the apostles, "Lo, we have heard of twelve glorious men in the old days under the stars, the thegns of God, nor did their glory fail them in the fray when standards massed together." [1] This faith was a thing so joyously simple, that our minds, sophisticated by the doubts and controversies of many ages, find it hard to comprehend. "So He showeth honour on His handiwork. Of Him the prophet spake that holy gems were lifted up on high, the radiant stars of heaven, the sun and moon . . . above the earth gleameth the moon, a ghostly star; even so shineth bright the Church of God when righteousness and truth are met together." [2]

For quite half a century after the coming of Archbishop Theodore, Northumbria became a centre from which Christian culture was diffused over Western Europe, a meteor across the dim light of that age, too dazzling to last, but strong enough, while it lasted, to dart its radiance through all the confines of heathendom, and even to suffuse, with its last beams, the Court of Charlemagne.

[1] *The Poems of Cynewulf*, translated by C. W. Kennedy, p. 211.
[2] Ib., p. 178.

English Churchmen displayed a passionate enthusiasm for acquiring such learning as could be saved from the wreck of Roman civilization. Benedict Biscop, Abbot of Wearmouth and Jarrow, who escorted Theodore and Hadrian to England, made no less than five journeys to Rome, from which he brought back a generous supply of manuscripts and objects of art. On the ruins of York rose a school endowed with a magnificent library, including all the accessible classics, Aristotle and Cicero, Virgil and Lucan, besides the Fathers of the Church. Wilfrid himself, with all his faults of pride and worldliness, spared no pains in enriching his countrymen with the best that Latin civilization had to give, importing workmen to teach the art of stone masonry "in the Roman style". Early in the eighth century England becomes the teacher, and we find Naitan, King of the Picts, writing to Jarrow for masons to build him a Church in the Roman style.

The art of singing Gregorian chants, then in their first freshness, was brought from Rome by John the Precentor. Painting came over, stiff Byzantine figures, but real enough to men whose unsophisticated imaginations were more capable than our own of supplying the missing details. Glass-making, an art with which the Nordic peoples were already acquainted, was pressed into the service of religion, and we find Saint Cuthbert writing from Jarrow to the Archbishop of Mainz for skilled glass-workers, "seeing that in that art we are ignorant and without resource." It is important to realize that fifty years of this little coastwise strip of Anglian Northumbria have bequeathed us a literary and artistic heritage incomparably superior to that of nearly four centuries of the Roman occupation of Britain.

For all her imported magnificence imperial Rome had cast a blight over every form of originality in her provinces. But Northumbria and, to a lesser extent, the other English kingdoms, more than made up in vital energy for what they lacked in the amenities and experience of civilization. Northumbria speaks with a crudeness that the intelligentsia of old Eboracum would have scoffed at as barbarous, but she speaks with her own voice and with a power and freshness beyond the reach of time. And it may be asked how the return of Roman civilization in the seventh century worked the precisely opposite effect to that of its coming in the first.

It is not enough to say that spiritual Rome after all had not the absolute "imperium" that accompanied the legions, that she had to persuade where she had once ordered and to proceed by tact and compromise. This is no doubt true as far as it goes, but the

main explanation is to be sought in the fact that Rome was only one, and that not the most vital, of a number of influences that combined in generating the spirit of English civilization. True, she supplied the strong framework without which most of that youthful energy would have dissipated itself in vain. But the whole tendency of recent research has been to show that the proportionate influence of Rome has been exaggerated, in spite of her formal triumph.

It is not without its significance that the centre of light and learning was in the part of England furthest from Rome and most exposed to Celtic influence. The Runic crosses, of which those at Ruthwell and Bewcastle are among the most precious relics of Northumbrian art, have their counterparts in the Isle of Man and all over Ireland, and the art of illuminating manuscripts came by way of Iona to Lindisfarne. King Oswy's fiat at Whitby might cause the adoption of the Roman Easter and the Roman system, but it could not root up the seed already sown by the glowing and ascetic Celts, and Peter, at best, could only water where Columba had done most of the planting.

The Celtic influence has long been recognized and allowed for. It is only of recent years, however, that the researches of an Austrian scholar, Professor Strzygowski, have effected what bids fair to prove a veritable revolution in our notions about the origin of Christian art in general and English art in particular. The classical influence has, by this showing, been much exaggerated, and the main source not only of Gothic, but even of Byzantine and so-called Romanesque art, must be sought within the limits not of the Roman but of the Parthian Empire, in the country East and North East of Syria. Here, when nascent Christianity had been a religion prescribed and persecuted by the Caesars, it had been tolerated and suffered to find its own modes of architectural and artistic expression, modes which were naturally influenced by those of neighbouring Persia, with its traditions of Zoroastrian Mazdaism. This living art owed nothing essential of its development to the dead formulas of Rome.

It is impossible to predict how far Professor Strzygowski's theory will stand in need of modification, but in view of the overwhelming array of evidence he has produced, it is safe to say that we can never return to the limited outlook consecrated by centuries of educational concentration on Greece and Rome. The Professor has had no difficulty in showing how both Northumbrian and Celtic art are permeated by the symbolic conventions of Persian Mazdaism,

evidenced particularly in the vine decoration and figure sculpture on the three great crosses of Ruthwell, Bewcastle, and Bishop Acca. He has also urged that the timber-roofed Roman basilica constitutes an architectural blind alley and that the principles of vaulted construction already developed in the East were bound to be adopted by Nordic peoples as soon as they abandoned wooden for stone construction.

These influences must have come to England by the same routes of communication with the Near East that existed before the Roman conquest and, indeed, before the dawn of history. The sea route to Ireland and Western England had, probably, never been closed, and undoubtedly played its part in fostering the growth of the Celtic Christian civilization which Augustine found in such vigorous opposition to his Romanizing schemes. And there is the other, even more important, land route across Russia by way of Kieff to the Baltic, by means of which the Nordic tribes were exposed to a steady current of Oriental influence even before the bursting of the Roman barriers.

But however much we may assign to this or that outside influence, the main impelling force of English art and thought must be sought for in the English themselves, or rather in the mixtures of peoples brought about by the circumstances of the conquest. The pagan invaders had not the refined taste of Athens or Rome, but they were honest and skilful craftsmen, and it was not for nothing that they deified the father of smiths, the ancient Weland. For it was in metalwork that their skill was chiefly shown, whether in weapons or ornaments, coins or jewellery. Such workmen as these only wanted a little education, a little stimulus from outside, to develop their natural genius.

The development of Anglo-Saxon architecture is by no means simple. Rome, now in undisputed sway over the Church, naturally tried to impose her standards on the stubborn islanders. And Rome, now that the Eastern Empire could set the fashion from her outpost at Ravenna, was herself largely influenced by the semi-Oriental standards of Byzantium. The Continental influence was always strong, first from Italy and afterwards, when Ravenna passed into Papal hands and Frankish power overshadowed the West, from Germany, but the English, while frequently copying or adapting foreign styles, were all the time evolving one of their own, with the high single nave and narrow chancel entrance that we see at Bradford-on-Avon, and usually with the addition of a Western

tower, a style marked, at its best, by an engaging simplicity and earnestness.

But in architecture the Anglo-Saxons, perhaps because they derived their original inspiration from a smith and not from a builder, seemed half afraid to assert their individuality to the full. If we return to this same church of Bradford-on-Avon, and look at it this time from the outside, we shall see a row of dummy arches about half way up, which merely seem put there to show how truly Roman the builder wishes us to think him. Of the same class are the so called pilaster strips stuck on to the surface of walls which we find both here, and in most other pre-Conquest buildings. The free development of a native architecture, in spite of the distinctive charm that no Anglo-Saxon building fails to evince, is partially frustrated by this spirit of timidity or snobbishness, and proves a little disappointing.

As craftsmen the English were hampered by no such disabilities. The beautiful Ormside bowl, now in the York museum, evinces a skill in chasing that might have warmed the heart of Weland himself. And to whatever influences they may testify, the early Northumbrian crosses, with their free and sure carving, are veritable masterpieces of this branch of stone masonry. But perhaps most people would say that the crowning glory of Northumbrian art was in the illumination of manuscripts, which had been already carried to a high degree of perfection in Ireland and had come to Northumbria by way of Iona. The gospel manuscript of Lindisfarne shares with the slightly later gospels of Kells in Meath the honour of constituting the *ne plus ultra* of illuminated art, and this in spite of the naive crudeness of human figure drawing which, as in Japanese art, accompanies a supreme mastery of decorative composition and colouring. A comparison between the two shows that though the English might learn from Ireland as they did from Rome, they were no more disposed to be the copyists of the one than of the other. The Celtic wildness and exuberance of fancy are in striking contrast with the more disciplined taste of the Northumbrian artist, and each is perfect of its kind.

The Church had brought a new civilization to England, and had turned the little Pirate Kingdom North of the Humber into a nursery of scholars and artists. But for this service she exacted a terribly severe price, and if for a short time she exalted Northumbria to the spiritual leadership of the West, she left her drained of energy and a prey to invasion from abroad and internal anarchy.

We have spoken of the Church as a mind-training society on a vast scale, and no more in the days of our fathers than our own could such a society continue to function on any other than a business footing. The Church took her toll not only in material wealth, but by a perpetual levy on human capital. There are few who, in the light of her achievement, will say that the price was extortionate.

For one thing, the monasteries which she planted all over the land constituted a eugenic drain of the most serious description. It is one of the Church's proudest boasts that she, for the first time, presented the spectacle of woman on a mental and spiritual equality with man. Among the great figures of that age, there is scarce one greater than the Abbess Hilda of Whitby, and none more charming than the missionary Lioba. Where, according to the lax practice that obtained here, men and women were associated in the same community, the head of it was the abbess. But such a sexual revolution could only be accomplished by withdrawing women from the business of bearing and rearing children, and, in fact, by skimming the cream of the nation's motherhood. A corresponding tax was levied on fatherhood, and to make matters worse, kings and statesmen, whom their countries could ill spare, kept on retiring to monasteries in the fullness of their powers. Thus the intensive mind-training that the Church supplied was accomplished, to a certain extent, at the expense of the next generation, and it is something more than a coincidence that national disaster has so frequently trodden on the heels of national piety.

The evil in Northumbria was intensified by the fact that the Church was not as yet perfectly mistress in her own house. After the first flush of enthusiasm, monastic life became less and less of a disciplined quest for salvation, and more and more of an excuse for well-born and lazy people to lead a comfortable life and evade any sort of public duty or even taxation.

We have a vivid account of the state of degeneracy into which Northumbria was sinking so early as 735, in a letter from the aged Bede to Egbert, the first Archbishop of York. Bede was not only a devoted Churchman but a Northumbrian patriot, and he could not close his eyes to what he saw going on around him. The most serious thing of all was that as spiritual fervour grew cold in the Church, the temporal drain that she levied on the country grew more and more intolerable. The multiplication of so-called monasteries was making it impossible to recruit an adequate army.

The natural leaders of the nation, the nobles, were taking advantage of the peaceable disposition of the times to lay aside the practice of arms and retire into monasteries with their children. "What will be the end of it," says Bede, as if in his mind's eye he could already see beaked prows topping the Eastern horizon, "the next age will show."

The Wessex Supremacy and the Coming of the Norsemen

Throughout the seventh and eighth centuries we must imagine, for we can only see by glimpses, the various Kings, under the stimulus of hostile pressure and Roman tuition, learning more and more about the business of holding a people together. Those who, like Ini of Wessex, have "been considering of the wealth of our souls and the good of our realm", busy themselves with codifying the existing tariff of blood-fines. The primitive form of conscription, the obligation to serve in the "fyrd" or host, is enforced under crushing penalties. The assemblies become more regular and acquire a special sanctity, an idea that we may perhaps trace to Roman influence. At any rate, it is the Christian convert, Ethelbert of Kent, whom we first find decreeing that if the King calls an assembly, and anyone does evil there, he must pay a double fine, and fifty shillings into the bargain to the King. The idea is gradually gaining ground that the peace, which men of goodwill seek and ensue, is the special property of the King, and from this the transition is not hard to the idea that the land of the King's frith, or peace, is the King's land. So, on a smaller scale, the idea of fixing responsibility for good order produces a number of minor "griths" under the King's "frith", a process that is likely to be accelerated by the formal "booking" of rights to religious bodies. This all leads up to the idea, which we find definitely expressed by Athelstan in the tenth century, that it is a man's business to find a lord to be responsible for him.

As the system of government, such as it was, gradually improved, so the size of the political unit was enlarged. Even before the establishment of Christianity, the petty tribal settlements were beginning to coalesce, or be absorbed, into those seven kingdoms which the school-books style the Heptarchy, and of the seven the only three that counted in the struggle for supremacy were Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex, or the amalgamated North,

Midlands and South. The supreme difficulty with every one of these was one of hinterlands. For the North, there were not only the Celtic kingdoms of Cumbria and Strathclyde, but also the inchoate menace of Pictish Scotland. Northumbria reached the height of her power when her King Oswy, with all the odds against him, put an end to the career of that grand old pagan, Penda of Mercia, by driving his army of thirty divisions into the river Winwaed, and sending him to Woden in the way he would probably have chosen. But Oswy soon discovered that to dominate Mercia was a task beyond his power, and Northumbria endeavoured to limit her responsibilities by isolating herself from the rest of England behind the marshes of the Upper Trent, but even so, her Northern and Western difficulties, coupled with the drain on her resources imposed by the Church, sufficed to reduce her to an exhausted anarchy. Oswy's successor, Ecgfrith, a powerful and ambitious Prince, after wasting his strength in an unprovoked raid on North Eastern Ireland, struck Northward at the Picts and in that wild country was trapped and annihilated with the flower of the Northumbrian nobility. By the beginning of the eighth century Northumbria was politically a finished power, declining, by slow stages, into chaos and impotence. The only one of her sovereigns who seemed to have a chance of stopping the rot, retired by his own choice into a monastery.

In the eighth century Mercia takes up the running and her King Offa, who reigned from 757 to 796, was so indisputably supreme over his neighbours that he was actually recognized by the Pope as King of the English, and even the great Charlemagne entered into negotiations for the marriage of one of his sons to Offa's daughter. But Mercia, no more than Northumbria, was able to subdue her Celtic hinterland, and Offa's plan of protecting his whole Welsh frontier by one continuous entrenchment, after the example of Hadrian's wall, needed a permanent military organization, like that of the Romans, to make it a permanent success. And thus the Welsh ulcer continued to sap the strength of Mercia, which had, besides, an enormous frontier to guard. Only one generation after Offa's death she sank into the abyss of civil strife and her power collapsed with a suddenness that showed the weakness of its foundations.

It was now the turn of Wessex. She had hitherto played a less conspicuous part than her rivals, but she possessed two advantages that were bound to prove decisive in the long run. She had a Celtic hinterland, in Devon and Cornwall, small enough to be conquered

by a strong king, and the peoples of South Eastern England were more inclined to submit to her sway than that of Mercia. At the beginning of the ninth century and, as it turned out, not a moment too soon, she found the leader she required in Egbert, who first conquered and annexed Devon and Cornwall, and then shattered the power of Mercia and even established some vague claim of suzerainty over the welter of anarchy that was still called Northumbria. Egbert was no more King of England than Offa had been, though with his Western flank cleared and his back to the sea, not to speak of his nearness to the Continent, he stood a far better chance of perpetuating his overlordship.

But already a catastrophe was impending that was to shake to its foundations, though ultimately to enrich, the civilization over which Wessex had established her precarious supremacy. Out of the east swept the raven standards and long ships of the Viking rovers, the last and most terrible of the Nordic invaders. As early as 793, these heathen had wiped out the monastery of Lindesfarne, the nursery of Northumbrian Christianity. For the next forty years England had a respite, but hardly had Egbert settled with Mercia than he found himself called to deal with this new enemy who, since he had control of the sea, might strike his blows with absolute unexpectedness at his selected place and time, and disappear into the unknown from which he had emerged. The old warrior was hard put to it to hold his own, and his successor, having gained a breathing space by the utter overthrow of a Danish host at Ockley, thought more of saving his soul than his kingdom, left his folk to shift for themselves while he went on pilgrimage to Rome, and allowed his own Wessex to be partitioned. After the middle of the century the Vikings came not only as plunderers but as conquerors; they wintered in England and within less than a generation had overrun all the land north of the Thames. Northumbria toppled to pieces; Mercia followed and East Anglia, whose King, Edmund, won for himself the martyr's crown. And yet the Vikings, full of Berserk energy, were not satisfied until they should have crowned their work by making an end of Wessex, whose capital, Winchester, they had already sacked, and which, by all human calculations, seemed to be doomed.

8

Alfred

By fortune or providence, this desperate hour brought forth in Alfred, the youngest of four brothers who occupied in succession the tottering throne of Wessex, perhaps the only King on historical record whom we can imagine capable of retrieving the situation. We say this advisedly. History presents us with three outstanding examples of a sovereign who can not unplausibly be said to embody in his own person the supreme ideal of the civilization for which he stands. Asoka, the Buddhist Emperor of India, is one, Marcus Aurelius another, Alfred the third. Of the three, the most flawless is our beautifully styled "England's darling", because he was free from that priggishness that repels us, in spite of ourselves, from Marcus, and his life is stained by no such crime as the Indian's bitterly repented massacre of the Kalingas, or the Roman's complacent persecution of the Christians. Considering the circumstances and limitations of his time, he appears as perfect and complete, both of mind and spirit, as we can imagine a man to be, and his goodness was crowned by the sweet humility of a Christian gentleman. Even romance has conceived of nothing more chivalrous than his conduct to the Viking leader, Haesten, who had sworn oaths to Alfred and consented to the baptism of his two children. The old pirate quickly forgot his oath, but Alfred could not forget that he was godfather to one of the children, and when they, with their mother, fell into his hands, he simply returned them, as the chronicle tells us, "with many presents." We hear no more of Haesten after that. And yet Alfred was a chronic invalid, who can seldom have enjoyed a day unvisited by pain.

In the year 871 the Danes closed in for the final annihilation of Wessex. Alfred's brother, King Ethelred, was a brave soldier, but had inherited some of his father's pious obsession, and at the opening of the most critical battle, refused to leave Mass to command his troops, and left the young hero, Alfred, to assume command and, charging uphill "like a boar", to achieve the greatest victory that had as yet been won over the Danes. It was hardly a respite. In that year were fought nine pitched battles besides innumerable skirmishes; King Ethelred died, probably of his wounds, and Alfred, now King of Wessex, was driven to the desperate expedient of gaining time by paying blackmail to the enemy. In a few years

the Danes were back, and by a swift winter campaign in January, 878, they surprised and overran Wessex, driving Alfred, with only a handful of followers, to his last fastness in the Isle of Athelney in Somerset. But the indomitable King was able to profit by the fact that short of actual extermination, the conquest of a country was apt to be more apparent than real. In the spring he was able to break away from Athelney, sweeping up an army as he went along sufficient to inflict on the enemy a decisive defeat, followed up by a remorseless pursuit and the investment of their base at Chippenham. Wessex was saved, and the Danish King, now a Christian and Alfred's godson, retired behind the line of Watling Street, a beaten man. Alfred was lord of Southern England.

There was hard fighting still to come for the West Saxon King, but he had now got the measure of his enemy. Alone of all Christian leaders of that century, he had showed himself capable of beating the Vikings fairly and squarely at their own game of war. He had discovered two vital secrets. The first was that of holding up the mobile and well-mounted Danish hosts by permanent works, and these not the strongholds of feudal noblemen, but "burhs", or fortified settlements, maintained by the united effort of their inhabitants. The second was of even greater importance, and consisted in the recognition of the fact that against an overseas enemy, salvation lies in sea-power. At the very beginning of his reign, during the short breathing space gained by buying off the Danes, Alfred, still a young man in his twenties, began the creation of an English navy.

He did more than this, for in some sense he may be said to have lit the first sparks of an English as distinguished from a merely local patriotism. The Danish invasion had at least had the effect of flattening out the other still surviving English kingdoms, and leaving Wessex the sole representative of independent Anglo-Saxondom. So terrible was the Danish menace that what was left of Mercia gladly submitted to Alfred, and even the Welsh chieftains besought his protection and suzerainty. It is notable that Alfred's contemporary and biographer, Asser, a Welsh monk who became Bishop of Sherbourne, in describing that desperate year of the nine battles, talks of the English not as the "West Saxons" but the "Christians", and this very fact of an English Christendom fighting for its life against heathendom must have tended to bind Englishmen together. Asser gives us a memorable description of the fight on the Berkshire downs swaying round the thorn tree at

Ashdown, the one side fighting for an ill cause, the other for " their life and their loved ones and their native land ".

Alfred was confronted with a task even harder than that of beating the Danes in the reconstruction of what was left of England. During the struggle, in the course of which the land had been harried from sea to sea, learning and even religion had been well nigh extinguished. The Danes had made a special point of sacking the monasteries, which had accumulated so large a part of the wealth of the kingdom. In consequence, the mind-training organization so elaborately built up by the Church was almost destroyed, and Alfred might fairly have said, with Tennyson's Arthur

> " All the realm
> Reels back into the beast and is no more."

Fortunately Alfred, in addition to being the greatest soldier of his time, presented the almost unique spectacle of a layman who was also a scholar. Not content with the ordinary work of a ruler, he set himself to change the minds and hearts of his people by becoming their teacher, and taking on his own shoulders the burden of the stricken Church. And indeed, nobody can be imagined better fitted for the task; for Alfred devoted the whole of his manhood to a course of self training and self discipline as exacting and scientific as any monastic rule. Every hour was carefully mapped out, and lest he should lose count of time after dark, he turned his inventive genius to the construction of a candle-clock. What he exacted from himself he expected from those round him. It was, in an Anglo-Saxon court, an unheard-of innovation that laymen occupying posts of responsibility should be expected to read, but Alfred succeeded in training up an educated governing class, and, if we may trust his biographer, the spectacle might have been witnessed of one of the young princes being told off by his father to read appropriate literature to some grizzled old thegn incapable of mastering his alphabet.

" God Almighty be thanked," Alfred wrote, " that we now have any supply of teachers ! " He diligently sought out such as were left in his distracted and illiterate realm, and reinforced them with others from abroad. But he was not content merely to organize education; he conceived it a King's duty to bear the first part in the mental as in the bodily warfare. He himself undertook the translation into his people's vernacular of what he deemed to be the most essential classics for them to know. He saw that the history both of his own and former times in England was set down from the most trustworthy sources. Skill in craftsmanship was not likely

to be neglected by a sovereign who could not refrain from inserting, in his translation of Boethius, a reference to Weland Smith. Not only did he surround himself with craftsmen, but we find him instructing his goldsmiths to make new and beautiful articles from designs of his own. A jewel, found at Athelney, bears the simple inscription, "Alfred had me worked."

True to his high ideal of Kingship, he determined to make the royal power efficient to an extent undreamed of before. He regulated his finances on a fixed system of budgeting, devoting one half of his revenue to religious, which included educational, purposes. Tradition credits him with having invented the unit of local government known as the hundred, though this almost certainly dates from centuries before his time. The truth of the matter is that he probably had to reorganize the local as well as the central administration, and that he got the credit for creating what he merely restored. He codified the laws of his Kingdom, confessing with naive modesty, "I durst not set down in writing much of my own, for it was unknown to me what would please those who should come after us." As Green points out, the importance of these laws lies in their being, unlike previous codes, definitely national. Not only are they for the West Saxons, but for all Englishmen.

Professor Oman, who has written with such sympathy and insight of pre-Conquest England, has expressed a regret that Alfred showed such deference to the counsel of his magnates, and contented himself and them with only slight modifications of the existing code of blood fines, instead of launching out into a *code Napoléon* of his own. We should be inclined to regard it as the supreme proof of Alfred's greatness that he resisted what to his bold and versatile genius must have been the insidious temptation of imagining that he could refashion the State according to his will. Alfred was no Cromwell or Napoleon, but greater than either in proportion as he was more humble. Had he tried to make a clean sweep of the old, barbarous law, he must needs have put a Romanized law in its place, and thus, had he succeeded, have changed the whole course of English history and nipped our constitutional development and Common Law in the bud. It is more likely still that such an attempt would have been doomed to failure from the start, and plunged the land into worse confusion.

Alfred was, in the best sense, an English constitutional monarch, before the birth of anything that could fairly have been called a constitution. He was at the same time a reformer and a conservative.

While he undertook, almost single-handed, the task of reconstructing and re-educating his realm, of overhauling every department of national activity, and bridging the transition from a divided to a united England, he showed the most scrupulous reverence for the past, and the determination to alter nothing except by the counsel of that informal Parliament of magnates, his " witan " or wise men, whose forced or unconvinced assent would have been the sure prelude of trouble in his own time or reaction afterwards. Moreover, he invested the kingly office with a new sanctity and prestige very necessary in a united England. Alfred was merciful to a fault, but the one unforgivable sin in his eyes was treason. Even Jesus, he says, could not pardon Judas.

He was happy in his successors. The counter-offensive that he had started against the Danes was pushed home in the reign of his son Edward the Elder, and of his grandson Athelstan, the beautiful, fair-haired boy who had been Alfred's favourite, and about whom history tells us all too little. In 937 a decisive victory, at a place called Brunanburh, probably, as Professor Oman indicates, on the North shore of Solway Firth, shattered a coalition of Northumbrian Danes with their Irish kinsmen and a host of Picts, Scots and Northern Britons, and laid the whole of England at Athelstan's feet. The House of Wessex now wielded a sovereignty more complete than that of any Bretwalda. But the task of welding the nation permanently together was really impossible without a strong, administrative organization such as the House of Cerdic could not aspire to create. Too much depended on the personality of the sovereign ; he had only to be incompetent to bring the whole structure toppling about his ears. For since he could by no means control so large an area through his officials, he had to fall back upon the old petty kingdoms, each of them under an almost independent ealdorman, and it was in vain that the West Saxon House sought to bind the provinces to itself by appointing as ealdormen scions of its own. Of all families, those least swayed by loyalty are royal.

9

The Cluniac Revival and the Failure of the House of Alfred

The line of Alfred provided a succession of high-souled and capable rulers to carry on his work, but they inherited his fatal weakness of constitution. They could conquer, they could govern, but they could not live. The eighty years after his death saw no less than

eight sovereigns, one of them a chronic invalid, and the last four boys on their accession. Where so much depended on the personality of the King, it was hopeless to expect that under such circumstances Alfred's task of reconstructing English civilization on a national basis could be successfully carried through.

For no less than three generations, however, it seemed as though the impossible might be achieved. The fortunes of England attained a fair semblance of peaceful prosperity in the reign of Edgar (from 959 to 975), a boy of sixteen who had the sense to lean on the advice of the most remarkable Englishman of that century, Dunstan, who had been made Abbot of Glastonbury in the reign of Edgar's father, and whom Edgar recalled from exile to the archbishopric first of York and then of Canterbury. Dunstan was an English churchman of the best type, a strenuous and level-headed reformer who did not allow his devotion to the Church to conflict with his loyalty to his country. He was a lover of song, a designer of beautiful apparel, and so renowned an exponent of the craft of Weland Smith that tradition has credited him with having tweaked the nose of Beelzebub with a pair of red-hot tongs, when that potentate showed too intrusive an interest in the smithy.

Dunstan availed himself of his young sovereign's support and the comparative peace that followed on the reconquest of the Midlands and North, to make a supreme effort to carry through the work of reconstruction that Alfred had taken in hand. The great King had done all that one man could do—more than any but he would have done—to revive the civilization that the Danes had almost extinguished, but during the first half of the century disappointingly little had been achieved. True, there was a vernacular literature which we may fairly trace to Alfred's inspiration, and which was capable of rising to such heights as the saga of Brunanburh, one of the few great battle poems in the English language. A high standard of craftsmanship was evinced in the coins struck for Edward the Elder, though this was hardly maintained in the reigns of his successors. But the levelling up of the whole nation, morally and intellectually, for which Alfred had laboured, was still far to seek. A time of war, demanding the whole energies of the people, is not one for education and moral reform.

By the middle of the tenth century the influence of a great religious revival was making itself felt in England. The beginning of this century saw the dark ages at their darkest throughout Western Europe. The Christian Empire of Charlemagne had gone to pieces;

the heathen and the faithful of Islam were everywhere gaining ground; even the Church seemed to have forgotten her civilizing mission. The Benedictine fire was almost out, and the spiritual Empire of the West seemed in a fair way to share the fate of its temporal predecessor. But the Church's vitality is such that seldom, in the hour of darkest crisis, has she failed to arouse one of those great spiritual revivals in which some have seen a special intervention of Providence. And so it happened in the tenth century that in the monastery of Cluny, near Mâcon, a series of remarkable abbots succeeded in refurbishing the Rule of Saint Benedict. It was from Cluny that the impulse was given that led to the tremendous revival of the Church in the eleventh century.

It was as an influence and not by the establishment of Cluniac Houses that the revival came to England in the tenth century. Before he had been recalled by Edgar, Dunstan had been an exile in Flanders, which was thoroughly under the Cluniac influence. No sooner had he gained power to put his ideas into effect, than he, with the aid of two reforming bishops, Oswald of Worcester and Ethelwold of Winchester, set himself to purge the Augean stable of English monastic life, to restore the strict observance of the Benedictine rule and to stop the scandalous indiscipline which permitted foundations which had formerly housed monks to fall into the hands of married, or worse than married, non-resident canons. Dunstan himself and Oswald proceeded in the matter with tact and charity, but Ethelwold was made of sterner stuff and producing a bundle of cowls, offered his canons of Winchester the choice between immediate acceptance or expulsion. It is not surprising that they are supposed to have returned the compliment by trying to poison him.

The fact is that the new discipline was far from being popular. There was a time when a monk had only to appear in the street for people to start hooting him, and national disunion was made worse by the formation of clerical and anti-clerical parties. This is no doubt partly accounted for by the vested interests that were threatened by the reformers, but also by the fact that the monasteries, with their privileges and exemptions, absorbed more and more of England's wealth and man-power. On the other hand, the sole hope of educating and civilizing the nation, and indeed of preventing Europe itself from lapsing into barbarism, lay with these communities withdrawn from the world, in which art and learning could find a refuge until the dawn of a brighter day.

During Edgar's reign it must have seemed to a superficial observer as if England were launched upon a career of peace and prosperity. The supremacy of the house of Cerdic was unquestioned from the Forth to the Clyde, and the series of excellent "dooms" decreed by this King and his predecessors testified to a more coherent social organization than that envisaged by the old tariff of blood fines. But the foundations of this prosperity were all too shallow. It is doubtful whether we can speak of an English nation except in the most shadowy sense. As Green has pointed out, it was less a question of the King controlling the ealdormen than of the ealdormen struggling together for power over the King. It was something, perhaps, that the Kingship was an established institution for the ealdormen to quarrel over.

Nor must we argue from the laws that have been preserved, as if their execution answered to the intentions of the law-giver. It must, at best, have been very rough and ready, and there was perhaps as much of Lynch law as of any other kind. In one illuminating passage of the Chronicle we are informed, almost casually, that "this year King Edgar ordered all Thanet land to be plundered". Wrecking appears to have been the offence and this was the "peaceful" King's method of dealing with it, a method copied by at least three of his successors, including the saintly "Edward the Confessor". Again, on two separate occasions the laws of Athelstan make provision for the contingency of a man being so rich, or of so powerful a family, that he can neither be punished nor kept from committing and abetting crime. We gather that cases of this kind must have been fairly common.

It was Edgar who elaborated a system of primitive police for the different hundreds or groups of villages. The hue and cry is to be raised after a thief, probably a horse or cattle thief, by order of the "hundred man", and he is to inform the "tithing men", or heads of each group of ten freemen, and they are all to ride after the thief under pain of fines or, in the last resort, of outlawry. If they chase him into another hundred they are to notify the hundred man there, and so forth. The cumbrousness of such a system need hardly be pointed out, and what actually happened was probably a much more informal affair, anticipating the palmy days of the Wild West.

The old Anglo-Saxon habit of "mooting" affairs of importance was extended and regularized. Meetings were supposed to be held twice a year in the shires, once every four weeks in the hundreds

and probably at still more frequent intervals in the villages. Doubtless a good deal of conviviality and "butt filling", to adopt the expressive phrase of one of Athelstan's laws, relieved the serious business of these assemblies. John Bull was, even in those days, nothing if not clubbable, and those time-honoured aids to fellowship, drink and religion, can seldom have failed to play their part in the all-important transition from the old family unit of society to more artificial and adaptable groupings. It was indeed his capacity for making such a transition that most distinguished the Anglo-Saxon from the Celt in the political sphere.

In the tenth century laws we hear less than before about the kindred and the blood-fine. It seems to be the object of all this legislation to deal with every man not as an individual, but as the member of some group who can guarantee and be responsible for his good character. We hear a good deal about the tything, or group of ten men, though it is needless to suppose that this number was exactly adhered to. These little clubs, or artificial families, must have been the embryo of the gilds which were so vital a constituent of medieval society. Indeed the gild-forming habit appears to have been fully developed long before the Conquest, and to have taken the form of impelling any body of neighbours who possessed interests in common to unite, primarily on a religious basis. Even priests appear to have had their gilds. It is obvious how, in centres of population and therefore of trade, the gilds, without losing their religious aspect, might come in time to consist of people with the same business interests, and, in fact, to form the economic framework of society.

A result of the Danish invasion and the distressful state to which the country was reduced could not fail to be in England, as in the rest of Western Europe, a considerable increase in the powers of the lord, or local strong man, both over the village communities and the Church. The central government was far off, the Danish host moved with fearful rapidity, and a community of independent free men would have stood small chance of surviving a raid. It was best to have a right to the protection of some one capable of sheltering and rallying the folk at short notice, and such protection was not to be had for nothing. Two results followed from this, one the gradual feudalization of the country, the increasing cult of the maxim "no land without a lord", though owing to the happy illogicality of the English nature this process was carried out in a very irregular and haphazard way before the Conquest; the other

was the power obtained by laymen over the Church, particularly over the parish priests, who became rather their servants than their Fathers in God. This was the evil which turned the Cluniac revival of the tenth and eleventh centuries into a war for the independence of the Church.

On the death of Edgar, still a young man, the inevitable catastrophe followed hard. The ealdormen were thoroughly out of hand; much of Dunstan's reforming work was undone; faction and personal rivalry flourished unchecked; a boy king was callously done to death without any attempt to avenge him; his successor, Ethelred, a boy of ten, grew up into one of the worst kings that has ever sat on an English throne, alternately shiftless and violent. The Danes returned. The navy, Alfred's creation, had been allowed to decay; the army was never in time or at the right place. The King fell back on the expedient, for which he could have pleaded the precedent of Alfred, of buying the Danes off. But he did not use the time gained, as Alfred did, to organize the nation for resistance. The Danish appetite for blackmail grew with each successive levy. Finally Ethelred, with all a weak man's love for sudden violence, ordered a treacherous massacre of Danes, presumably recent settlers domiciled in his kingdom. This was the beginning of the end. Paralyzed by the incompetence of their sovereign and handicapped by treason, the English forces were ill fitted to make a stand against the now infuriated Danes. The wretched Ethelred fled over the seas, and left the Danish King Sweyn to occupy the vacant throne. There was a brief interlude of Sweyn's death, Ethelred's restoration and death, and a desperate war between their respective sons, Canute and Edmund, in which Englishmen at last had a chance to show what they could do under a competent leader. But Edmund was doomed to the usual fate of Alfred's House, he died young and just when his country had most need of him, leaving England under the undisputed sway of a Danish King.

The noblest product of this struggle is the war song that recalls the death of Brihtnoth, the gallant Ealdorman of Essex, who lost his life in a vain attempt to repel a Viking raid, in 991, at Maldon. The account of the last stand of the thegns over the body of their lord is a song of defeat worthy to be compared with the Serbian epic of Kossovo. What, in all the records of loyal devotion, surpasses the speech of the old thegn,

"Heart shall the harder be,
Mind shall the keener be,
Mood shall the more be
As our main lessens . . .
. . . I am old of years,
Hence stir will I not,
But I by the half
Of my lord,
By such a loved man
To lie am thinking."[1]

So, amid a blaze of glory, declines the light of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

[1] Freeman's translation.

CHAPTER III

CELTIC CIVILIZATION

1

CELTIC ORIGINS

WE shall best study the Celtic civilization in Ireland and Wales. Scotland, with its diversity of races and its debatable South Eastern frontier, can hardly be said to have found its soul, or to have had the same historical importance, during the first millennium of our era. In no part of the British Isles was there so little homogeneity of peoples. The Angles thrust up from Northumbria and occupied the fertile South Eastern lowlands; a people akin to the Welsh had the South Western region of Strathclyde; in the extreme South-West corner were the Picts of Galloway; Irish invaders had established a Kingdom in the West which was to attain a temporary predominance; to the North lay the Picts, a people whose origin is still disputed. Later, the Danes swept round the Northern and Western coasts, occupied all the islands, and established settlements on the mainland.

The most important of all these competitors for supremacy proved ultimately to be the Northumbrian Angles. True, the effort to establish an English hegemony over Scotland proved not only disastrous in itself, but the ruin of the Northumbrian Kingdom. There is a passage in Bede which has a tragic significance as describing not only the downfall of Northumbrian power in Scotland, but foreshadowing the long agony of England's relations with Ireland.

"In the year of our Lord's incarnation 684, Egfrid, King of the Northumbrians, sending Beort, his general, with an army, into Ireland, miserably wasted that harmless nation, which had always been most friendly to the English; insomuch that in their hostile rage they spared not even churches nor monasteries. These islanders, to the utmost of their power, repelled force with force, and imploring the assistance of the divine mercy, prayed long and fervently for vengeance; and though such as curse cannot possess the Kingdom

of God, it is believed that those who were justly cursed on account of their impiety did soon suffer the penalty of their guilt from the avenging hand of God ; for the very next year that same King, rashly leading his army to ravage the province of the Picts . . . was drawn into the straits of inaccessible mountains, and slain, with the greater part of his forces." [1]

But Northumbria, though her power was driven out of Scotland, was yet to give the guiding impulse to Scottish history. The Anglian farmers of the Lothians not only occupied the most fertile strip of the country, but their practical commonsense and capacity for organization were calculated to supply just that element which a mainly Celtic people most needed. The differences between Scot and Pict gradually disappear, the very name Pict vanishes out of history. A dynasty of Irish descent comes to lord it over the whole of Scotland, but the tendency is for the centre of gravity to shift towards the Northumbrian lowlands. Edwin's burgh becomes Edinburgh and in the eleventh century King Malcolm Canmore, with his English wife, brings Scotland into line with Anglo-Norman polity and Roman religion.

In Brythonic or British Wales, and in Goidelic or Gaelic Ireland, the old Celtic civilization is too strong to be supplanted short of sheer conquest in Wales, and not even by conquest in Ireland. In using these terms, Brythonic, Goidelic and Celtic, we are entering upon one of the most disputed provinces in ethnology, and we need not deal at length with controversies that are as frequently swayed by love of country as that of truth, in which the data for a final decision are lacking, and about which the one thing that is really certain is that no simple solution is to be found.

This at least we know, that Europe contains no such thing as a pure race. In using the term Celt, we must not be taken to imply that Irishmen and Welshmen are unmixed descendants of the stock that held Rome to ransom in the days of Brennus and, as the Cimbri, were shattered by Marius a century before the birth of Christ. Conquest and migration must have produced the strangest mixture of blood, for exterminations, like Matthew Arnold's miracles, do not happen, even when the conquerors are such piously conscientious butchers as Chosen People.

It is a commonplace of ethnology that there were in both Wales and Ireland pre-Celtic stocks that combined with subsequent invaders in quite unascertainable proportions. Indeed nobody who has lived

[1] Translation, *Temple Classics*.

among the dark and wiry Welshmen can doubt the blood-predominance among them of a stock more akin to Mediterranean brunette than Celtic blonde. But spirit is more potent than blood, and there is a bond of language and temperament uniting the peoples lumped together under the inaccurate but convenient designation of Celtic.

Ireland, like Britain, was peopled by wave on wave of immigrants, to whom her earliest traditions bear a shadowy and distorted witness. It is not without its significance that the most ancient band of these, which was wiped out by a plague, was supposed to have been under the leadership of one Partolon, whose name may well be a variation of that of the legendary invader of Britain, the Trojan Brutus. Dr. Waddell claims to have discovered traces of this Partolon in Scotland, and derives his name from a Hittite-Phoenician root, "Barat," which he finds in the Indian Mahabharata and the name of Britain. However much we discount this theory—and in arguing from philology we are no doubt on treacherous ground—some significance must surely be allowed to the Eastern origin which Irish tradition assigns to the successive invasions, and we may at least respectfully hazard the suggestion that the attention of historians has been focussed somewhat too exclusively on Gaul as the starting point for immigration, to the neglect of the coast route from the Mediterranean. Partolon, according to the story, started from Spain.

We are on firm ground, however, when we say that after a Bronze Age in Ireland, during which the symbolic craftsmanship of the Celt was plied with a skill and taste unsurpassed, of their kind, anywhere, a fresh band of invaders arrived from Gaul with iron weapons and tools, against which the bronze stood as little chance as the Dervish spear against the Lee Metford. These conquerors appear to have been a tolerant folk, on the whole, and to have allowed the native tribes and kingdoms to live on under conditions of more or less honourable vassalage. Thus when we speak of Celtic Ireland gradually emerging into the light of history, it is in the knowledge that we are speaking not of one stock, but of many—more perhaps than historians have allowed for—blended together in varying proportions. But the dominant note in art, in language, in temperament and institutions is what, for want of a better word, we must designate as Celtic. And the same may be said of Wales, whose ancient connection with Ireland recent research—not to speak of her Mabinogion stories—is showing to be of the most intimate.

What concerns us is not so much the ethnological accuracy of such rough and ready terms as Celt and Saxon, as the fact that in these British Islands the Celtic and English temperaments and ideals are fundamentally different, and that from their blending and mutual repulsion respectively, have arisen no small part of the weal and woe of the two island folk that Nature, that most daring of matchmakers, has joined together.

The Celtic Spirit

The student of Irish or Welsh history must have noticed one circumstance that distinguishes it from that of England. In the sense of ordered political development, neither Ireland nor Wales possesses much that is worth calling history before the coming of the Norman. Family rises up against family, and chieftain against chieftain, but there is no such continuous effort to bring order out of chaos as that made by Alfred and his successors, nothing even to compare with the transient greatness of Northumbria. Such a wave of spiritual enthusiasm as swept over Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries has its effects in the spiritual sphere. But the nation, and even the Church, remains almost as unorganized at its subsidence as at its rise.

The besetting weakness of the Celtic mind, from the days of Caesar down to our own, has been lack of concentration, the least attractive but perhaps the most essential of all the constituents of genius. But here, as in all broad generalizations, it behoves us to tread with caution. We must not forget that Ireland, in her palmy days, produced such scholars as Erigena, such missionaries as Columcille, such a monarch as Brian Boru; we dare not deny the patient industry that must have gone to the making of runic crosses, of illuminated manuscripts, of gold and bronze ornaments, and, to come to our own age, of the holdings which have been forced by almost superhuman exertions to yield increase from a hopeless soil, often, in the end, merely to increase the rent of some non-resident landlord. When we speak, then, of imperfect concentration, we must not be understood to imply mere lack of persistence. What we mean is rather a certain weakness of the synthetic faculty, that deficiency of organizing power which is the gulf fixed between the exquisite and the great.

It has been a perpetual puzzle how the plodding Englishman has succeeded, even in the arts, in overtaking and passing the more sensitive and tasteful Celt. We look in vain around the so-called Fringe for a Shakespeare, a Chaucer, a Spenser, a Milton, a Shelley, a Turner, or a Purcell. There is no one, with the disputable exception of Burns, a Lowland Scot, whom any candid Celt would venture to select from among his compatriots to place on the same level with the least of these masters. And yet romance is in the very breath of the Welsh mountains, of the mournful hills and green plains of Ireland. The people have a poetic felicity of self-expression for which you will seek among the stolid English peasantry and townsfolk in vain.

Psychologically, the case may be put simply enough, if we conceive of all mental processes as passing through three stages; first, impression through the senses, last, realization in action, including all forms of outward expression, and between these a period of varying but appreciable duration during which the brain, like a central office, is busy recognizing the impression, co-ordinating it with others, storing it in the subconsciousness, and determining its outlet in action. It is just this middle or determining stage that the Celtic mind tends to cut short. The transition from thought to action is of excessive quickness. Herein we have the secret of the Celtic charm, and also of the Celtic failure.

The mercurial Irishman or Welshman not unnaturally laughs at the Englishman's slowness. But this very slowness may tend to strength, although, carried to excess, it may be the gravest of handicaps. But at least it gives the chance of building up a rich and well-ordered inner life, and it may impart something of that quality which the Roman knew as *gravitas*, and Emerson as "character". Now *gravitas* would hardly be cited by the most enthusiastic Irish or Welsh patriot as an attained or even a desired quality of his national temperament. He would probably designate it by a less complimentary term. A nice discrimination, a quick sensitiveness, a felicity amounting to brilliance of expression, dash and damnation of the consequences in action, all these are qualities of which he might well be proud and to which he could justly lay claim. These are the fruits of that instant transition from impression to action which we have just described.

Popular satire is not to be despised as an index of national character. It may be, and often is, grossly unfair; the typical Englishman, the Broadbent or Stogumber of Mr. Bernard Shaw, is

about as monstrous an exaggeration as the bull-making, head-thwacking "Pat" of English tradition. But nobody, not even the Society of St. George, would think of describing Tom Broadbent and Sir Gorgius Midas as being in the least like Irishmen, nor, we imagine, would any Irishman call Handy Andy or Micky Free very typical examples of the English temperament. Cant and materialism, awkwardness and lack of discrimination, are charges freely hurled against John Bull; against Pat the accusation is rather one of general irresponsibility, of acting, as a Lowland Scot might say, unadvisedly. The Irish bull is the result of a too quick flow of ideas seeking instant and unco-ordinated expression. When Sir Boyle Roche said: "Mr. Speaker, I smell a rat, I see it hovering in the air before me, but, mark my words, I shall nip it in the bud," he was displaying the very opposite of stupidity. Images were being formed in his mind with kaleidoscopic rapidity, and were hurled into expression without the least pause to judge of their fitness or congruity.

It is not surprising then, that one accomplishment in which the Celt can claim full equality with the Saxon is that of oratory. Few Irishmen or Welshmen have ever been at a loss for words. The names of Burke, Sheridan, Grattan, Flood, Sheil, and Lloyd George are not unworthy rivals to those of Bolingbroke, Chatham, Fox, and Bright. But the Celt is too often the slave and not the master of his words, down the swift flow of his eloquence prudence and even accuracy are swept away. It was not only aristocratic prejudice that kept Burke out of Whig cabinets; and as for Sheridan, we have all heard of that dazzling invective about the Begums, concluding with the orator's deliberate fainting into the arms of Burke, and of Sheridan's subsequent meeting with that very complete Englishman, Warren Hastings, and his airy explanation that of course all he had said against him was not to be taken seriously.

When, therefore, we speak of a lack of concentration as the defect of the Celtic temperament, we are using what is at best a somewhat imperfect word to express a psychological fact which no one word will fit quite exactly. Nor is there anything paradoxical in admitting that such a defect is consistent with unremitting industry. The Arab peoples have shown how it is possible to combine the utmost patience and minuteness in matters of detail with a transience and brittleness of effort on the grand scale which have left them out-distanced in their long rivalry with Western peoples. It has been remarked, by so penetrating an observer as March Phillips, how

plainly this is revealed in the Saracenic architecture, brilliant but fundamentally unsound, as contrasted with the honesty of Gothic.

Without going too minutely into the question how far other peoples have been mixed with the Celtic stock in these islands, we may remark that our earliest information about the Celts confirms such an estimate of their character. The tribes who rushed down on Rome in the days of Camillus and as suddenly melted away, the Gauls whom no less an observer than Caesar has described for us, are characterized by the same strange combination of brilliance and instability. In attack they are well-nigh irresistible, but they are incapable of sticking out a prolonged struggle, or of constructive political effort. Something of this reproach tradition has allowed to adhere to the French character, but with less than justice, for France, unlike Ireland, has come from the first under the full weight of Roman ideas and Roman discipline, and the iron of that rod has entered into the French soul. Enough of the Celtic fickleness is left, upon the surface, to deceive those whose wish is the father to their judgment, and know not that underneath burn the fires of Verdun. The Irish, on the other hand, are a people who have never come under any discipline save that of oppression. This has produced a hardness, perhaps an invincibility, but of a different order from that of France.

The rapidity of the Celt's mental processes entails a consequence that is natural in itself, and is borne out abundantly by experience. Impressions are translated so quickly into action that they have less than enough opportunity to be stored in the mind. Hence the grip of the Celt upon the outside world is feeble compared with that of the Saxon. He is, in fact, of an intensely subjective nature. The world he lives for, and to which he longs to escape, is one of dreams, and it is the characteristic of dreams that the governing faculty of the mind is in abeyance; dream facts are emotions clothed with the semblance of reality. "The Irish story-teller," says Mr. Yeats, speaking of the ancient epics, "could not interest himself with an unbroken interest in the ways men like himself burned a house or won wives no more wonderful than themselves. His mind constantly escaped out of daily circumstances as a bough that has been held down by a weak hand suddenly straightens itself out . . . His art, too, is often at its greatest when it is most extravagant, for he only feels himself among solid things, among things with fixed laws and satisfying purposes, when he has reshaped the world according to his heart's desire."

Thus it is that from the events of the ancient Irish Cuchulain and Finn epics we never get the same sense of workaday, ding-dong reality that thrills us in the Norse sagas and the Iliad, in Beowulf and the Northumbrian account of St. Andrew. When we read of Ajax defending the ships, and the Thegn of God going forth amongst the heathen, we feel that we are among men with like passions and difficulties to our own, we are even ready to accept the supernatural element of the stories in good faith for the nonce. Beowulf's dragon may not occur in any book of natural history, but he is a genuine dragon for all that, and it is even betting, we guess, whether he or Beowulf is going to get the best of it. But few can have the least illusion of reality when they read of a gigantic man stalking into the hall of Emain Macha, and allowing any hero to cut off his head provided he may take his own turn at decapitation on the following day. The head is duly cut off, whereupon the body picks it up, and walks, with neck spouting blood, out of the room, to join up outside.

In the story of Deirdre, one of the most beautiful, in its tragic poignancy, of any people or time, the action is far less credible than that of most fairy-tales. Conchubar, the old, jealous King, has betrayed the lovers, Deirdre and Naise, son of Usnach, with his brothers, and surrounded them in the house destined for their destruction. First one of the two sons of Fergus, who have accompanied Deirdre and the sons of Usnach, rushes out of the house and kills three-fifths of the King's army, whereupon Conchubar buys him off by the gift of a mountain, which turns bare in a single night on account of that treachery. But the second son, fair-haired Iollan, is made of firmer stuff, he makes three courses round the house, and disposes of three-fifths of the remaining troops. Conchubar then despatches his own son, Fiacra, to fight Iollan. Fiacra is put down and lies beneath his shield; the shield Ochain roars for the greatness of its owner's peril, and the three chief waves of Ireland, the wave of Tuagh, the wave of Cliodna and the wave of Rudriage, roar in response. Far away at Dun Subairce, Conall Cearnach hears the roaring, and hastens to the scene, in time to slay the fair-haired Iollan and deliver Fiacra. After this it seems almost commonplace when the Druid Cathbad raises an imaginary sea which causes the sons of Usnach to swim on dry land, and their swords to drop from their hands.

But these Irish happenings are sober commonsense beside the products of the Welsh imagination, especially as exemplified in the

earlier Mabinogion, -those of the tales yet untouched by the spirit of Continental chivalry. The story of Deirdre is at least a work of profound emotional import, and if the artist makes light of reality, it is because he chooses, with full intent, to inhabit a dream world. But such a story as that of Kilhwrch and Olwen is a string of rollicking absurdities, in which only affectation could find anything but the most entertaining of nightmares. Among the many things that Kilhwrch is told to get before he can marry Olwen are a comb, razor and scissors which are to be found between the ears of a big pig with silver bristles, called the Twrch Trwyth. King Arthur, who has obligingly consented to help Kilhwrch, goes over to Ireland with his hosts, his horses and his dogs, to fight the big pig and his seven little pigs. On the first day the Twrch Trwyth vanquishes the dogs and the Irish and lays waste a fifth part of Ireland, on the second day he gets the better of Arthur's household, and for the next nine days and nine nights he and Arthur himself fight continuously without so much as one of the little pigs being killed. Then all the pigs jump into the sea and swim to Wales, and Arthur, with all the warriors that are in the three isles of Britain, and the three islands adjacent, and France, and Normandy, and Brittany and the Summer Country, pursues the hunt with varying fortunes through Wales and the West of England, until he has secured the comb, the razor, and the scissors, and killed all but two of the little pigs, whereupon the survivors, having satisfied honour by the slaughter of the King of France and a good part of Arthur's armies, jump into the sea and are never heard of again.

The difference in spirit between the Welsh and the Irish is probably more due to the nature of their respective countries, than to any distinction between the Brythonic and Goidelic temperament, in so far as these words stand for racial facts. The Welsh are a nation of mountaineers, with the independence and intractability that hillmen naturally develop ; the green hills of Ireland, the softness of her atmosphere, the bogs and misty distances of her central plain, combine to produce a dreamy melancholy, a wistfulness of spirit that animates even heroes, as when Cuchulain and Ferdiad, after fighting and wounding each other all day so that birds can fly through their bodies, rest at evening and each gives the other three kisses. From the dawn of her iron age to the coming of the Danes, Ireland had been subject to no external pressure whatever, whereas the Welsh had first had to submit to a military occupation, and afterwards had had the threat of a warlike and aggressive

alien power constantly on their borders. Wales was therefore less in a condition than Ireland to follow her destinies unimpeded; her tribal feuds were always more or less overshadowed by the threat to her existence. Hence is born a somewhat tougher-fibred, less purely artistic temperament. It is significant that while Ireland was pouring missionaries of the gospel into Britain and the Continent, the Welsh Church held sullenly and proudly aloof from any taint of contact with the Saxon.

The attitude of each people towards reality is what we might expect under these conditions. The Irishman is a rebel, but he is also a fugitive. He flies from the brutality of life into dreams, the Welshman simply rebels against it. Matthew Arnold, who wrote his brilliant essay on the Celtic spirit largely on the strength of what he knew about Wales, made the mistake of generalizing from the Welsh attitude to that of the Celt in general. He cites a fine and typically Welsh poem of Llywarch Hen to his crutch, an old man cursing his lot in the fashion of Job. To this there are enough Irish parallels. But the Irish have also a way of escape like that of St. Brendan, going forth alone in the night on the mountain that now bears his name, seeing the vast and dim ocean spreading all around, and then beholding the fair and excellent vision of a blessed land, far from human ken, with angels hovering over it, or, as the greatest of modern Irish poets has sung:—

> "The wind blows out of the gates of the day,
> The wind blows over the lonely of heart
> And the lonely of heart is withered away,
> While the fairies dance in a place apart . . ."

One point of contact with reality both Irishman and Welshman certainly have in their intense love of nature, and their sympathy, one might almost say their comradeship, with the lower animals. A Welsh patriot bard, moved by the woes of his country, quite naturally addresses every stanza to a little pig, and one of Dafydd ap Gwilym's finest poems is an ode to a fox. Irish saints were great lovers of animals; St. Bridget, when she was cooking bacon for her father, could not refrain from bestowing a goodly portion on a "very hungry, miserable hound" who came and begged for it; St. Patrick stopped some men who were going to kill a fawn and carried the little thing in his arms, the mother running behind; most beautiful of all is the story of St. Columcille's old, white horse, who, perceiving that his master was about to die, came and shed tears into his lap. "Let him alone," murmured the saint, to those who would have driven the horse away, "for he loves me."

Irish nature poetry has a beauty all of its own. There is no looking before nor after, no attempt to penetrate a secret or draw a moral; the poet merely jots down, with exquisite discrimination, just what he sees and feels and leaves it at that:

> "The peat bog is as the raven's coat,
> The loud cuckoo bids welcome,
> The speckled fish leaps,
> Strong is the bound of the swift warrior."[1]

It is enough merely to catalogue these things; they are too lovely and lovable in themselves to need embellishment. The Irish temperament lends itself less to reflection than enjoyment. It is difficult to conceive of an Irish Wordsworth.

Living in a world so largely composed of dreams, it is natural that the Celt should be a believer in all kinds of magic, for the root of magic is the idea that thoughts are things, and that what happens in the mind happens also in the world without. This is not exactly the same as mysticism, which is an intense form of mental discipline. Mysticism proper is more natural to the Englishman than the Celt, as the names of Hylton, Rolle, Lady Julian, Fox and Law bear witness. Magic is the Celt's province. Even in the South-West corner of England, which Egbert conquered, the Celtic nature bewrays itself in the hundreds of ghosts that haunt house and wood, in the bottomless pools, the little men in green, and the local misadventures of His Satanic Majesty with which every lover of Dartmoor must be familiar. Ireland and the Celtic parts of Scotland are still the resort of the good people; the superstition of the Welsh is proverbial. The Nordic priests of Thor and Woden never impress the imagination of mankind in the same way as the awful figure of the Celtic Druid:

> "All things begin and end in Albion's ancient, Druid, rocky shore."

The Celt's swift transition from impression to action carries as a natural consequence an extreme and whole-hearted intensity, though not necessarily a persistence of passion. Anybody who has witnessed a Welsh revival meeting or been in an Irish crowd will realize how utterly the Celt can abandon himself, on the least provocation, to his emotions. He is a great lover, a great hater. Where in all literature can you meet with anything more poignant than the keening of Deirdre over the sons of Usnach:

"Do not break the strings of my heart, as you took hold of my young youth, Conchubar; though my darling is dead, my love is

[1] Kuno Meyer's translation.

strong to live. What is country to me, or land, or lordship? What are swift horses? What are jewels and gold? Och! It is I will be lying tonight on the strand like the beautiful sons of Usnach!" [1]

There is, in the Welsh story of Peredur, the original of Percival, an incident which, if it has not the tragic intensity of Deirdre's keening, at least shows us the Celt in all the beautiful extravagance of his passion. Peredur has arisen with his mind full of the thought of his lady, and as he rides he sees first the new-fallen snow upon the ground, then a bird whom a hawk has killed, and lastly a raven. "And Peredur stood, and compared the blackness of the raven, and the whiteness of the snow, and the redness of the blood, to the hair of the lady whom best he loved, which was blacker than jet, and to her skin which was whiter than snow, and to the two red spots upon her cheeks, which were redder than the blood upon the snow appeared to be." As he muses thus he is accosted by twenty-four knights in succession, and so deep is his meditation that he cannot answer them, but when they attack him he throws each in turn to the ground with one thrust of his lance, and finally overthrows his enemy, Sir Kai, and rides over him twenty-one times without disturbing the train of his meditation. Here is the quintessence of dreaming, but it is a dream whose wings are steeped with unearthly passion and fragrant with winds that are blown out of fairyland.

The Celt has been called melancholy, but so, with equal truth, are the ancient English, a strange instance of the imperfection of words, for love is not more different from hate than Celtic from Saxon melancholy. There is a grave and often heroic resignation about the Saxon; Wyrd is above him, the inexorable destiny, and a man's part is to endure. "The hard helmet decked with gold, must be bereft of its adornments; they sleep who once did brighten it, they who prepared the masks of war. . . There is no joy of the harp, no mirth of the gleewood, no good hawk swinging through the hall, no swift horse beating with his hoof the castle yard. Baleful death hath sent forth many mortals on their way." [2] About this there is no shrinking from reality, no rebellion, just the mournful acceptance of life in all its inexorable sadness. But the Celt, when he is confronted with a reality that contradicts his dreaming, dashes himself against it with a fury that finds vent in titanic imagery, in gestures and actions of unmeasured extravagance.

It is said of Conchubar that he had been desperately wounded

[1] Lady Gregory's translation.
[2] From *Beowulf*, Mr. C. B. Tinker's translation.

in the head, and was told that, in order to save his life, he must keep quiet and refrain from anger. This he did for seven years, but on one Friday he beheld the sun and moon darkened at mid-day, and was told that at this very hour Jesus Christ was being crucified. Forthwith the old pagan King burst into a terrible cry of grief and rage:

"It is with Christ my help would be; a wild shout going out; the keening of a full lord, a full loss . . . beautiful the fight I would make for Christ that is defouled, I would not rest although my own body was tormented . . . I would go to death for his safety, it crushes my heart to hear the outcries and the lamentations." [1]

Forthwith he rushed out with his sword, and began hacking the branches of an oak-wood, since there were no Jews at hand on whom his vengeance might be wreaked. And in so doing he opened the old wound in his head, and fell lifeless among the trees.

That is the Celtic melancholy; we should rather call it the Celtic revolt against all the brutality and ugliness of things, all that makes the world we see different from the world we dream. The evil thing may be as inexorable as death, it may be as high as God's throne—that is no reason for accepting it. St. Patrick may tell Oisin how his companions, the Fianna, are lying on the flagstone of pain. The old hero merely replies:

"It would be a great shame for God not to take the locks of pain off Finn; if God himself were in bonds my King would fight for His sake. Finn left no one in pain or in danger . . . for the sake of your love, Patrick, do not forsake the great men; bring in the Fianna unknown to the King of Heaven." [2]

It is that selfsame melancholy that drove forth Brendan into unknown seas to seek the Blessed Island, that has made the Celt in all ages the adventurer on forlorn hopes, the despiser of odds. He does not count the forces of reality. So it was when Kilhwrch replied to every miracle dared him by Yspadaden Penkawr; "it will be easy for me to compass this, although you may think it will not be easy," so it was when Conolly and his Dublin mob dared defy the whole might of an Empire in arms. No wonder that of such people it has been said, "They always went forth to battle, and they always died."

[1] Lady Gregory's translation.
[2] Ib.

Christianity and Scholarship

It is a proof of the astonishing vitality and energy of spiritual Rome that, at a time when the temporal Empire was bleeding to death from the assaults of Huns and Vandals, the Church was actually pushing her war of conquest into regions to which neither the Cross nor the Eagles had ever yet penetrated. Ireland, given over to nature symbolism and luxuriant magic, might prove not unresponsive to the gospel message reinforced, so it was faithfully believed, by supernatural powers more than a match for those of the mightiest druid.

But the fire was not to kindle into a blaze at the first lighting. The missionary Palladius, sent from Gaul in 431, seems to have departed or died without achieving any widespread conversion. But in the next year arrived the man of genius whose name will forever be linked with Irish Christianity. Patrick was a West-country Briton of respectable parentage who had been kidnapped during one of the Irish raids and served a term of slavery, escaping finally to Gaul, and serving his apprenticeship in sainthood in the island monastery of Lerins. He appears to have been a man of comparatively little book learning, but of extraordinary tact and personal magnetism, coupled with a sweetness of disposition whose fragrance still lingers round his memory.

Patrick lost no time in striving for merely local successes. Nothing would satisfy him but to establish Christianity at the court of the High King, one Loigaire, a pagan who was possessed, unlike most of those with whom the Church had to deal, with an invincible loyalty to the faith of his fathers. It was the feast of Beltane, which the story, with some wrenching of dates, makes to coincide with Easter Day. On that night it was death to light any fire except the King's fire. But when darkness had descended, the King and his courtiers, in the palace of Tara, saw far away over the Plain of Breg the flicker of a fire. It was the challenge of Christianity, the Paschal fire that Patrick had kindled in honour of his risen Lord. So the druids told the King that unless that fire was put out before daybreak, it would never be put out at all. Accordingly King, courtiers and the druids mounted their chariots and drove off in the night across the ten miles that separated them from the Hill of Slane, circling widdershins in order to defeat the newcomer's

incantations. Then the White Magic of Christianity was pitted against the Black Magic of druidism throughout that night of wonders, until Loigaire, still unconverted, was fain to acknowledge defeat.

Such was the coming of Christianity as seen through the mirror of Irish imagination, though another and earlier account suggests that the contest was rather one of words than of magic, and that what most affected Loigaire was the fear lest the levelling tendencies of the new faith should lead to a confounding of social ranks. But he respected the personality even while he rejected the message of Patrick, and allowed the missionary a free hand, while remaining constant himself to the faith of his fathers which even he must have recognized as a lost cause.

Patrick had some of the faculty, possessed by that other great missionary organizer, Saint Paul, of becoming all things to all men. He was no Wilfrid or Augustine, to force the whole of Roman discipline upon the Irish tribes. He saw that even Rome must modify her demands upon a people that had never felt the yoke of the Caesars. Family and clan feeling was too strong to admit of effective centralization. Accordingly, the Irish Church came to be organized, or rather unorganized, on lines that by Roman or Gallic or even British standards were nothing less than anarchic. The monastic life was the one that appealed most to the ardent, Irish nature, and the monasteries were usually attached to particular family or tribal units, and consisted of little groups of ascetic individualists, living apart in stone or wattle cells, clustered together rather like the huts of a Kaffir kraal, with perhaps an encircling palisade, and a rather larger but still primitive building which served for occasional common worship. Outside the monasteries prevailed an ecclesiastical chaos. The fatal practice was started—whether by Patrick or his successors is uncertain—of appointing bishops without sees, with the result that the Irish Church soon became afflicted by a veritable plague of these mitred unemployed, and it was nearly a thousand years after Patrick's death before the celibacy of the clergy could be enforced.

It is easy to understand the enthusiasm with which the Irish rushed into the arms of Christianity. To them it was the realization of their fairest dreams; the Kingdom of Heaven was within them as it never was in the subjects of the Roman discipline. Christ was a reality as palpable as that of a friend, "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ under me, Christ over me, Christ to the right of me, Christ to the left of me, Christ

in lying down, Christ in sitting, Christ in rising up, Christ in the heart of everyone that thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone that speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me "—with such passion of faith did the great Patrick invoke his Saviour, when his enemies were lying in ambush for him. And the story runs that all they saw passing by was a wild deer and its fawn, Patrick's servant.

Love is the keynote of this Irish Christianity; the hardness that expressed itself elsewhere in persecutions and bitter controversies had not yet penetrated to the Green Island. It was a love that included everything in its scope; Saint Bridget, when she was not giving to the dogs would be giving to the poor; as for the holy Maling, he could be so courteous to the Devil himself as to draw a tribute of rhapsodic admiration from that "man of tribulations". There is no more adorable figure than that of the hermit, seated in his woodland shieling, in frank and ecstatic enjoyment of the life and beauty around him:

"Around it tame swine lie down,
Goats, pigs,
Wild swine, grazing deer,
A badger's brood.

"A peaceful troop, a heavy host of denizens of the soil,
A trysting at my house:
To meet them foxes come,
How delightful!" [1]

Thus the Irish Church, however much it may have suffered from its lack of centralized organization, went far to compensate for it in the richness and intensity of its inner life. It was as monks or hermits that the Irish found the most congenial outlet for their individualism. They went forth to spread their gospel in the wildest lands as cheerfully as St. Brendan had gone to find the blessed island. And along with Christianity Ireland embraced learning. It was as if, in the very acquisition of knowledge, her sons could find that escape from reality which they were always seeking. Her schools, collections of huts clustered together within the precincts of some monastic community, became famous throughout Europe, and scholars flocked to Ireland from all parts, sure of a courteous and hospitable welcome.

It was during the sixth and seventh centuries, as Dollinger [2] informs us, that "the Church of Ireland stood in the full beauty

[1] Kuno Meyer's translation. [2] Quoted by Newman.

of its bloom. The spirit of the gospel operated amongst the people with a vigorous and vivifying power; troops of holy men, from the highest to the lowest ranks of society, obeyed the counsel of Christ, and forsook all things that they might follow Him. There was not a country in the world, during this period, which could boast of pious foundations or of religious communities equal to those that adorned this far-distant island. The schools in the Irish cloisters were at this time the most celebrated in the West; and in addition to those which have been already mentioned, there flourished the schools of St. Finian of Clonard, founded in 530, and those of Cataldus, founded in 640. Whilst almost the whole of Europe was desolated by war, peaceful Ireland, free from the invasions of external foes, opened to the lovers of learning and piety a welcome asylum."

The spirit of Irish scholarship found its highest, and at the same time its most characteristic expression in the philosophy of John Scotus Erigena, who flourished in the early ninth century, and many of the details of whose life are wrapped in the mists of legend. In one story that is told of him the essential Irishman (then called Scot) is unmistakably revealed. He was sitting at table opposite the French King, Charles the Bald, and the latter, with that heavy badinage, so characteristic of persons in authority from monarchs down to ushers, enquired, as nearly as we can bring out the point in a translation: "What divides a Scot from a sot?" "Only a table," was the innocent reply, surely with some primitive touch of the brogue. Erigena possesses quite the most original intellect of his time, and until the coming of Abelard he stands unrivalled in Europe. The discipline of Rome has produced no more effect on his mind than on those of his compatriots. He is less of a Catholic than an unconscious Hindu, and indeed, when we approach the study of India, we note a striking similarity between the two extreme outposts of Aryan civilization. A Pope, four centuries after his time, branded Erigena's opinions, with more insight than elegance, as swarming with worms of heretical perversity, a compliment which reminds us of Luther's reference to the *lousiness* of the Papal doctrines.

Like a Hindu, Erigena builds up his universe entirely out of his own mind, with but the shadowiest reference either to the facts of life, or, what is more remarkable, to those theological dogmas which were the support and the dungeon of the later schoolmen. Like Brahma, he dreams the universe, and an astonishingly modern universe it is. It is avowedly to be apprehended not by authority

but by reason'; the Persons of the Trinity are refined into abstract principles as thoroughly as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva in the mind of an educated Brahman. Above all, it is a kindly universe; the awful dogmas of Hell and original sin are explained away as thoroughly as anyone could, at the time, without being dispatched to find out for himself. Hell is a symbol, sin merely nothingness that the unenlightened think to be something—the Hindu Maya. In the end all things, even the devils, return to that eternal peace, passing understanding, that neither creates nor is created, that which is at once nothing and everything, call it God or Nirvana.

Here we cannot refrain from quoting one of the most inspired passages of that supreme thinker and stylist, an Englishman who loved Ireland, John Henry Newman:

"Distinct, nay antagonistic, in character and talent, the one nation and the other, Irish and English, the one more resembling the Greek [no, not the Greek, with his essential materialism, but the Hindu, with whom the Cardinal of St. George was but little acquainted], the other the Roman, open from the first perhaps to jealousies as well as rivalries, they consecrated their respective gifts to the Almighty Giver, and, labouring together for the same great end, they obliterated whatever there was of human infirmity in their mutual intercourse by the merit of their common achievements. Each by turn could claim the predominance in the contest of sanctity and of learning. In the schools of science, England has no name to rival Erigena in originality, or St. Virgil in freedom of thought; nor among canonized women any saintly virgin to compare with St. Bridget; nor, although it has 150 saints in its calendar, can it pretend to equal that Irish multitude which the Book of Life alone is large enough to contain. Nor can Ireland, on the other hand, boast of a doctor such as St. Bede, or of an apostle equal to St. Boniface, or of so long a catalogue of royal devotees as that of the thirty male and female Saxons who in the course of two centuries resigned their crowns, or as the roll of twenty-three kings, and sixty queens and princes, who, between the seventh and eleventh centuries gained a place among the saints. Yet, after all, the Irish, whose brilliancy of genius has sometimes been considered, like the Greek, to augur fickleness and change, have managed to persevere to this day in the science of the saints, long after their ancient rivals have lost the gift of faith." [1]

Though the Church of Wales had a goodly record of saints,

[1] From *The Idea of a University*, ch. x.

and can boast of schools like that of St. Illtyd, its Christianity can hardly be said to have had a bloom and a fervour like that of Ireland. The legends of its saints are sometimes repulsive, like that of the Breton Illtyd, who alone out of a whole hunting party failed to be swallowed up by ground that the ownership of St. Cadoc had rendered taboo, or merely grotesque, like that of the patron saint, David, who is said to have owed his archbishopric to his success in a singular episcopal competition at the synod of Brefi. Having decided to reject the Pelagian heresy, each of the good prelates in turn got up upon a heap of clothes, and strained his lungs to bawl the news to all the assembled multitude. None succeeded, until, by the advice of the aged Paulinus, David was sent for. The story is of course apocryphal, the archbishop is an anachronism, and if the Welsh crowd had been kept waiting about until David had arrived, other things would have happened. These Welsh legends breathe a very different spirit from that of the pure and fervent Christianity of men like Patrick and Columcille.

Welsh Christianity was already old at the time when Patrick was spreading the Good News in Ireland. Its brightest ornament was Gildas, a scholar and the nearest approach to a historian that Wales can show for long centuries. This obviously sincere and disinterested Churchman takes a depressing view of his country's state and prospects. He is as much of a patriot as the prophets of ancient Israel, and his object is to

> "Show each wound, each weakness clear,
> To strike his finger on the place,
> And say, thou ailest here, and here!"

In his opinion, the tide of invasion that has borne back the Britons into their mountain fastnesses has been due to the tyranny and lusts of their various Kings, and to the worldliness and depravity of their clergy. Making all allowance for prophetic exaggeration, it is difficult, on reading this terrible and detailed indictment, to believe that it can be wholly without foundation, or that Christianity in Wales was in a particularly healthy condition at the time when Gildas wrote.

4

Welsh and Irish Nationality

One weakness of the Celtic temperament lay in its incapacity for organization. For patient, constructive effort the Celt, with his dreamy nature, and his quick transition from impression to

deed, is but poorly equipped. We see English sovereigns like Alfred and Edgar, slowly and painfully building up a fabric of law and ordered government. Hardly anything of this kind takes place in either Wales or Ireland. Such a King as Howel the Good will, indeed, codify the Welsh traditional laws, but he is able to establish no machinery for their enforcement. The social unit is, and remains, the family; the state only exists in embryo.

Wales, indeed, is less primitive in this respect than Ireland, which is what we should naturally expect, considering that she has passed under the Roman sway, and that she is perpetually threatened by a powerful and ambitious enemy, anxious for her subjugation and harassing her with raids from behind the shelter of his dyke. The King, or rather the local chief, differed, as Professor Lloyd has well pointed out, from the Kings of Ireland, in that he set out to enforce justice, as interpreted by the court of his "cantref", in person and by force of arms. Theft was punished by death, though, by a merciful Christian provision, beggars who had stolen after starving three days were let off. The King's power to make himself respected lay in his body of private retainers, often a little band of not more than a hundred men, but generally the most formidable force in his dominions.

For all this, the Welsh do not seem to have taken kindly to the idea of law. "They never," says Giraldus Cambrensis, writing as late as the twelfth century, "scruple at taking a false oath for the sake of any temporary emolument or advantage; so that in civil and ecclesiastical causes, each party, being ready to swear whatever seems expedient to its purpose, endeavours both to prove and defend, although the venerable laws, by which oaths are deemed sacred, and truth is honoured and respected, by favouring the accused and throwing an odium on the accuser, impose the burden of bringing proofs upon the latter. But to a people so cunning and crafty, this yoke is pleasant and this burden is light." Nor was perjury their only besetting weakness, according to Giraldus, for he informs us that no people is so much addicted to the digging up of boundary ditches, the removal of landmarks, and, in fact, every kind of land-grabbing. This is no doubt accounted for by facts being, in Professor Lloyd's words, "in an early Welsh court, often quite subordinate to status, and the mere will of a landowner of 'higher privilege' was enough to give effect to his desire to extend his boundaries at the expense of a less privileged neighbour."

The fact is that family feeling seems to have been so strong

among the Welsh that it was almost impossible to superimpose effectually any higher units such as the State. Giraldus remarks—what must have struck anybody with Welsh friends to-day—that they are inordinately proud of their birth and pedigrees. Their vendettas were therefore of Corsican fierceness, and impersonal to the extent that a brother, who had been hated and persecuted during life, would be avenged after death. Had they only been able to unite effectually, the Welsh might have been invincible among their mountains, for they were all trained to arms and brave fighters, though with the traditional unsteadiness of the Celt. But there was no tendency to unite or set up any form of national organization, except when Roderick the Great so far pulled the nation together as actually to make the beginning of a navy. But when he was killed, the whole fabric fell to pieces again, and the best that could be attained was a nominal supremacy of some chief, that could only by courtesy be entitled government.

But there is no deeper fallacy than that which confounds national with political unity. Little Wales, for all her faults and all her instability, was truly a nation. An unmistakable sign of patriotic feeling is contained in the legend of a common and honourable origin. The Britons, according to their Welsh remnant, were descended from the Trojans who had fled from Troy with Brutus. For their sins they had been driven into the West, but no less an authority than Merlin had prophesied that they should possess their land again. The great figure of Arthur was dimly shaping itself out of the mists of the past as the ideal, patriot King. An old Welshman was bold enough to tell King Henry II that though his nation might be harassed, it could never be finally subdued. "Nor do I think that any other nation than this of Wales, or any other language, whatever may hereafter come to pass, shall, in the day of severe examination before the Supreme Judge, answer for this corner of the earth." Or, as Taliesin sings:—

"Their Lord they will praise,
Their speech they will keep,
Their land will they lose,
Except wild Wales.

Till some change shall come,
After long penance,
When equally ripe
The two crimes come.

Britons then shall have
Their land and their crown,
And the stranger swarm
Shall disappear."

In Ireland we find even less political unity than in Wales. Between the last Celtic and the first Danish invasion, the Irish, unthreatened from without, had no incentive to build up a central government above the ancient tribal organization. There was, indeed, an Ardri or High King with a domain in Meath, and certain rights to tribute that he might enforce if he could. The result, when a King of Leinster was in question, was an armed raid, which every Ardri was bound in honour to undertake, and which ended in a pitched battle, involving, as likely as not, the High King's death. Irish political history is a monotonous record of raids and family feuds, with little apparent purpose except that of driving off cattle, maintaining some point of family honour, or gratifying the Irishman's traditional love of a row. These wars were generally decided by one battle and the death of at least one leader, since it was dishonourable to survive a defeat.

If Ireland was disunited politically she had two bonds of union in her law and her national sentiment. Irish law was even more lacking in formal sanctions that that of Wales. In the earliest times any learned man appears to have been qualified to act as judge, but in process of time the privilege was restricted to "brehons" who had a regular training in the law. The brehon, like the umpire at cricket, gave his decision when appealed to, but it is a moot question whether he had any means of enforcing it except the pressure of public opinion. Mrs. Green,[1] indeed, holds that the judges had the power of swift and severe punishment, but she relies largely on what seems a mere speculation that many of the battles recorded by chroniclers arose out of the enforcement of justice, which even if it were to be established, would prove no more than that a King had as hazardous an adventure in enforcing a law as in extracting a tribute. But, as she pertinently indicates, for a man to set himself in open defiance of the brehons was to involve losing his honour-price and status in a country where status was all in all, and such contumacy was probably unthinkable in practice to any but the most hardened characters.

The basis of Irish law was the family, and the union of families in the Tuath or clan, usually tracing its descent to a common ancestor. This was no doubt much the same as with the Anglo-Saxon invaders of England, but they, in their utilitarian way, showed a capacity for grouping themselves in artificial units that the Irishman neither possessed nor desired. To him family feeling was,

[1] In *The History of the Irish State to* 1014, ch. 12.

and is still, far more powerful than with the Englishman, so strong, in fact, that not till after centuries of English domination was it possible for Ireland to evolve a national as distinct from a clan polity.

It may be said with some justice that the weakness of Ireland as a nation has lain in her indurated clannishness, which has had a similar effect in retarding national development to that which psychoanalysts tell us is produced by an inordinate love for a parent on the growing youth or maiden. Even the Church had to fit her organization into the all-pervading tribal framework, which was proof against the centralizing discipline of Rome. Every man had his place in a complicated hierarchy of social ranks culminating in an intensely proud and clan-conscious nobility. Add to this a law of succession that seemed as if it were specially designed to foster vendettas.

The nearest approach to national organization was provided by the great assemblies which were held from time to time, and at which the laws were publicly recited. They were also the occasion of athletic sports and every kind of conviviality. At the yearly fair at Telltown all the people, without distinction of class or sex, were qualified to attend. Still more important was the triennial assembly in the great hall at Tara, over which the High King presided, and which was attended by all the aristocracy of birth and learning. Its special object was to preserve intact, or modify if necessary, the law of the land. "This then is my foster-mother," says an ancient sage, quoted by Mrs. Green, "the island in which ye are, even Ireland, and the familiar knee of this island is the hill on which ye are, namely Tara."

The unity of ancient Ireland is of a kind which the practical Saxon, brought up in the Roman and Norman tradition, finds it impossible to understand, and this very failure has been the prime cause of the tragedy which has dogged Anglo-Irish relations. To the English invader the Brehon Law was a "damnable law which is no law, hateful to God and man", and in our own century we find such a scholar and statesman as Lord Balfour solemnly arguing against the sentiment of Irish nationality with the lamentable sneer that "Ireland has never been deprived of her national organization, for she never possessed one". But the unity of Ireland was one of the spirit, and it is even more wrong to deny it than it is to sentimentalize over it, and exaggerate its possibilities for good. It was at any rate a lovely and wonderful aspect of this unity that

in an age of incessant war, poets and learned men could go about without let or hindrance, that even before Christianity the Irish loved and respected learning. National sentiment was fostered, also, at the great assemblies by the recitation of history, and if the Welsh bard could write of his people "their speech they will keep", pride in his native tongue was equally the mark of an Irishman.

How intense Irish national sentiment could be, we may realize from reading Columcille's greeting to Ireland, which, though Mr. Kuno Meyer ascribes it to the eleventh century is, whatever its real authorship, one of the most inspired patriotic poems in all literature. The Irishman loves Ireland as he loves nature, he catalogues, in unadorned detail, just those persons and places that are too dear in themselves to need the adornments of epithet or imagery. He dwells upon Loch Lene and upon Lenny, upon the clerics and the birds and the oaks and the sloes, upon sweet Brendan and Comgall of eternal life. And then, as his thoughts come home to Derry, with its crowd of white angels from one end to the other, he cries in a supreme access of love:

"My Derry, my little oak-grove,
My dwelling and my little cell,
O living God that art in Heaven above,
Woe to him who violates it!" [1]

The Norse Invasions and Brian Boru

The first awakening from that external peace which had favoured the brightest days of Irish civilization, came from Viking Northmen, those eminently practical and businesslike adventurers whom it required all the heroism of Alfred to hold in check, and who conquered England, in the long run, as well as Normandy. But Ireland they failed to conquer. They were confronted with the same difficulty that baffled Napoleon in Spain; they were attacking a social organism in a low stage of development. For the Irish were without towns, without coined money, and without any organized system of national defence. Above all, they had no sort of a navy, the most necessary means of defence against seafarers for an island people. But the mere fact of there being a number of families or tribes united only by spiritual bonds made their complete conquest a matter of infinite difficulty. Every single tribe had to be conquered in detail; there was no heart of the nation

[1] Kuno Meyer's translation.

at which you could strike, no Alfred nor Harold to concentrate a national levy which, if finally beaten, would leave the country naked to conquest. And so the Danes planted their towns and ravaged all over the country, but it was, as Mr. Holland Rose said of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, like a sword-slash through a pond.

At last came the supreme crisis, and a national hero, in the shape of Brian Boru, or Brian of the Tribute, who, from being head of a local dynasty in Munster, arose first to be King of that province, and then, with an army largely composed of Danes, managed to oust Maelsechlainn, the hereditary High King, from Tara, and to seize the High Kingship himself, with some idea of providing Ireland with the centralized government she lacked.

It was a critical time, for during Brian's supremacy England was conquered by Sweyn and Canute, and a great Northern Empire extended from the Baltic to Land's End. It was natural that the Danish imperialists should entertain the same prejudice against a free Ireland on their flank as Agricola, and accordingly when the Danish settlement of Dublin was threatened, Danes flocked to its defence from all parts, even as far as the distant Orkneys.

The decisive battle was joined upon the shore at Clontarf. The army of Brian was the nearest approach to a national army that Ireland ever raised, but even so it consisted only of the hosts of Munster and Connaught, with the doubtful support of Maelsechlainn and his host of Meath; the North held sullenly aloof, and Leinster was in alliance with the enemy. All day the fight raged, and Brian, too old to fight, remained praying in his tent, and watching the standard of his son Murtagh as it floated above the thickest of the fight. At last it fell, and "Ireland is fallen with it!" cried the King in utter despair. Then, even as the enemy ranks were breaking in ruin before the Irish charge, a Danish Earl, flying from the field, rushed into the tent and slew Brian. But the dream of a Northern Empire was shattered for ever.

It is difficult to speak of Brian as a patriot, in the sense that we use the word of Alfred. His policy had been consistently in the interests of his own family, and by supplanting the High King he had ruined the last hope of any effective political union by making the High Kingship the prize of any successful adventurer; though he vanquished the Danish host at Clontarf, he had not scrupled to enlist Danes in his service against Irishmen, and against his own sovereign. If Clontarf averted the immediate danger, it left Ireland fatally weak, and even more anarchic than before. The Danes

remained in their fortified towns along the coast, open gates into Ireland for a yet more formidable invader of their own blood. And yet, if we hesitate to give Brian Boru the title of patriot, we can hardly deny him that of hero. Irishmen of all ages will think with pride upon the glory of Clontarf, nor will they readily expunge from their hearts those words of the great King: "It is not hereditary with us to submit."

CHAPTER IV

NORMAN CIVILIZATION

1

The Vikings

The slowness of thought and imagination, that clogged the wheels of Anglo-Saxon civilization, might have proved ruinous had it not been for the infusion of blood and energy from the North-East that began towards the end of the eighth century and culminated at that most familiar of all dates, 1066. We are apt to make too absolute a distinction between the two conquests, Danish and Norman, to regard the French-speaking followers of Duke William as essentially Frenchmen. There is, of course, a certain element of truth in such a view; William's host included many feudal adventurers and a majority of troops who were not Norman at all; the original inhabitants of Normandy had blended with their conquerors to an undeterminable extent; but the nucleus of that proud aristocracy which held down England only to weld her into a puissant and united nation were in blood and character Northmen, whatever elements of French and Roman culture they may, characteristically enough, have assimilated.

Normandy itself, we must remember, was long divided into a Western, conservative half, staunch to the old Danish traditions, looking for support to the Danish connection, and an Eastern half, centring in Rouen and Évreux, receptive of French and Roman ideas, progressively Christian, and covered with monasteries that looked to the South for a market for their wool. The close ties of friendship that united the Norman Dukes with the ducal and royal French House of Capet greatly strengthened this tendency, but it was only during the dukedom of the Conqueror himself that the battle between the two cultures was finally decided in a sort of confused tilting match at Val-ès-Dunes, and a united, Catholic and Latinized Normandy came definitely into being. But it was the Danish blood and the Danish spirit that received and interpreted that culture, and it was the successor of Guthrum and Canute who

brought it to England at Pevensey. To lose sight of this fact is to miss the whole significance of the Norman conquest.

The Northmen, somewhat misleadingly designated as Danes, who were the terror of Europe during the ninth and tenth centuries, were of the same Nordic stock as the Anglo-Saxons—parts of the Beowulf story reappear in the sagas—like them they were sea-faring, sea-loving adventurers, with a practical, independent spirit, and a religion which did not sit too heavily upon them. But between Northman and Saxon there is a difference of spirit which, though subtle, has been decisive of much in our history. Bede and Alfred are as unmistakably Saxons as Olaf Tryggveson and Gunnar of the saga are Danes. *The Lament of Deor* and *The Wanderer* could never have emanated from one of the Norse Scalds.

The temperament of the Anglo-Saxon was of a reflective earnestness, with melancholy seldom far below the surface. The Norseman is less prone to meditation; he is of a harder and keener temper, ruthlessly efficient, storming along joyously from action to action, with a super-abundant energy that makes inaction a torture. Nor was it only in fighting that this energy was expended. The Vikings were not only fighters but traders; they were, in fact, as canny as the legendary Aberdonian about money. In the story of Burnt Njal we read how Thorarin comes over to obtain the atonement-money for his brother Glum, who has been murdered. It is pointed out, however, that atonement has been done already by the slaying of the murderer, and at that, says the saga, Thorarin thought that the matter had taken a bad turn. Bargaining and haggling over dowries and blood feuds is everywhere rife in the saga stories. There is a touch of the modern advertiser in Eric the Red, who dubbed his new-discovered land "Greenland" because, he said, there was nothing like a good name to attract people thither.

It is perhaps the habit of travelling and trading in all parts of the known and some of the unknown world that accounts for the Viking's extraordinary adaptability. He is at home bargaining with grave and bearded Moslems whose caravan terminus he has reached at Trebizond by way of the long Russian rivers; he takes service, as body-guard, with the Byzantine Emperor; he becomes, in Sicily, first the conqueror and then the mainstay of the Pope; he marches up the slope of Senlac to the strains of the *Chanson de Roland.*

In temperament the Norseman is almost the exact opposite of the Celt. He is the complete realist. Old Irish literature softens the facts of life in an atmosphere of dreams, but the Norseman of

the sagas demands the facts, in all their starkness, set down as tersely and exactly as possible. Such a hero as Cuchulain, such impossible happenings as preceded the death of the sons of Usnach, would have struck the Viking as incredible nonsense. His fights had to be the real thing, his very heroes credible. For all his strength and struggles Grettir is tied up by the farmers; the last sea fight of Olaf Tryggveson, in the Long Snake, comes home to us as vividly as that which Admiral Cradock fought against odds equally hopeless, and in the same spirit, that it was better to perish gloriously than prudently to decline a fight. The very ghosts are as solid and tangible as the men, and equally mortal, for Grettir kills Glam's spook in good, stand-up fight. It is this straining after the bare truth that makes the sagas models of the storytellers' craft; so, we feel, it must have happened, and no whit otherwise. It may not be altogether fanciful to trace to the Danish element in our ancestry the genius for fiction that has been so conspicuously displayed by the English of modern times. We cannot imagine a more perfect sentence, because of its entire simplicity, for starting off a story than this, with which the Laxdaela saga commences—"Ketill Flatnose was the name of a man."

The Viking is too much of a man of action for any great spiritual fervour. It is difficult to imagine him brooding, like the Northumbrian Thegn, upon the riddle of life and death. Olaf's (the Saint Olave of our London churches) conversion of the heathen Bondi is curiously like that of Paulinus's conversion of Edwin's court, only with the tender and reflective element left out. An idol of Thor is brought into the assembly. Olaf diverts the attention of the heathen to the rising sun, while a faithful companion fetches Thor a smashing blow with his axe. The assembly breaks up in panic, but Olaf gets them back again, and puts it to them that Thor is plainly no good, and that they may as well adopt his God, which is unanimously agreed upon.

The Viking was, in fact, never more businesslike than in his dealings with the gods, and was quite capable of running with the Christian hare and hunting with the hounds of Valhalla, by the simple expedient of enrolling himself as a catechumen, or a pupil, not actually baptized, but with a view to future baptism, when amongst his Christian customers.

This is by no means to say that the Viking is incapable of piety after his own fashion. He makes little difficulty in picking up the religion of any nation on whom he may happen to have quartered

himself, and once having adopted it, is likely to become its most formidable champion. He is, however, religious in a very irreligious way. Canute was as ready to murder a brother-in-law or mutilate a hostage as he was to row to shore and hear the monks of Ely sing. Norman religiousness was equally efficient and unspiritual; Roger Guiscard sacking Rome to help Pope Hildebrand, Thurstan enforcing his abbacy of Glastonbury by a shower of arrows upon the unfortunate Saxon monks.

The same spirit that made the Northman a worldling in matters of religion, conduced to his being a formalist in matters of law. The Icelandic sagas, where we see him at his purest and best, show that the average Norse gentleman's principal interest in life, next to fighting, is in the periodical Things or assemblies to which he rides. He is intensely litigious, and has hardly the least idea of abstract justice. The decision turns less upon the merits of the case, than upon the amount of pressure that can be brought to bear upon the scald who declares the law. Primitive as this law was, the folk at the Thing displayed a capacity for hair-splitting and legal quibbling which augured a potential susceptibility to the finer shades of jurisprudence, and might under favourable circumstances give birth to a legal system more vigorously individualistic, if far more tangled, than that of Rome herself.

For the Norseman was a mighty individualist. It was long before he could be brought to bow to any sort of authority. The causes of the Viking movement are by no means simple, but what did more to stimulate it than anything else was the fact that Harold Fairhair, in the ninth century, was impelled, partly, it is said by the beautiful termagant with whom he was in love, to unite the whole of Norway under one government. He had vowed not to cut his hair until this was done, and for ten years fought desperately both for his bride and his coiffure. He conquered, but with such an effect upon the untameable Norsemen, that there was danger of his realm being depopulated. Many of the sturdiest sea-rovers settled in Iceland, each on his own independent farmstead; many more sought their luck in lands already inhabited, such as Britain, France and Ireland. And yet the same Viking, who chafed at all governmental restraint, could be loyal to the death to a leader he respected, and was amenable to that best of all discipline which is based upon independence. Of such qualities is born the capacity for organization.

The Viking Influence

Such were the men who conducted three successive invasions and two conquests of England. It is probable that we derived most new blood from their first invasion. The Vikings of Harold Fairhair's and Alfred's time were folk, like the old Saxon pirates, who wished not only to plunder but also to migrate. By the time of Sweyn and Canute, that impulse had spent itself; there was room enough for the Northmen in their own country, and England was valuable for what could be got out of it. Canute himself was scarcely more of a conqueror than William of Orange; he enjoyed, from the first, considerable support in the country, and he had the sense to send back all his Scandinavian troops, except his bodyguard, and rule peacefully as the successor of Alfred. There were probably few Englishmen who did not esteem themselves better off under him than under the "Redeless Ethelred." And Canute turned out to be as able, as pious and as patriotic a sovereign as Athelstan or Edgar.

The influence of the pre-Norman Danes on England was two-fold. They brought new blood into the land, a sterner, keener spirit—they did something to correct the sluggishness of imagination which was the great defect of the Saxon. Even now, we find that those Wessex lands which received the least Danish infusion are peopled by a more sluggish, though perhaps, as Mr. Belloc might say, a kindlier and wiser race than that which peoples the old Northumbrian Kingdom, which came to be the stronghold of Danish power.

Again, the coming of the Danes was a stimulus to the first beginning of trade, and consequently of town life. The Nordic peoples did not take kindly to town-dwelling, and the Saxons, in particular, appear to have deliberately avoided the old Roman towns they captured. But the Danes were not only warriors, but tradesmen, and trade, even of the most primitive, tends to the formation of towns, particularly at the ports and harbours where it enters the Kingdom. The five Danish boroughs in the Midlands were compact and well organized communities. It is after the Danish invasions that London comes to assume the importance it has retained ever since. "Malmesbury," says Green, "speaks of London as having become half barbarized at this time by the abundance of its Danish inhabitants; their influence is shown by the conversion

of its Portmanninot into a Husting, while the churches of St. Magnus and St. Olave at either end of the bridge suggest that the steep slope down into the river along which Thames Street runs on either side of Walbrook, as well as the similar slope across the water, were both peopled by Northmen at about this period," i.e. the reign of Canute. We must remember, too, that, it was the Danes who built the first Irish ports along the East Coast.

Gradually the almost complete economic isolation of Saxon England was being broken down. The ports of the West Coast, particularly Bristol and Chester, carried on a brisk but infamous trade, largely in slaves of both nations, with the Danish ports of Ireland. Here the Danes acted as middlemen. York, accessible to the seacraft of these days, became a flourishing depot for the trade of the North, and London was beginning to feel the advantages of its unique commercial position, both as the most convenient port for ships arriving from East and South-East, and as standing at the entrance to our most important river, at the nodal point of the principal roads. As early as Edgar's reign, we hear of the first settlement of German merchants, men from Cologne, thus linking up England with the great European trade routes by the Danube to Constantinople and over the Alpine passes into Italy.

As yet, however, this trade was of the most meagre. England had next to nothing for sale in the way of manufactured goods; raw wool, especially from monastic pastures, metals and hides formed the principal articles of export. Imports, as we learn from the colloquies of Aelfric, consisted of a few costly and easily portable commodities, such as gems, ivory, silks, wine, and oil. This is not surprising when we think of the risks and difficulties of transit, and the fact that inland trade was conducted by chapmen with pack animals, travelling in considerable bodies for the sake of safety, and harassed by restrictive regulations. Most districts were capable of supplying their own necessaries of food and clothing, with the exception of salt, which was obtained from the old Roman mines. The few foreign goods were the luxuries of the rich.

Even this embryo of commerce was beginning to widen the circle of our national interests, to bring England into contact with Europe, and to compel her to some vague beginnings of a foreign policy. Hitherto the bond uniting her to the outside world had been one of religion; now gain, as well as piety, was to enter into her motives. It is not altogether accurate to say that under Canute she became part of a Northern Empire; it would be more to the

point to say that the same man happened to be King of three peoples at the same time. But this very fact was enough to give a North-Eastern bias to her trade and policy.

This state of things was hardly likely to be approved of by those Northmen who had now for a century been in possession of the French province of Normandy on the opposite side of the Channel, and who, by grafting Latin civilization on to their Viking ferocity and business instincts, were in a fair way to becoming the most formidable of Western peoples. The "Redeless" Ethelred, who seemed to have a perfect genius for doing harm to his country, had married a Norman princess, and Canute followed his example by marrying the same lady after Ethelred's death. Henceforth the Norman court was to have a finger in every English pie, and in particular constituted itself the patron of the exiled House of Cerdic. When Canute died, and his sons and successors, a pair of graceless young ruffians, quickly followed him to the grave, the old Saxon line was restored in the person of Ethelred's son, Edward, nicknamed "The Confessor", half a Norman by birth and wholly a Norman by upbringing. The first peaceful Norman conquest took place when this monarch appointed a Norman Archbishop, and filled his court with Norman favourites.

We must not fail to notice another factor which is destined to become of decisive importance in England's foreign policy. The County of Flanders, then extending as far to the West as the Somme, was rising, under a succession of brilliant rulers, into what has been described as the Manchester of the Middle Ages. The Flemings were of the same Frisian stock as the English, but they do not seem to have shared the English slowness of imagination, a fact that may perhaps be accounted for by the Gallic admixture in their blood. They early acquired the art of working up raw wool into cloths of various descriptions. Their own flocks were, however, insufficient to keep their looms employed, and hence they came to depend for their raw material upon the pastures of England. As long as the English were content to have their wool worked up for them abroad, an obvious bond of interest united English sheep-farmer and Flemish weaver, and to prevent Flanders from falling under the control of a strong alien power became then, as in fact it is now, the cornerstone of our foreign policy.

Had England been consistently able to preserve her friendship with Flanders, the Norman conquest could not have taken place. With a hostile Flanders on his flank, Duke William could never have

ventured to transport his army across the Channel. But while England did not know her own mind, because she had scarcely, as yet, one mind to know, William, who knew exactly what he wanted, united himself, by marriage, to a daughter of the House of Flanders, and thus secured, at the critical moment, the all-important alliance.

The Conquest

Anglo-Saxon civilization had by this time exhausted its vitality and was on the down grade. The havoc wrought by a second Danish invasion on a country that had never properly recovered from the first, had been more than even a Canute could repair. The land was beginning to break up into earldoms and the work of Alfred to be undone. Wessex itself had passed out of the King's hand, and when the house of Cerdic came back, it was to find Earl Godwin, half Englishman, half Dane, its ruler, and thus, as it was to prove, a more powerful personage than the King himself. What was most fatal of all, in that age, was that the sovereign was a weak and irritable man, cast in the same mould as his "redeless" father, and a cipher in the contest for power between the rulers of Mercia, Wessex, and Northumbria. Edward's only contribution to the government of the country was to place it in the hands of Normans and to allow Norman civilization to make a peaceful conquest of his Kingdom, an arguable policy, but one hardly likely to commend itself to Englishmen, and which was brought to an abrupt close by Godwin, whom the King had banished, and who returned as the champion of an English, or West Saxon reaction. The foreigners were sent packing and the House of Godwin henceforth governed in the King's name.

The country, meanwhile, was in a deplorable state, morally and intellectually. Wulfstan, who was Archbishop of York at the time of the Danish conquest, had drawn, in a sermon, a detailed picture of vice and oppression worthy of a Hebrew prophet. Treachery, perjury, and theft are everywhere rife; free right is put down, slave right is upheld, slaves are constantly forsaking their lords and joining the Danes. So demoralized have the people become that one Dane is more than a match for ten Englishmen; droves of slaves are openly driven along by two or three Danes from end to end of the land. But Wulfstan's had been a voice in the wilderness; things had tended to get worse rather than better.

At a time when Normandy was being swept along the full tide of the Cluniac revival, the Saxon priests could scarcely stammer out the words of the sacraments, and a person who understood grammar was a source of wonder and astonishment. It is the old complaint of Alfred, and not the efforts of his house nor of Dunstan had availed, in the long run, to wean England from the self-satisfied mental stagnation that is the worst form of insularity.

The end was as inevitable as any event in history can be said to be. While the Norman Duke was biding his time and making his plans, the House of Godwin was busy keeping itself in power. When Godwin died, his son Harold became the virtual ruler of the realm. His policy for the twelve years of his supremacy is not unfairly described by Green as one of national stagnation within and without, though he conducted a successful campaign against the Welsh and displayed a patriotic moderation in advancing the cause of his family. After the King's death he made the blunder common to men who have not the greatness to be content with the reality of power; he grasped at the shadow and allowed himself to be made King, thus losing the great but intangible advantage that the prestige of hereditary right, in the shape of a puppet King, confers. The rival Earls of Mercia and Northumbria, contemptible creatures at best, felt no incentive of loyalty towards this upstart. William, secure in the Flemish alliance, began at once to gather together an army and fleet for the invasion of England. Harold did the best he could in the way of counter preparations, but was called to Northumbria by a Danish invasion in support of one of his own brothers, whose tyranny had lost him the Earldom.

With prompt energy, he rushed North and relieved the defeated Earls of Northumbria and Mercia, by smashing the invasion in the greatest victory ever won by an English over a Viking host. Meanwhile the English fleet, which was waiting for William off the Isle of Wight, ill-found and ill-victualled, had had to go home; the coast was defenceless and Harold was called back to meet an enemy who ought never to have been allowed to land. The two Earls, with as much folly as treason, deserted him on the morrow of their deliverance; the North and Midlands stood aside till it was too late.

Harold had not even the full force of Wessex, for with a precipitancy that speaks more for his love of his people than his judgment as a soldier, he dashed Southward, to check the Norman plundering, without even waiting for the Western levies who were

marching to join him. Without cavalry and without missile weapons he assumed from the outset the attitude which is the most hopeless in war, that of a passive defensive. He had a small nucleus of regulars, his personal following of house-carls, but the remainder of his army was made up of shire levies, a territorial militia, without very much discipline. One quality they possessed, which has never failed Englishmen under a worthy leader; they were, even by the admission of their conquerors, dauntlessly brave. It is an astonishing fact that they repulsed two tremendous assaults; but they, or their leader, were incapable of an organized counter offensive. The territorial levies were even incapable of obeying orders; William was able to decoy them into a pursuit most probably by the old Danish trick of a feigned flight. They were ridden down in the open by cavalry, and the position once being pierced, the Norman archers were able to co-operate with the stormers by searching the rear ranks of the defending line with a shower of dropping arrows, to which the English could not reply. From noon to September twilight the hopeless struggle was maintained, until the King and the flower of his army had fallen at their posts. Only under cover of darkness were the last survivors swallowed in the gloom of the great forest behind. Given such a leader as William at the head of such an army, there could be no shadow of a chance for the ill-armed, ill-disciplined host not of England, but of Wessex and East Anglia.

So Saxon civilization had fallen at a blow, fallen because, as Archbishop Wulfstan had foreseen, it deserved and was bound to fall. A universal and slovenly individualism, without restraint, without discipline, without education, and without effectual contact with Continental civilization, was not even capable of self-defence. The pagan or hardly Christianized Dane had easily adapted himself to his English environment, but the Gallicized and Romanized Norman had nothing but contempt for the slovenliness that permeated every department of English life. For a long time the very word Englishman was a term of contempt, and "Do you take me for an Englishman?" would be the reply of a testy baron to any stupid proposal. No doubt there was loss as well as gain. In some ways the Englishman was distinctly in advance of his conquerors. This was undoubtedly so in the plastic arts. It was a long time before a Normanized England was to recover the excellence of Anglo-Saxon figure sculpture. English illumination, though for centuries nothing had been produced to compare with the Lindisfarne Gospels, displayed a boldness and freedom all its own in the handling of line.

And in laying the foundations of ordered self-government, England was, speaking generally, more advanced than feudalized and aristocratic Normandy. The Witan, or council of magnates, exercised something more approaching the functions of a constitutional Parliament, than the feudal council of the Norman Duke, who had evidently imagined that by getting Harold, who had fallen into his hands after a shipwreck, to recognize his captor's claim to the English crown, he had settled once and for all a question of succession which, as a matter of fact, was in the sole competence of the Witan. The method of local government by moots or assemblies which had been elaborated by a succession of English Kings, though somewhat roughly handled in the first stages of the Conquest, was too strong to be uprooted, and the Norman could do no more and no better than take it substantially as he found it.

4

The Norman Spirit

However sincerely William may have intended to rule as an English King by English law, there could be no question of his maintaining, as Canute had done, the continuity of the existing order. As well expect the English in Egypt to maintain the tradition of the Khedives! The Norman was willing enough to learn from his hosts where they had anything to teach him, and he had much, in the long run, to learn, even as a soldier. But his own ruthless efficiency and his newly acquired Latin culture impelled him to make a complete break with most of the outward and visible forms of Saxondom. At the time of the Conquest, the Norman civilization was at the zenith of its strength and creative energy, and Anglo-Saxon civilization, which had never recovered from the shock of the second Danish irruption, appeared to have outlived its prime and to be, at best, in a state of stagnation. Normans were appointed to almost every post of power and dignity, not only because they were conquerors, but because it had become apparent, even in the Confessor's day, that they were better fitted to hold them than Englishmen.

Of what Norman civilization implied we have evidence more convincing than any written record. Clearly and directly it speaks to us, from the sombre arches and massive columns of St. Bartholomew the Great in Smithfield, from the walls of Gundulph's Keep at Rochester, from many another secular or ecclesiastical building.

For the Norman had come to England as a builder even before he came as a conqueror, and it was in building that his genius found its natural and most lasting embodiment. It is, or was up till very recently, the fashion to talk of Norman architecture as Romanesque, one of those facile words that conveys less than half a truth. We are now beginning to realize that we must look further East than Rome for the true fountain head of Christian architecture in the Middle Ages. Professor Strzygowski has introduced us to buildings of pre-Norman date in Armenia and Upper Mesopotamia in which we find the characteristic Norman features of the massive, round arch, the cushion capital, and the barrel and cross-groined vaulting. There were many channels of commerce and religious intercourse through which Eastern influence must have spread Westward into Mediterranean lands. It was by way of Burgundy and the Nivernais [1] chiefly that the new style seems to have come to Normandy, and the Norman, ever hungering and thirsting after the arts of Western civilization, took just as much and no more than he could adapt to his own purposes and make part of himself. He was faced with other necessities of lighting and protection from the weather than those which confronted the Mediterranean builders. And thus the influence, partly Eastern and partly classical, that came from the South, was reinforced by Norse traditions of construction in timber. For though he might think and call himself a Frenchman, you had only to scratch the Norman to find the Viking.

Norman architecture may be said to have come of age in the monastery church of Jumièges, that was commenced in 1040, and only completed the year after the Conquest. There were still traces of German, and what is even more remarkable, of English [2] influence, and though the aisles had groined vaulting, the nave itself was roofed, Norse fashion, with timber. Norman architecture had still much to learn before the supreme achievement of Durham. but its leading features, its massive simplicity and sincerity, its austere preoccupation with the essentials of construction and the comparative neglect of ornament which distinguishes its earlier phases, survive to this day even in the ruins of Jumièges. And Jumièges served as an inspiration for an even more splendid building,

[1] The church of St. Étienne, at Nevers, is one that any uninformed visitor might take for a perfect specimen of primitive Norman.

[2] Unmistakable in two specimens of the coupled arch, high up in the wall of the church of St. Pierre, the oldest part of the abbey buildings.

King Edward's Abbey at Westminster, in which the Conqueror was crowned, and which has now wholly disappeared. Harold himself, the last hope of English nationalism, was fain to employ the Norman style for his foundation at Waltham.

There was, of course, a sense in which Rome had come back to England in the wake of the Norman. Normandy of the eleventh century might plausibly have been styled the Pope's Green Duchy. However cruel and rapacious the Norman might be, he seldom failed to be a devout Catholic. It was natural for him to look to Italy for the culture which he so eagerly sought. The great focus of Italian influence in Normandy was the monastery of Bec, which numbered among its brethren those two scholars of European fame, Lanfranc of Pavia and Anselm of Aosta, who became successively Archbishops of Canterbury. Whatever we, in the light of modern research, may discover about the real sources of Norman building, there can be no doubt that the Norman himself imagined that he was modelling his style upon the best traditions of the Holy and Eternal City.

The fact was that like all peoples of energetic individuality, he took from his models just as much and no more than he could make part of himself. He, like the Roman, was an imperialist; he might have taken for his motto "*regere imperio populos*". The Roman *gravitas* is apparent in those massive, round arches, those tremendous, four-square towers, that clean, deliberate axe and chisel work. He, like the Roman, was essentially a man of this world. Gothic architecture rushes skywards in tumultuous aspiration, Norman reposes in mighty stillness on its pillars. The Norman, we feel, conquered advisedly; his is a silent architecture as men are silent who possess the power of command in a supreme degree.

Here the resemblance to Rome ceases. For all his organizing capacity, the Roman was at heart a vulgarian. He is seen at his best in his aqueducts and sewers, where he is not consciously striving for effect. In his more ambitious efforts, he combines an ignorance of constructional values with a meaningless prodigality of ornament. A dull weight crushes down upon his ponderous arches, like the bureaucracy of the Caesars, annihilating everything individual under its sway. The one thing he succeeds in expressing sincerely is bigness. Norman architecture is an altogether cleaner, simpler, more vital thing. The Norman too is a born ruler, his stone expresses perfectly his will to power, but with a severe absence of ostentation. The shafts of his columns are visibly adequate to their purpose; he has not the Gothic delight in demonstrating on how

slender a stone cluster a roof can be supported; these columns have strength and to spare—they say so quite frankly. His decoration, even where, in the later phases of the style, as at Durham and and St. Mary's Chapel, at Glastonbury, it is both rich and varied, is strictly obedient to the demands of construction; it is never allowed to conceal the essential features of the building or to say the thing that is not. There is a clear-cut pride of good workmanship about the axe-chipped capitals and zig-zag mouldings, that perhaps accounts for that indefinable impression of freshness that so many Norman buildings convey.

Somewhere before we have met with this simple, matter-of-fact workmanship. It is in the sagas. "Ketill Flatnose was the name of a man"—the style is the same though words are the material. With all his Romanesque veneer, the Norman was still at heart a Northman. His castles and cathedrals are sagas in stone. Every one of the Viking characteristics we see reproduced in him. Christianity has hardly mitigated his cruelty—the polite Robert de Belesme can tear out a child's eyes with his own hands—he is still the litigious formalist of the Norse Thing; he is, like the Viking, the master and not the slave of his religion; he has the Viking drive, the Viking practicality, the Viking eye for the main chance.

5

Norman Catholicism

But the Norman has become what temperament and opportunity have denied to the Anglo-Saxon, a good European, speaking the language of France, and championing, with an ardour more practical than spiritual, the religion of Rome. Rome had, indeed, come to England with Augustine; she had come, after a fashion, with Dunstan, but now she was to exercise, through the polite and adaptable Norman, an influence that was ultimately to place England in the van of civilized states. For if the Norman imposed an alien culture, he did so in no spirit of bigoted nationalism. Lanfranc and Anselm, monks of Bec, who sat in Augustine's chair at Canterbury, were no more Normans than they were Englishmen, and fortunate indeed it was for England that she found such men to breathe new life into her waning civilization.

William, bastard and conqueror, stark beyond measure to those who opposed his will, but mild to the good men who feared God, is a sufficiently familiar figure, but we are apt to forget the

almost equal debt we owe to Lanfranc. A Lombard, of the city of Pavia, then a centre of the revived interest in law, a renowned pleader and one of the first scholars of his time, the spirit moved him to forsake all and serve God in the humblest and most despised monastery he could find, which proved to be one just founded by an old Norman Knight, Herluin of Bec. Genius was not to be so easily denied. We find our converted lawyer high in trust at the court, opposing the Duke himself, banished, and then reprieved by a joke in season. Duke and Churchman, they recognized each other for what they were, and a staunch and touching friendship, equally honourable to both, was cemented between them. On William's death, the Archbishop's grief was so terrible that men feared for his life.

Neither King nor Archbishop cared for native Englishmen in authority, either in Church or State. Lanfranc had no use for uneducated Churchmen, and made a nearly clean sweep of the English bishops and abbots, though the saintly Wulfstan of Worcester retained his see by the posthumous intervention of the Confessor King, as the legend ran, but more likely because William and Lanfranc knew the worth of a good man when they found one. Lanfranc himself, "while he remained a foreigner to the world at large, assumed the position of an Englishman, writing 'we English' and 'our island'." [1]

The spirit of the Catholic revival was now rife in the English Church. Cluny had prepared the way, but the direct influence of Cluny was only exerted in the reform of monastic life. In 1073 the Papal Chair came to be occupied by a dumpy, stammering monk called Hildebrand, who took the name of Gregory VII, and in his uncompromising zeal to purge the Church which simony and lay dictation had brought so low, put forward sweeping claims not only for her freedom but for her absolute supremacy. It says much for the wise reasonableness of William and Lanfranc that, at a time when the temporal and spiritual heads of Christendom were locked in mortal conflict, these two loyal and masterful spirits continued to work together in harmony. Courteously but firmly William declined Gregory's request to do homage to him for his realm of England, and by a series of compromises he and the Archbishop defined the respective spheres of Church and State. It is characteristic of Lanfranc that when the King hesitated about arresting the rebel Bishop Odo, he reminded him, with the subtlety of a trained lawyer,

[1] Dr. Hunt in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

that it was the Earl of Kent and not the Bishop of Bayeux with whom the secular arm had to deal.

The most conspicuous effect of the Conquest consisted in the stone constructions, castles, and churches, that in a few decades transformed the landscape. Of these the most impressive and artistically valuable were the great monastery churches of the Benedictine order, now on the full flood tide of the Cluniac revival. The idea of Cluny had been to keep alive the Benedictine reaction against the solitary cult of individual salvation. The monk was nothing, the community everything. The way of a brother was to be one of life-long humility and self-denial, but the community in which he was merged might rightly affect a magnificence that would be deadly sin in one of its members. God was to be glorified by imposing building and splendid ceremonial. His house was to be a palace, enriched with all the adornments that devotion could lavish upon it. The bonds of Roman discipline were drawn even tighter than they were by Benedict, all monasteries that took their rule from Cluny submitted to the dictatorship of the mother-house.

The monasteries formally affiliated to Cluny were never very numerous nor very important in England. But it was the Cluniac spirit that dominated English monastic life in the period of Norman architecture when the monastic side of church life far outweighed the secular in importance. The Cluniac monk and the Norman aristocrat had much in common. Each, in his own sphere, was an imperialist, proudly convinced of the superiority of his order, and of his mission to impose his own civilization on " lesser breeds without the law ". But the baron had nothing like the discipline, the education and the team spirit of the monk, and unless curbed by a strong hand was apt to degenerate into a ruffian. So far as the Conquest brought a renewed civilization to England, it was the work of the Church, for which the mailed knights had but prepared the way. The Church was still the mind-training society on a vast scale, and perhaps, in the long run, it was for his good that the Englishman should be made to undergo a compulsory course.

6

Feudalism

The Conquest, it used to be said, was responsible for the introduction of the Feudal System, and more recently it has been maintained that so far from introducing, it really checked feudalism.

Both statements are, in a measure, true, and it would simplify matters if we were to keep in mind the distinction between the thing itself and the legal and political theory that was invented to explain it, and which may conceivably have had some effect in hardening its outlines and intensifying some of its results. Something in the nature of feudalism is an almost necessary stage in the growth of society and has occurred again and again. When communication is slow and the administrative art in its infancy, it is a matter almost of impossibility for the central power, in a state of any size, to maintain effective protection or control over its provinces. It is natural, when the need is for instant defence, for the ordinary man to have resource to the man on the spot, the man he knows. Thus we may take it that the first and most essential attribute of feudalism is the concentration of power and prestige in local chieftainships, owning an imperfect and limited allegiance to a central government. Such a state of things may occur when small independent governments are beginning to coalesce into a larger unit. More often still it tends to happen when the government set up by some powerful individual, some Charlemagne or Great Mogul, weakens its grip. It is a development that may take too many forms to admit of any simple generalization and is by no means peculiar to the West—the weakening of the central power in Japan resulted in a feudalism more logical and complete than any European variety. Something of the sort was bound to occur on the break up of Imperial Rome, and was, in fact, actually taking place while the Western Empire, reeling under the blows of her barbarian adversaries, was still in being.

The achievement of the Roman bureaucracy in administering that vast area from the Atlantic to the Euphrates was beyond the power of any medieval potentate. A heroic effort was made by Charlemagne not only to restore but to govern effectively the Empire of the West, but Charlemagne's Empire fell to pieces after his death, and then, besides Moslems and Magyars, came the Danes with their command of the sea, striking now at this point now at that, before the distant monarch could, even if he would, interfere. The most effective method of defence, on the Continent at any rate, was found to consist in the castle of the local magnate, and his retinue of heavily armed cavalry, which could be mobilized on the first alarm.

We are accustomed to think of the process of feudalization as consisting in the gradual encroachment of the lord on the liberties

of a more or less free peasantry. To our forefathers of the Dark Ages things probably appeared very differently. The modern joke that an Englishman loves a lord was, in those days, sober truth. We have seen how, in the old poem of *The Wanderer*, to be left lordless was almost as melancholy a fate as it was, in classic Greece, to be a cityless man. The lord not only would be looked upon as an ever present help in time of foreign invasion, but even in peace he could answer for his man at a court of justice, and this was all-important where evidence was required, not of guilt or innocence, but of respectability. Athelstan, by way of rounding off the police system of the country, went to the length of commanding that every lordless man should have a lord found for him in the folk-moot, under penalty of being treated as an outlaw, and killed at sight.

There is, however, another aspect in the relation of lord and man. Feudal lords, as a class, were no more romantic philanthropists than modern men of business. If the lord is going to protect land, it must be formally acknowledged as his own land, and hence the basic maxim of feudalism, *nulle terre sans seigneur*. Hence the man who seeks a lord's protection or, in the technical phrase, "commends himself" to him, has formally to surrender his land to the lord, who then permits him to re-occupy it on the performance of certain conditions. The nature of these conditions will first of all be determined by the necessity that has produced them. The vassal will be expected to give military service to his protector, to cultivate the military virtues of loyalty and obedience—treason to a lord is the unforgivable sin, meriting the lowest circle of Hell. But the lord has not only to be followed in time of war; he and his necessary retinue have to be maintained in time of peace, and therefore the vassal has to redeem his land by performing various strictly fixed services—so many days' work on the "demesne" or home farm, such and such customary dues, ordinary and extraordinary. A lord with several manors and a large retinue will spend most of the year in journeying from one to the other, eating up his quota of each one's resources.

In the dim origins of feudalism the lord appears to some extent in the role of capitalist. It had been his function not only to lead his retainers but also to provide them with arms, and even to this day there survives in certain manors the custom of the heriot, to be paid to the lord of the manor as a sort of death duty, and which in its origin was the return to the lord, on the death of a vassal, of the arms with which the lord had supplied him.

But the feudal system, by which each man held his land of a lord who might command his allegiance, had to be imposed on another, of a co-operative and practically self-sufficient agricultural community. The real or fictitious family groups, the Birmings and Kemsings who had appropriated or been apportioned the first village settlements, were incapable, with their limited resources, of farming the land in isolation. How much, if anything, they adopted from the slave-cultivated villas of Roman Britain, is a moot point among historians, but when they gradually emerge into the light of history we find the petty landowners, free or half-free, of these village communities very much—if we may borrow a simile from Professor Vinogradoff—in the position of shareholders in a company. Their shares in the business of extracting subsistence from the soil were their own ; each family lived or starved on its own dividends ; but the management of the business was the common concern and its main features settled at periodical general meetings of the shareholders. A man would have his own land, it is true, but it would be apportioned to him in shares or strips, not together but scattered among those of neighbours. The village plough, or ploughs, would be used in turn, much as the washhouse of certain London flats is nowadays. The rotation of crops—two of the great open fields of strips being cultivated and one left fallow—would be settled by the general voice, and the pasture and waste lands would be held in common, though the amount of stock that each man might turn out on them was strictly proportioned to the value of his holding. The meeting of shareholders also served as a court, in which the law or custom of the community was declared by the general voice of its members.

It was upon this self-governing community of peasant shareholders—of which we have many analogies in peoples at a similar stage of development—that the feudal system came to be superimposed. Regarded from the standpoint of feudal law, the lord was the owner of all the land and the master of all its inhabitants ; from the standpoint of what we may call community or folk law he was in the position of a highly paid director who was also the largest shareholder in the company. And even with the sharpening and intensification of feudal law after the Conquest, when the village community had definitely evolved into the manor, the community law was not superseded and the lord of the manor was so far from being an absolute tyrant that his rights were defined with the utmost minuteness, and he might, on occasion, appear as a suitor in his own

manor court, whose law was declared by the voice of all the suitors.

The legal origins of feudal theory form an interesting study, but one of little importance for our purpose. No doubt it can be traced back, without breach of continuity, to certain features in the Roman land system. But the theory, however it originated, did no more than recognize and regularize a state of things imposed upon mankind by necessity. The State, when government was incapable of functioning efficiently over large areas, remained a mere abstraction. The only loyalty to which the ordinary man could be expected to rise was to a person, the man with whom he was brought in personal contact. This, to the vast majority, would be the local lord, the man on the spot, who would, according to the theory of feudalism, have opportunities of coming into personal touch with an overlord or king to whom, in turn, his allegiance was due. But in practice loyalty of this kind sat all too lightly on the powerful vassal, with a compact army of retainers to back him. Feudalism might work well enough within a day or two's ride of the lord's principal seat, but over anything like a national area it was a hopeless and chronic failure.

It is obvious that such a system is the very negation of patriotism. It looks not to the State but to the estate. That explains much of the futility of medieval politics. No sooner is a dominion got together than it is parcelled out by will between different brothers. Even the greatest sovereigns, even Charlemagne and William the Conqueror, were not above partitioning their territories by bequest. The invariable theme of the chivalric romances is one of personal loyalty and personal motives. As soon as the lord is dead his peace lapses, and when a King dies a great vassal, like Robert de Belesme, will ride off with a quiet conscience for a spell of private looting. Vassals are ready to support an immediate lord against his overlord, so that a sovereign's position may be that of one among several competing magnates as powerful as himself. The very offices of state become hereditary and independent.

Medieval political theory was entirely on the side of local autonomy and personal loyalty. The universe itself was thought of as a macrocosmos, a living, organic unity presided over by God, but every smaller community, and, for that matter, every man, is likewise a microcosmos, a little world in which the larger world is mirrored. Again, God being a person, an infinite Being more or less vaguely conceived of in man's image, it follows that a man, a lord or monarch, is the appropriate ruler of every human community and invested

with a certain divine authority which makes the feudal tie more sacred than any ordinary contract between man and man. Every human right to govern is, in the medieval view, a divine right.

7

Norman Feudalism

The old statement that the Conquest was responsible for the introduction of the Feudal System might be amended by leaving out the word "feudal". What the Norman really introduced, vastly for the benefit of Englishmen, was system. The growth of the English village or manorial community had, like most other English developments, been patchy and unsystematic. As we gather from the Conqueror's fiscal survey called Domesday Book, there were isolated survivals of free and lordless communities; there was a complication of tenures and class distinctions that is the despair or delight, according to temperament, of the modern researcher. But the drift of English development had been towards a feudalism that was none the less real from being more slovenly and informal than the French kind. When the country was being overrun by Danes there must have been small chance for the lordless village. In so far as we can speak of any rule prevailing in that unruly England of the Confessor, it can fairly be expressed in the French feudal maxim, "no land without a lord."

In Normandy, on the other hand, we have more of the form and less of the reality of feudalism. In theory the Duke stood in exactly the same relation of lordship to his barons as his own overlord, the King of France, stood to him. He was the supreme landowner, his vassals held their estates by knight service, and the governing body was his court of tenants in chief. But in practice there was all the difference in the world between the wide realm of France, over which no ruler of that time could have hoped to exercise effective control, and the compact duchy on the Lower Seine. Here a line of able rulers had built up a central power whose strength and efficiency were less in the feudal than the Roman tradition. The Duke was able to maintain direct control by means of officials called vicecomites, closely corresponding to the English King's sheriffs, and each governing a district small enough to be manageable. Normandy contained no feudatories strong enough to set this authority at defiance. Even the baron's private jurisdiction was qualified by the

Duke's practice of reserving the most important pleas for his own court.

We must therefore picture the Duchy as the most efficiently run state in Western Europe. The Norman's creative energy impelled him to fashion his institutions with the same sureness of touch that we see in the axe-work of his columns. All must be done in order and by rule, a living rule in constant process of development. Even the rudiments of a jury system were being experimented with.

Such needless complication as that of the English social system was anathema to the practical Norman, who set to work interpreting it in terms of the French feudalism in whose logical atmosphere he had been nurtured. The meeting or gemot of wise men that had advised the English Kings was feudalized into such a court of tenants in chief as that of a Norman Duke. Tenure by thegnhood was replaced—whether all at once or in a few decades is a disputed point—by the more unified and sharply defined knight-service. There was much levelling down and some levelling up of classes; the slave on the one hand and various grades of semi-free tenants on the other were lumped together as villeins, or peasants tied to the soil, rendering certain fixed services for their holdings of the great fields, and with rights and duties defined by the law of the manor.

But William, of all people, was the least likely to be the slave of the feudal or any other theory. Even in Normandy he had contrived, under feudal forms, to set up an administration whose spirit was the negation of feudalism. In England it was all to his advantage to pose as the lawful successor to good King Edward, though what his private conscience was in the matter may be judged by his reported deathbed confession that he had acquired the crown wrongfully. His posthumous nickname "conqueror" is a mistranslation—William the Getter would be nearer the mark. His own age knew him, unceremoniously, as William the Bastard.

True Norman as he was, he knew how to put himself on the right side of the law, and at the same time to make the law his slave, and not his master. For his most ruthless measures, he could plead precedent. If he confiscated the estates of Harold's supporters, it was not by right of conquest, but for the same reason as holy Edward had seized those of the House of Godwin, because they had been forfeited by treason. His most terrible act of all, the ravaging of the North, differed only in degree from the punishment that Edgar the Peaceful had actually inflicted on Thanet, and Edward the Confessor had ordered Godwin to inflict on Dover. So great a soldier and

statesman as William—it comes as a shock to discover that he could only execute a shaky cross by way of signature—was above the vulgar itch to flaunt power as well as have it.

He had, in fact, everything to gain by exploiting the heritage of Alfred and Canute. No doubt it required the might of a victorious army to prevent the realm from dissolving into its component earldoms, but once the King's peace was established from the Cheviots to the Channel, there was much in the English system that he might turn to his own advantage. For one thing, there was an easily tapped revenue in the Danegeld, or land tax, by whose proceeds Ethelred had been in the habit of buying off the Danes. Then there was a territorial militia, that might at any time be called out against rebellious feudatories. And, finally, the Conqueror found to his hand, in the county sheriffs, just such a means of maintaining his direct authority as he already possessed, in Normandy, in the vicecomites. Thus, however much he may have introduced the language and fictions of feudalism—and these came to prevail to as great an extent, probably, as in France itself—he was determined that nothing like the reality of it should get a footing in England. He made as complete an end of the old Heptarchic earldoms as the French Revolution was to make of the provinces. Henceforth the administrative unit was to be the shire or county under the King's reeve. Dominating all was a central government, ever growing in experience and complexity, through which the King made his sovereignty direct and effective.

To understand why, and how far, such a policy was feasible, we must take stock of William's position. He was holding down the country, and had to put down more than one dangerous rebellion with forces that probably did not much exceed a modern brigade. He took the most effective way of doing this by quartering the fighting noblemen, who had enlisted in the venture, on the confiscated estates, which were allotted piecemeal as they came in, thus avoiding the creation of big, compact fiefs. These men understood the art of permanent fortification, and the first step of each new occupier was to ensconce himself in a castle, perhaps no more at first than a mound with a wooden improvization on top and a palisaded enclosure beneath, but as far as the natives were concerned, impregnable. Thus the whole land was covered with a network of fortified posts, just as the Boer Republics were held, in the last stages of the South African War, by a system of blockhouses, only with this difference, that the castle was a practically independent unit.

Nobody knew better than the Conqueror that the castle might at any moment prove not only a nucleus of tyranny, but also of rebellion. Hence there was a community of interest between monarch and people that, once it was clearly understood that the new masters had come to stay, the English were not slow to recognize. Within nine years of the Conquest some of the leading barons were up in arms and the county militias were turning out, under their sheriffs, on behalf of King William. From an Englishman's point of view the new order of things was not without its compensations. If the new King governed sternly and taxed highly, he at least maintained an excellent peace, and times were probably not so bad as during the Danish invasions.

For this supreme blessing, at least, the Conquest had conferred on England—the days of serious invasion were over forever. Three years after Hastings the Danes were back supporting a Northumbrian invasion, but it was their last visit, and the whole country from the Humber to the Tees was turned into a desert by William's calculated vengeance. At the end of the reign a mighty Danish and Scandinavian armada assembled for one last effort to recover England for the Northern sphere of influence, but it never set sail. If in one sense England was conquered at Hastings, in another it is true to say that she passed from the defensive to the offensive. She was no longer a loose federation of provinces waiting to be attacked, but a united realm under a King capable of carrying war into the enemy's territory. Forty years, almost to a day, after the Conqueror's landing, an expeditionary force from England, fighting on foot in the English fashion, routed the Norman baronage and conquered the Duchy for the Conqueror's son, "doubtless," says William of Malmesbury, "by the wise dispensation of God, that Normandy should be made subject to England on the very day that Norman power had come to subdue that Kingdom."

The fact that the Norman Kings had no cause to fear a serious invasion, did away with the need out of which feudalism had arisen. It was only on the Scottish and Welsh frontiers and—while the Danish menace was still on the horizon—in Kent, that there was any necessity for large, compact baronies, under lords who could mobilize a strong force at the shortest possible notice and maintain strongholds capable of blocking an invasion. The history of these baronies showed that the strong fief was at best a necessary evil, and that the frontier magnate was little less dangerous to his sovereign than to the enemy. William was wise in entrusting the two most formidable of these

creations to bishops, who could not bequeath their power to descendants, and were practically his nominees.

William decisively broke with the whole principle of feudalism in the oath of allegiance to himself that he exacted at Salisbury in 1086 from " all the landowning men of property there were all over England, whosoever men they were ". Attempts have been made to minimize the importance of this step on the ground that " all " is obviously an exaggeration, but nothing can detract from its decisiveness as an assertion of principle. Henceforth a man's loyalty was first and foremost due not to his local Earl or Baron, but to the sovereign, and loyalty to the King of England passes by imperceptible stages into loyalty to England—in fact, patriotism.

The Conquered

We may ask, how was it with the average Englishman, he who carried on the never-ending life and death struggle with nature, that cannot be remitted for any change of human masters. We are perhaps too much in the habit of assuming that the Conquest was, for him, an unmitigated disaster, an exchange of a jolly, native master for a French-speaking bully who ground his face unceasingly and made his lot ten times worse than it had ever been before.

On some manors this may well have been, particularly in the first years of military conquest, before the invaders felt themselves firm in the saddle. The Norman was little more gentle than his Viking fathers ; he had acquired the sense of belonging to a superior civilization and regarded the boorish Saxon with an ineffable contempt. There must have been more than one ruffianly adventurer of the type of Ivo de Taillebois, who amused himself by setting dogs on to peaceful folks' cattle, for what could be expected of an illiterate baron when even the Church produced abbots like Paul of St. Albans, who desecrated the tombs of his English predecessors, and Thurstan of Glastonbury, who settled a musical difference with his monks by having them shot down by archers ?

> Things like that you know must be
> After a famous victory,

but life, most of all agricultural life, has a way of finding its level after the direst storm. The Norman was no lamb, but he liked to do things decently and in order, and once settled down on the land,

he had every inducement to run his little community on efficient and tolerable lines. The landlord who hunts his tenants' cattle, the landlord who makes himself thoroughly hated by his labourers, is not only a knave but a fool, and the average Norman was anything but that. The routine of the months, that the medieval sculptor has limned for us with such vivid realism, had to and did go on in hundreds of obscure manors all over the kingdom, where a bad harvest was a calamity that touched the poor man more nearly, perhaps, than a change of masters from Thegn to Baron.

After all, were times and masters so good before the Conquest that the English peasant had much to lose by any change? Such is not the impression that we get from the scanty evidence that has come down to us, which rather tends to show that the second series of Danish invasions had dealt Anglo-Saxon civilization a blow from which it never properly recovered. William of Malmesbury, who was as much an Englishman as a Norman, in an account which was obviously intended to be impartial, speaks of an unprotected commonalty before the Conquest, a prey to rich and powerful men who made fortunes by seizing on their neighbours' property and even selling them as slaves, one horrible custom being to sell maidservants, once the master had made them pregnant, to prostitution or foreign slavery. We are the more inclined to believe the substantial truth of this account from the fact that the good monk is at evident pains to qualify it as far as he dares, by admitting that this state of things was not without exception.

We have one vivid sidelight on the workaday state of things on an Anglo-Saxon farm in the shape of Bishop Aelfric's *Colloquy*, which was intended to serve the humble purpose of a school book. Here we get an impression that the poor man's life was one of ceaseless work under the hardest possible conditions, though we must make what allowance is due to the Englishman's immemorial habit of grousing. "Indeed it is great toil," complains the ploughman, "because I am not free," while as for the oxherd, who had to tend the cattle by day and guard them by night against thieves, it is difficult, as Miss Seebohm [1] points out, to see how the poor fellow could have got any sleep at all during the summer months. Particularly hard must have been the lot of the slaves, to whom even Alfred's laws denied, except at the lord's discretion, the holidays of the Church.

The coming of the Norman, if it turned a good many freemen

[1] In *The Evolution of the English Farm.*

into villeins, was no bad thing for the bottom dog of all, since the class of slaves rapidly begins to vanish under the new order of things. When, twenty years after the Conquest, came the great fiscal survey of Domesday, the picture it gives us is of a society in which everybody's status and duty is a matter of exact record. Where rule and custom prevail, there is little room for arbitrary tyranny. This is the impression we get of the manor when, later on, it emerges into the light of the court rolls.

Perhaps we are too apt, in reconstructing the past, to imagine that all men's minds were engaged, as much as our own, with the great political events and social movements that loom so large in our vision. If we could be transported to an eleventh century English manor and listen to the daily talk of the villagers, we should possibly be amazed at the triviality of it all. Where we expected to hear complaints of foreign tyranny, we should more likely hear grumbles, deep but not loud, at the unfairness of the reeve, who, being one of themselves, was up to tricks and evasions that would have escaped the notice of a French-speaking lord, whom they might only see for two or three brief but strenuous weeks on his yearly tour from manor to manor. But perhaps the loudest complaints of all would be reserved for the weather, and the doings of William the Conqueror would arouse less interest than those of—let us say—the smith's wife.

In this laborious and trivial round of the English peasant's existence there were two redeeming features. However hardly the lord's power may have pressed upon him, he himself and his fellows were able to keep it within the limits prescribed by the law or custom of the manor, which was declared not by the lord himself, but by the suitors at his court. It is true that the King's courts would have granted no remedy to a villein against a lord, who should have broken the custom of his own manor, but to substitute arbitrary tyranny for immemorial routine was a thing that does not seem to have occurred to normal landowners. As soon as we get detailed information about the working of the system, the records show us that the principle of the Great Charter had come to hold substantially good of this kingdom in miniature, where not even an unfree man could be deprived of an alleged right save by the judgment of his peers and the law of the manor.

Most important of all to the poor man was his unquestioning belief that no conditions of serfdom could deprive him of his membership of Christ's kingdom, a membership of which he was continually being kept in mind by the offices of the Church. From his mud and

wattle hut, from the dust and sweat of his drudgery, he could pass into a building spacious and beautiful, and be partaker in the miracle of Godhead made one with manhood, even the humblest.

9

The Central Power

After the Conqueror's death his work of establishing a strong central power went steadily forward for half a century, and his successor and namesake, nicknamed the Red, from his apoplectic countenance, inherited his strength without his statesmanship. The bold iconoclast who poked fun at the ordeal and professed his willingness to join the Jews if they could beat the Christians in open argument, was no commonplace ruffian, and may have had less than his due from shocked monkish chroniclers. But a ruffian he was, and with the help of a kindred spirit, a clerk called Ralph Flambard, set himself to exploit Church and State for what they would fetch. Resistance was hopeless in face of the central power that his father had built up, but the Middle Ages had more ways than one of removing a tyrant, and when the Red King happened to be out of the way of witnesses in the New Forest a convenient arrow found its billet in his heart. His brother Henry, who was a member of the same hunting party, and in a position to establish a formal alibi, galloped hot foot to Winchester, to seize the crown and treasure with a promptitude that is at least remarkable.

The new King, who, like his brother, violated the rule of hereditary succession by seizing the crown, presented the almost unique phenomenon, for that age, of a layman who was also literate and a passable scholar. With an ability comparable to that of his father, he set himself to consolidate and organize the central power of which the Conqueror had laid firm the foundations. Though he spoke French and though the court was still filled with persons of Norman names and Norman descent, he was enough of an enlightened egotist to perceive that it was better to be a national King of England than a mere feudal overlord of Norman barons. To his brother, as well as himself, the English people had shown themselves enthusiastically loyal. When Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, in whose favour the Conqueror, as a precaution against the Danes, had made an exception to his rule of granting scattered fiefs, raised the baronage against Rufus, the English had quickly cornered him in his castle at Rochester, and loudly expressed their disgust when

the Bishop escaped hanging. When, early in Henry's reign, the barons, who very naturally preferred his shiftless elder brother, Robert Duke of Normandy, to a monarch capable of keeping them in order, again rose in rebellion, the English levies once again turned out to vindicate the royal authority. Again the ringleader was one of those Border lords whose fiefs were supposed to be bulwarks of the realm, the Earl of Shrewsbury, the infamous Robert de Belesme. His fate was that of Odo, and on the surrender of his castle of Bridgenorth, the English are said to have cried: "Rejoice King Henry, and thank the Lord God, since you only began to reign freely when you conquered Robert de Belesme and turned him out of your Kingdom." Three years later Henry was over in Normandy, and the English were congratulating themselves for having avenged Hastings and turned the tables on the Duchy at the field of Tenchebrai.

It was a memorable stroke of policy when Henry, braving the jeers and nicknames of his nobility, allied himself with a daughter of the House of Alfred. It was symbolic of the change that was taking place in the country. Already it was becoming difficult to distinguish a Norman from an Englishman. The generation of the Conquest was passing away, and the one thing that tended to keep the feeling of difference alive was the fact that after Robert's defeat Normandy was part of the King's dominions, and many of the nobles had estates on both sides of the Channel.

The grafting of the new stock on to the old had been accompanied by a grafting of civilizations. Just as life is renewed and quickened by the blending of two cells, so the almost moribund English civilization was fertilized by the Norman spirit even more than the Norman blood, and started on a new and more vigorous growth than ever before. But in order for this blending to thrive, it was necessary to remove, as far as possible, the disturbing and wasteful factors of war and civil disorder. This was exactly what the Conqueror and his youngest son accomplished by the firm peace they maintained and the strong central power they fostered to maintain it.

Their task was to expand a feudal court into the governing organization of the State. Our ancestors were wont to regard all matters of State in a purely personal aspect. The monarch was a landowner, the State his estate, his vassals his tenants, and his court his household. Hence for a long time we find the greatest ministers of the State dignified by such titles as Keeper of the Chamber or the Wardrobe. The King's court was a manor court on a glorified scale, at which the tenants declared the law, and which performed

indiscriminately executive, legislative, and judicial functions. To talk of its constitution would be a straining of language; what it was and what it did depended largely on the personality of the King and the circumstances of the moment.

Such may have been the theory, but in practice the combined realms of England and Normandy demanded other methods of government than those which answered for a few hundred acres. The Norman Kings therefore had to expand their court into an efficient governmental machine or see their power founder in a vortex of feudal anarchy. The Norman mind was fertile in expedients. The Kings soon got to work on the English institutions that they found waiting for them, and by applying to them French feudal method and Latin scholarship transformed them out of recognition.

At first it was natural to proceed less by rule than a series of improvisations. The King's court being an indefinite was also an adaptable body, and anybody the King chose to represent him was to all intents and purposes the King himself and brought the court with him. If some big case had to be tried, the King might depute one of the clerical scholars of his entourage to deal with it, as, for example, the Conqueror deputed the Bishop of Coutances to represent him in the case of the Bishop of Worcester *versus* the Abbot of Evesham. It was an obvious, and indeed an inevitable step, as the demands upon royal justice increased, to make this practice regular instead of issuing a special commission for each particular case. Hence, under Henry I, we find the functions of the King's court being exercised by justices in eyre, or on circuit, a revival of Charlemagne's practice of appointing *missi*, or travelling commissioners.

But a judge's task, even in those days, demanded a higher degree of training than that of the illiterate magnates who constituted the majority of a feudal court. Nor was it the only task for which a staff of experts was necessary. The two pillars of kingly power were peace and a large revenue, and to deal with this revenue, an elaborate system of checking and accounting had to be devised. The earliest of government departments was, in fact, the exchequer, and by the time of Henry II it had developed so specialized a technique that its treasurer, who was also Bishop of Ely, was moved to write a comprehensive handbook for the benefit of his subordinates, an administrative classic.

In fact, the King's court, however constant it might be in theory,

in practice had to fulfil two quite different functions, that of a permanent staff by which the government could be carried on, and that of an occasional deliberative assembly. For the Norman Kings, like those of Wessex before them and parliamentary England after them, had in some way to ensure the support of the people who mattered before they could embark on any vital line of policy. But the fighting barons, the great landowners who might follow the King to Normandy or pronounce the condemnation of a highly placed traitor, had neither the time nor the skill for checking the accounts of sheriffs or performing the routine of "the household".

In theory the King's court was just as fully the court when it consisted of a few permanent officials attached to his person, as when it was afforced at special festivals or emergencies by the whole body of the more important landowners, lay and ecclesiastical. But our ancestors were practical men pursuing practical ends, and no more liable than ourselves to be the dupes of their own fictions, or to confuse the great council of the nation with the smaller and permanent body that constituted the bench and civil service.

The extent to which the King would be dependent on his council of magnates, the court in the larger sense, was determined less by constitutional theory than force of circumstance. And circumstances were peculiarly favourable to the Norman House. The long period of comparative peace enabled them to keep their expenditure below their huge, regular incomes, and to refrain from sudden or extraordinary calls on their subjects' resources. The Conqueror and Henry I may have taxed hard, but they taxed regularly, and even Rufus, who after all did not survive the process long, seems to have worked rather by a sort of legalized chicanery than by the extraordinary levies and new methods of taxation that are the parents of rebellion. To finish up a normal year with a credit balance was, down to Stuart times, the first principle of successful kingcraft.

Small wonder, then, if a capable sovereign was able, in the ordinary way, to do pretty much as he liked, and if the council of magnates did not get much more chance of deflecting his will than those gemots, or shire courts, which Ralph Flambard "drove" throughout the length and breadth of England. But the mere fact that the Kings constantly appeal to its counsel and consent, and even talk of the Barons "giving" an aid, shows that its powers are only dormant, and that the old Witan survives in the Norman Great Council, from which Parliament will one day be born.

It was at the accession of a new King that dormant liberties

suddenly became active. All the Norman Kings were, by the strict hereditary principle, usurpers, and all of them, even the Conqueror, were fain to make some sort of bargain with their prospective subjects. Of course, it was open to them, once they were firmly in the saddle, to act on the Red King's cheerful doctrine that a man couldn't be expected to keep all his promises, but the mere fact of a King's issuing a charter of liberties was a declaration of principle, the importance of which could hardly be exaggerated. It was a formal admission that there were rules of the game by which even Majesty must abide. The time would come when the subjects would themselves formulate these rules, and when the Charter of Henry I would be appealed to as the foundation of the Great Charter of English liberties.

10

The Towns

However hardly the Conquest may have borne on the villages, the towns were not such easy nuts for a feudal lord to crack. The town at the time of the Conquest was still only half urbanized; it had to raise the greater part of its food from its own resources, and would be surrounded by broad open fields and pastures cultivated after the manorial fashion by the burgesses. No doubt the towns were hard hit by the Conquest; their houses would be overshadowed by the grey, frowning mass of the baronial keep, whose garrison held the citizens at its mercy, and whose lord was able to curb their liberties and take toll of their resources in all kinds of ways. But they were for the most part allowed to maintain their time-honoured customs, and since they were not only agricultural but also trading communities, the power of the purse was able, in the long run, to wear down that of the sword. In the generations following the Conquest we see the lords giving, or rather bartering away their power by slow degrees. Sooner or later the lord would go on a crusade, or incur some extraordinary expenditure that would make him fain to sign away the whole or part of his privileges by charter, in return for cash down. The money was soon spent, but the charter remained and the citizens were constantly gaining and never losing ground. The same process was taking place in the royal boroughs, those which the King kept under his direct lordship, and whose charters form a series of milestones on the road to complete municipal freedom.

Perhaps we are too ready to visualize the relations of town and castle as those of perpetual hostility. It must be remembered that if the lord or castellan was in one aspect a potential tyrant, he was also the natural defender and sometimes the ally of the citizens. This, at any rate, seems to have been the case at Bristol, whose citizens had a notorious record in the way of raiding and slave-dealing, which caused the town to be known as "the stepmother of England". There was only too good an understanding between town and castle when the neighbouring town of Bath was sacked, and would have been sacked again but for its stout defence, or when, during the anarchy of Stephen's reign, people were brought into the city and tortured to make them disgorge their wealth.

It is in the towns that English life shows the least breach of continuity. The firm peace maintained by the Kings, with the exception of Stephen, and the bettering of overseas communication, fostered the spirit of commercial enterprise, at first in the merchant or trading gilds, for handicrafts were only in their infancy, though Henry I was doing what he could by importing colonies of Flemish weavers. There was hardly the possibility of a national, commercial policy, since the towns were nearly independent economic units, and negotiated with each other in entire disregard of nationality. London was on just the same footing in regard to Bristol as she was in regard to Sluys or Rouen. There was an obvious danger in this of what did, in fact, happen in France, Germany, Italy and Flanders, of the towns developing into practically independent cities, armed against each other and the Sovereign. But the same iron hand that crushed the independent fief prevented the independent commune, and so the castle, even if it was often a thorn in the side of the city, proved in the long run a blessing to the country.

In no part of England was the continuity of life less affected by the Conquest than in London, which, owing to its unique position as a port and road-junction, was rapidly overshadowing the royal city of Winchester as the real capital. The Conqueror himself had fought shy of an open assault on the city that had, half a century before, given a sound drubbing to another conqueror, the pagan Sweyn, and when he had won it by negotiation, he built two castles, Castle Baynard on the West and the Tower on the East, to keep it in check. But the Tower was more liable to be besieged by the Londoners than the Londoners to be terrorized by the Tower, and it was not long before the thriving cosmopolitan city came to exercise an influence that made it more than once, in times of crisis, the

arbiter of England's political destiny. Its prosperity, in spite of heavy taxation and the exactions of Norman absentee landlords, is evidenced by the number of churches that were built, including old St. Paul's, which was commenced four years after the Conqueror's death. Stephen, who usurped the throne on the death of the first Henry, was fain to solicit the support of her citizens, and his rival, the Empress Matilda, was ruined in the very moment of her triumph, because her ill-advised haughtiness set the Londoners against her. When the next King, the great Henry II, was at the crisis of his reign and faced with a dangerous rebellion, the first question he asked was whether the citizens of London were loyal.

We have a valuable description of London, as it was in the time of Henry II, from the pen of William Fitzstephen, the clerk and biographer of Becket, who, by the way, was himself son of a London port-reeve. Here there is not the least trace of subjection to a foreign power, on the contrary it is evident that Londoners are completely satisfied with themselves, and proud to be members of a city surpassing all others in wealth, commerce, and magnificence. The citizens, says the admiring clerk, "are respected and are noted above all other citizens for the elegance of their manners, dress, table, and discourse," while the section devoted to the matrons consists of the single sentence: "The matrons of the city are perfect Sabines." There is no city, Fitzstephen is careful to add, in which more approved customs are observed, such as attending church, preparing entertainments, and celebrating funerals, in fact we are assured that "the only inconveniences of London are the immoderate drinking of foolish persons and the frequent fires". Not only is London a grand but also a jolly city, devoted to the practice of every kind of sport, from tilting to stone-throwing; one particularly strenuous amusement being practised on the ice at Moorfields, two skaters, armed with poles, assaulting each other at full speed, and coming down with such violence that they are carried far apart, and whatever part of their heads comes in contact with the ice is laid bare to the skull. Finally, Londoners have got to the stage of enhancing their civic pride by legend. Alone they have repulsed Julius Caesar, "a man who delighted to deluge his path in blood." London is older than Rome, being founded by Brutus of Troy. Here, in fact, in the reign of the first Angevin, we find a full-blown, municipal patriotism easily capable of expanding into a national patriotism.

11

King's Peace and Baronial Anarchy

The centralizing work of the Kings was, meanwhile, building up a machinery of government such as no other nation in Europe could boast. There is no need to attribute to these Kings any but the most egotistic motives. They were, with the exception of Stephen, and including Henry II and his sons, men of abnormal energy even in that age of energy from which the Gothic architecture was born. The greatest of them all, the second Henry, was not only "the old warrior" and the prudent judge, but was capable of rolling on the floor in a paroxysm of rage, and abjuring the Almighty Being in whom he believed, as the only way of venting his feelings. Such energy, like that of Napoleon, who was liable to hardly more restrained outbursts, must needs find an outlet, and when its subject is head of the State, it is a necessity of his existence to make that State as efficient an expression of his will as possible.

The structure and theory of government were so different in the times of the Norman Kings from what they became later, that we are apt to ignore the extent to which the essentials of statecraft persist throughout the whole course of our history as a united nation. So long as the King aspires to govern as well as reign, his power is in almost direct proportion to his capacity for keeping the peace. War is a gaping hole in the bottom of the treasury chest, through which wealth pours out faster than it can conveniently be gathered in, and if war is prolonged there is nothing for it except to put on the screw of taxation to an intolerable extent or else to go bankrupt. It is difficult to say whether the wastage of foreign or of civil strife is the more disastrous, and the wise sovereign will be he who is prudent enough to avoid the one and strong enough to prevent the other.

From the time of the Conqueror's harrying of the North, a long period of comparative peace supervened. One or two easily suppressed baronial revolts, the fraternal squabbles in Normandy of Rufus and Henry with Duke Robert, and a little desultory fighting with the French King, constitute a sixty-five years' record of peace which England had not approached since the height of the Roman power. When, at the end of the eleventh century, the chivalry of Christendom poured Eastward in the great and ultimately unsuccessful counter-offensive against Islam, England, still on the edge of the world, was comparatively little affected, though the crusade

served as an outlet for the energy of a few baronial adventurers of whom she was better rid. The Kings no doubt screwed all they conveniently could out of their realm in the way of taxation, but by the good peace they maintained abroad and the strong hand they kept on the baronage they might claim to have earned it.

England's foreign policy was already beginning to take the lines it was to retain through the ensuing centuries. The key to our international position was constituted by the Low Countries, and particularly by the County of Flanders. It was to England that the Flemings principally looked for their wool, and hence the Flemish connection was of vital importance to a country whose economic prosperity depended on a market being found for the produce of its sheep farms. In spite of the efforts of Henry I and his successors to foster a native weaving industry, progress in this direction was very gradual, and not for many generations was there any serious prospect that the demand of English looms would absorb the supply of English wool. The danger was constantly before the eyes of our rulers lest a foreign power, which at this time could only mean the Kingdom of France, should get enough influence or control over Flanders to force its clothiers to buy their wool not in the English but the French market. This is the real meaning of the perpetual dynastic intrigues over the Flemish countship and the chronic hostility with France, which our Kings were, in addition, baulking of her natural outlet on the sea by their control of the lower Seine valley.

But as yet the French Kings, in their landlocked demesne, were not strong enough to give serious trouble, and the power of the Conqueror and his sons was great enough, for the time, to establish a sort of vague suzerainty over our neighbours of Scotland and Wales. This comparative freedom from the drain of war gave our Kings a golden opportunity, of which they were not slow in taking advantage, to consolidate their rule over a united nation.

"A good man he was and there was great awe of him. No man durst mis-do against another in his time. He made peace for man and beast." Such was the verdict of his English subjects upon the stern and grasping Henry I. They were soon to have a terrible lesson in what might happen when the King's only direct heir was a daughter, Matilda, Countess of Anjou and Dowager Empress of Germany. The throne was seized, without much difficulty, by her cousin, Stephen of Blois, a good-natured soldier, but "he was a mild man", says the English chronicle, "soft and good and did no

justice." Stephen was ready to promise anybody anything, but he was too shiftless to keep his barons in order or even to remain on good terms with the Church. Matilda was soon over in England, and during the scrambling and confused struggle for the throne between her and Stephen the barons broke loose from all control, and set up such a reign of terror as had not been known since the worst times of the Viking invasions. Everywhere they employed the forced labour of the country folk to build castles, which they proceeded to fill, as the English chronicler [1] tells us, "with devils and wicked men," who dragged peaceful persons to underground torture chambers in order to make them disclose their wealth. Some of these lordly desperadoes were capable of bidding defiance to the very God in whom they believed; one of them, a Fitzhubert, openly boasted of having hanged monks, and that he would grieve God by doing as much to the brothers of Malmesbury and sisters of Wilton. No wonder that men said openly that Christ and His saints slept!

The precise extent of the terror is not easy to gauge. That there must have been bright patches is proved by the great activity there was in the building of churches and monasteries. But the object lesson of unrestrained feudalism was terrible enough to burn itself into the consciousness of the nation, as deeply as that of military rule under Cromwell's major-generals. Englishmen must have heaved a great sigh of relief when at last Stephen, thoroughly tired out, consented to put himself in leading strings to Prince Henry of Anjou, Matilda's son and his adopted successor, a man thoroughly capable of curbing the anarchs and resuming the great centralizing work of the Conqueror and his sons.

The adopted heir, who also, thanks to his grandfather's matrimonial diplomacy, controlled more of France than the French King himself, ascended the English throne, on Stephen's death, with the title of Henry II. Again England was blessed with a scholarly and energetic sovereign. But about this Henry's energy there was something positively demonic. If by his English subjects he was beloved because, as they said, "he did good justice and maintained peace," to his courtiers he was a positive terror, never still for a moment, bursting the bonds of routine, dashing hither and thither as the mood seized him. And this energy, almost incredible to our modern notions, was accompanied by an equally incredible lack of self-control, so that the mighty warrior and subtle statesman might

[1] He lived in Peterborough, one of the worst districts, owing to the activities of the terrible Geoffrey de Mandeville.

now be seen giving rein to his temper like a spoilt child, now blaspheming like a lost soul, and again undergoing penance on a heroic scale.

To such a man the business of kingship became an absorbing passion; he would be master of his realm and make it a model to all others. Not even the binding force of custom and precedent could restrain his genius; he could create as well as maintain. He would be all that Henry I was and more. It was not long before he had stamped out the last embers of anarchy and restored the civil service to its normal working. The first ten years of his reign were, in the domestic sphere, years of consolidation; in the course of the next fifteen, by a series of bold and far-reaching measures, a reign of law was established such as no Western people had enjoyed since the days of the Caesars.

Henry II was fortunate in being able to draft his own laws as well as administer them. In fact he came as near to being an absolute monarch as it is possible for a King of England to be. The desire of the country for a strong government, and the additional power derived from the possession of half France, enabled him to stretch the limits prescribed by custom and precedent further than he might otherwise have dared, to crown the work of his grandfather by developing the King's household and court into an executive of trained officials and a bench of judges sitting in courts with functions clearly defined, and to plant the foundations of a legal system which was to rival that of Rome in influence, while based upon principles definitely national.

12

The Birth of the Common Law

The Norman Kings honestly endeavoured to maintain the English law as it had been under Edward the Confessor. But English law was cumbrous and out of date and not even uniform, for there was one law of Wessex, one of Mercia, and one of the Danelaw, and in doubtful cases that of Wessex had to be given the supremacy. With all the good will in the world, it was impossible for the Norman, with his methodical instincts and his highly developed feudal notions, to adopt such a system without transforming it.

The stronghold of English law was the sheriff's county court, where the law, or immemorial custom, was declared by the suitors. Even where the King deputed some special representative to try an

important case, it was through the machinery of the county court that he worked. Thus when Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, sued Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, for the return of some lands, the case was tried by the King's commissioner on Penenden Heath, before the "county", reinforced by certain magnates from outside. To them the lawyer Archbishop pleaded his own case, as he had pleaded long ago in the courts of his native Pavia. Such a three days' experience must have been an education in itself to his hearers.

Even the new royal justice did not consciously aim at superseding the old dooms. But as early as Henry I's reign these were becoming more and more difficult to interpret, less and less suited to new conditions. The French-speaking clerks about the court made valiant attempts to reduce them to some sort of order, and a number of treatises, the first of the noble series of English law books, represent their not wholly successful attempts to formulate the law of good King Edward as amended by his Norman successors.

But the twelfth century was to see the advent of a more potent influence, and one likely to commend itself to encroaching authority. The Law of Rome was now being studied in the great schools of Northern Italy, which had already given us a Lanfranc. Since his time, however, the code of Justinian, the crowning achievement of Roman Jurisprudence, had come to the West, and the importance of its message to civilization was fully appreciated. It was in the troubled reign of Stephen that another of those scholarly Lombards to whom England owes so great a debt, one Vacarius, came to England, and is believed to have given lectures at Oxford on Roman Law. Whether at Oxford or not, lecture he certainly did, and Stephen, like the muddle-headed soldier he was, made an attempt to silence him, not with success.

He must, indeed, have been a singularly inept monarch who would discourage a system all of whose principles made for authority, for the very centralization which Stephen, alone among the Norman Kings, had failed to maintain against his feudatories. For the Roman Law is the voice of that iron bureaucracy which had succeeded in imposing peace and uniformity over the only civilized world it knew. It was the voice of Caesar, the all-powerful and divine sovereign, imposing his will and his system impartially upon Jew and Greek, Gaul and Numidian; it allowed of no variation and no concession to prejudice or local prescription, its grand aim was order, and it took no account of liberty. It is not strange that Kings

saw the advantages of such a system from their point of view, and that alongside the revived study of the civil law, the Popes, the real representatives of Rome, should have encouraged the parallel growth of the Canon Law, based upon Roman principles, centralized in Rome and ignoring all national boundaries.

With a French-speaking court and a monarch like Henry II, there might have been expected such a Romanizing of our law as enabled the French monarchy to advance from feudal impotence to the despotism of Versailles, and swept over the German states in the early sixteenth century. Nothing of the sort happened in England, and that Roman law was unable to take root in our soil is a striking witness to the persistence of that spirit of individualism which England has inherited alike from Saxon and Northman, and which runs like a tough cord throughout our history. She took just as much of Roman science and system as she needed to build up a law peculiarly her own, as much the voice of England as Justinian's code had been that of Rome. This law was called the Common Law, or the law common to all England, and in this aspect its development is strangely similar to that of Roman law. For the Romans had developed their jurisprudence out of the simple expedient of striking an average between the laws of the different nations with whom they did business. And so the King's judges, by a series of recorded precedents, gradually built up one common law out of the varying bodies of custom they heard declared in the provincial moots.

Roman law aims above all things at simplification, its spirit is that of the French minister who boasted that at any given moment of school hours, all the children of France were repeating the same lesson. English law, as its warmest admirer will scarcely dispute, has none of this merit of simplicity, it is jealously conservative of tradition, it bases itself upon the rights of the individual. The Englishman has always been suspicious of generalizations, the rights of man do not appeal to him, but he is going to have his own rights, or trouble will ensue. Even if he changes, he prefers not to admit it, but to pose as the restorer of time-honoured custom. To the Roman " what pleases the prince has the force of law ", the Englishman replies with Henry III's barons, " we will not that the laws of England should be changed."

Even Henry II, whatever Angevin blood may have flowed in his veins, is thoroughly English, or shall we say thoroughly Norse, in his respect for the established letter of the law. However much

he may change things in reality, he is always, in theory, standing for them as they have been, and not as they ought to be. He takes what he finds, and develops it with marvellous skill. Thus, in establishing that most national of all our institutions, the jury, he is merely taking an old expedient of Charlemagne's for determining the royal dues, and transplanting it to the judicial sphere. He is also building on the habit, sanctified by centuries of English precedent, of trusting in important matters to the judgment of the general body of suitors to the local courts. And he is following out the policy, towards which his Norman predecessors have been feeling, of calling in the aid of the small man—it would be premature to say the people —against the baronage. Not by new legislation but by the issue of new writs, he interposed the authority of the Crown between the baron and his dependents, and that on the vital question of land tenure; if Front de Boeuf should oust plain Godric or Richard from his tenement, the victim can now apply for a writ of *novel disseisin*, by which the case can be settled before the King's judges by the verdict of a jury. And if Front de Boeuf is still recalcitrant, he may find himself liable to the formidable penalties attending *contemptus brevium*.

As with the land, so with the criminal law. Juries were empanelled not only to present lists of suspected persons, but also to determine the guilt or innocence of those who "put themselves on the country". The transition is easy to the great clause in Magna Charta by which no free man may be imprisoned or dispossessed or outlawed or banished or in any way destroyed except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land, a clause of which its authors doubtless did not realize the full implication.

England was fortunate in finding, in this most critical phase of her legal history, men of outstanding genius to record and interpret her law. Ranulf Glanvill, the justiciar of Henry II, was the first on the long list of authoritative jurists which includes the names of Bracton, Littleton, Coke, and Blackstone. For the century or so after Henry II's accession the general law of the land, the English Common Law, was in a state of abnormally rapid development, and the royal authority was being continuously extended, not by legislation, but by the issue of new forms of writ from the Royal Chancery. Roman Law, having accomplished its work, drops out of the running, but not without having left an evil legacy of its despotic simplification in assimulating the status of villeinage to that of slavery. Norman and Roman methods of straightening

out the confusion of Saxon tenures bore hardly on the common people, favouring uniformity at the expense of liberty. The only wonder is that the process was not carried further, that the Common Law, even in that French-speaking court, was able so quickly to shake off its Roman fetters. The Church, with her own system of Roman jurisprudence, was jealous of her civil rival, and, with more reason than Stephen, intervened to suppress it, for the Holy Fathers of the early thirteenth century were by no means minded to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

To an Ulpian or Papinian such a structure as the English Common Law would no doubt have appeared as mere chaotic barbarism. It had inherited from the Saxon all the verbal formality that had marked the proceedings of oath-helpers; there was a correct form for each action, and the slightest deviation therefrom would lose the litigant his case. It relied to an extraordinary degree upon precedent; records of cases were being kept before the close of the twelfth century, and provide the material for the classic treatise of Bracton. English Law did undoubtedly suffer from the want of logical simplicity; it was cumbrous, formal, and hopelessly complicated, but it was a living growth, rooted to the soil like one of those knarled and twisted oaks that stands proof against the storms of centuries. It grew with the growth of England, it was planted in her American colonies, and when her sovereignty departed, her law remained; it has proved the most beneficent gift that she has been able to confer upon her Empire of India; it has developed into a system of jurisprudence equal to that of Rome in the extent of its influence, and perhaps destined to surpass it by virtue of the individualism which, like that of a Gothic cathedral, is its informing principle.

13

Freemen in Arms

An axe was laid by Henry II to the root of feudalism when he developed the principle, first adopted by his grandfather, of substituting a money payment, called scutage or shield-money, for the military service by which a vassal paid for his lands. In the state of society under which feudalism had grown up, personal service was the most natural method of discharging obligations; the lord wanted to get his corn reaped by the only available labourers, the King had to get his battles fought by the only available army, that of his vassals. But with the gradual emergence of Europe from

the darkest age, the power of money increased, and it was more convenient to hire professional soldiers, who would go anywhere and, in the most sinister sense, do anything, than depend on the uncertain and undisciplined support of vassals, furnishing their own expenses forty days and no more. The Norman Kings had been well acquainted with the use of mercenaries; during the anarchy of Stephen's reign they had been imported in great quantities, especially from Brabant, and given the English a sufficient taste of their methods to arouse an undying hatred of any mercenaries whatever. Henry II had turned these ruffians out on his accession and, with one brief interval, kept them out. Their re-introduction by John was largely responsible for the hatred which united all classes against him at the end of his reign.

But Henry II's need of such support was imperative in what has been somewhat misleadingly styled his Empire. It was not an Empire, but a number of French provinces that he happened to include among his personal estates, and about which he was perpetually engaged in unprofitable squabbles with his own sons, and his overlord, the French King. For such campaigns the feudal levy was obviously impossible, it would have taken most of his allotted time for an English knight to get to the scene of action. For both parties, King and vassal, the payment of money down would be far more convenient. But with this, the last excuse for feudalism disappears. And while Henry was hiring mercenaries abroad, he was laying the foundations of a national army at home, by taking in hand the old levy of the people which had done good service to his grandfather and to himself. In 1181 he ordained that every free man, according to the extent of his holding, should be provided with arms, and that the inevitable jurors should be sworn in every hundred and borough to see that this was done.

Not every man, it will be observed, but every free man. The greater part of Englishmen were not free, but villeins, tied to the soil and without the protection of the King's law, except in such a sense as a dog enjoys protection at present.

Roman Law had drawn a hard and fast line between slave and freeman, and in this English law followed suit, ignoring the complication of semi-free tenures that existed before the Conquest, and placing the villein on the same footing as the slave under the later, more humane Roman legislation—a creature to be treated kindly, but with no rights whatever, the chattel of his lord, the lord of the manor. Thus far legal theory, but in practice a more tolerable

state of things obtained. There was a custom of the manor, derived from a time older than the manor itself, and so deeply rooted in the soil that even the Norman lord could not, or would not, set it aside. There was the manor court, in which all the tenants, free and unfree, gave judgment. The Common Law was, in fact, supplemented by the local and customary law, out of which it had, for the most part, arisen.

14

The Influence of the Church

So far our attention has been fixed mainly upon the temporal aspect of human affairs, but we must not forget that in the theory of the Middle Ages, the temporal was to the spiritual as the body to the soul, and that apart from and above the State, with its network of feudal relationships and its nascent patriotism, stood the Church of Christ, binding all Christian men, bond and free, together in one mystic communion and fellowship. In practice, the Church of Christ was the Empire of Rome endeavouring to establish her law and her dominion over the children of her conquerors. Her weapons were not the less formidable from the fact of their being spiritual.

The idea that Christendom was one state was not only confined to the realm of political speculation. So far as the unifying force of states is the pressure of a common enemy, there are two senses in which this test may be applied to the Church. Rome had still her barbarians thundering against the frontiers. The faith and civilization of Islam confronted her; Moslem armies, wave upon wave, pressed against the defences of Christendom from the Bosphorus to the Pyrenees. On the left flank, the Byzantine Empire opposed its diminishing and somewhat inert bulk; the rest of the defences were under the command of Rome. During the dark ages, when that command was in abeyance, the enemy had pressed forward even to Sicily and beyond the Pyrenees; now, at the end of the eleventh century, Rome had so far rallied her forces as to launch a counter-offensive against the lost provinces of Syria and Palestine. From end to end of Christendom the summons was obeyed. Rome had recovered her legions.

But the Church had another struggle, just as real and just as critical, to wage in the spiritual sphere. As in our own time there is all too slowly emerging the sense of a common cause uniting mankind against the untamed forces of nature, so in the Middle Ages there

was a common cause of Christendom against the brute in man. The difficulty that the modern man finds in understanding his medieval ancestor is that he finds it almost impossible to realize how much nearer that ancestor was to the animal. The modern educated man has at least attained a measure of refinement and self-control to which the contemporaries of Hildebrand and Coeur de Lion were strangers. Members of our Royal Family no longer express their annoyance by foaming at the mouth and biting the carpet, nor do clerical gentlemen signify their disapproval of a newly elected Archbishop by dancing on his body. We have remarked in the Celtic temperament a headlong swiftness of transition from thought to action, but it must be admitted that by modern standards, the Nordic temperament had still a long way to go in the mastery of its passions. We do not say that we are better men than our ancestors, but that our moral problems are of a more subtle and complex order than theirs.

"We will master the flesh and its longings restrain" is apt to sound cheap and platitudinous to men who have learnt to restrain their grosser impulses as a matter of course. But in the Middle Ages the struggle between the flesh and the spirit was direct and terrible. Our own ideal of refining the senses to their utmost capacity for enjoyment would have been hardly intelligible in the eleventh century. The flesh was a tyrant with whom no terms could be kept, it must be utterly subdued and mortified. When that singularly worthless young man, Prince Henry, son of Henry II, was dying at Martel, he caused his attendants to strip him of his soft raiment and put on him a hair shirt, to tie a rope round his neck, and haul him out of bed on to a heap of ashes, where he received the last sacrament. Nay, actual lousiness was esteemed as a mark of sainthood; there is an unsavoury legend of how the Queen of France, entertaining the gorgeously robed Thomas à Becket, observed his sleeve moving, and insisted on knowing the cause. On the sleeve being untied, its inhabitants fell out on to the floor, where they were instantly changed to beautiful pearls.

Such was the grossness even of virtue in those days. The Church was indeed carrying on an uphill and heroic struggle in the midst of enormous evil; the little communities of monks had some reason for feeling themselves islanded in a sea of iniquity, or as sheep sent forth among wolves. The awful experience of Stephen's reign, when men said openly that Christ and his saints slept, is enough testimony to what the feudal magnate could be, once the bonds of control were

loosed. The Red King declared that he had got no good out of God and God should get no good out of him; even the good-natured Robert Curthose was reported to have starved 300 prisoners in Lent, and this practice of starving prisoners is one of which even the chivalrous Coeur de Lion has not escaped the suspicion.

The Church did at least set up a milder ideal against this universal violence and heartlessness. But her instruments were men, men of the same blood and like passions with the "devils and wicked men" she strove to convert. The danger was lest she, too, should be captured and corrupted by the world around her. Hence the extraordinary importance that her great popes of Hildebrand's school attached to keeping her free from the interference and jurisdiction of the State. Simony, or corruption in ecclesiastical appointments, was a deadly disease to be exorcised at any cost. The Church must have the appointment of her own rulers, her courts must be free, administering their own milder law in independence of the merciless law of the State. God must be allowed to have the things that are God's, the Bride of Christ must not be degraded into the harlot of Caesar. Such was the lofty ideal that inspired the Hildebrandine reformation.

The Conquest forced England into communion with the rest of Western civilization just when the religious revival was entering upon its most intense phase. And religion, at that time, comprehended the whole range of intellectual activities. An educated man was, with rare exceptions, a clerk, a man in orders, though not necessarily a priest or monk, and whatever culture existed was fostered and kept within bounds by the Church which, we must remember, was a mind-training association on a vast scale, as well as a spiritual empire, and even, to some extent, a business concern.

Such a society could not fail to soften, in the long run, the rigours of Norman domination, and by the mere fact of its standing above racial or tribal prejudices, act as a defence for the crushed and otherwise defenceless native populace. At first, it must have seemed as if the proud foreigner who displaced an English abbot or bishop differed all too little from his neighbour in the castle. But the baron was a Norman, whereas the Churchman, in so far as he was true to his calling, was neither English nor Norman but something transcending both, a Catholic. Moreover, as churchmen could not found families, the foreign element in the Church dwindled more rapidly than among the nobility.

It is customary to speak of the Roman Church, at this time, as cosmopolitan, but this is to widen its scope unduly. It was European,

or rather Western European, the spiritual successor of the old Western Empire. The feeling that inspired the Crusades would be more fitly likened to the old Roman imperialism than to what we now know as cosmopolitanism. But this sentiment was in conflict, or compromise, with the self-consciousness of smaller units, local or tribal, which were by no means minded to merge their individuality in the citizenship of a resurrected and spiritual empire. Neither Englishman nor Norman, Frenchman nor Fleming, was going to follow the example of the old Gauls and Britons by resigning himself to the status of a contented provincial. The triumphs of spiritual Rome—the humiliation of the Emperor Henry IV before Pope Gregory VII, the homage of John Lackland to Innocent III—were startling enough, but they were transitory and unreal compared with those of old Rome.

Nevertheless, the importance of this partial unity of Western Christendom can hardly be over-estimated. The Conquest, if it brought England under the heel of a foreign garrison, brought back to her clergy the knowledge of Latin, the medium of intellectual exchange throughout the civilized West. It placed at her service the organizing genius of a Lanfranc, the scholarship of an Anselm. It enabled foreigners to accomplish the task with which our own Alfred and Dunstan had wrestled in vain, of putting an end to the slackness and slovenliness that were the bane of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

This reformation first took the form of a strengthening, such as Dunstan and his colleagues had essayed with very imperfect success, of the regular or monastic element in the Church. It was among the parish priests, poorly educated and often married men, very much under the thumb of the local lord, that the seed sown by the Church was most choked by the thorns of the world. The necessary tightening up of ecclesiastical discipline was first and most easily effected among the communities concentrated in selected spots and withdrawn from the world for the avowed purpose of living an intensive religious life according to prescribed rules. The evidence of stones is conclusive on this point. There is comparatively little building of parish churches before the end of the eleventh century, but the monasteries and monastic cathedrals were already beginning to rise up in the majestic sternness and simplicity of the early Norman style.

It is only with the dawn of the twelfth century, when the distinction between Frenchman and Englishman was well nigh obliterated, that the revival began to affect the parishes to any

marked extent. Then, indeed, the impulse to massive and stately buildings was felt even in the humblest villages. An almost incredible amount of labour and skill must have gone to the expression in stone of what even the oppressed peasant must have felt to be his highest ideal. The parish churches, which are mostly in the late Norman style, with its profuseness of carving, have generally only been allowed to survive as part of some later building. It is only in rare instances, such as that of Stewkely in Buckinghamshire, or Barfreston, in the Canterbury district, that we are able to see with our own eyes what a Norman parish church must have looked like, in its aisleless and rectangular simplicity. The deserted church of Dode in Kent shows us a Norman parish church of the most primitive style—without carving and almost without windows, yet redeemed from plainness by sheer honesty of intention.

The twelfth century saw no slackening of the religious activity that was astir in Western Europe. The tendency of human nature to decline from enthusiasm to formula, to substitute the letter for the spirit, was the evil with which earnest reformers were continually at strife. The monastic history of the three centuries following on the foundation of Cluny consists of a series of attempts to formulate a rule of life which shall be proof against this tendency and, in fact, to devise a law to perpetuate the work of the spirit, as hopeless an attempt as that of medieval and Renaissance scientists to devise a machine for perpetual motion. In the same way the Church itself was perpetually endeavouring to make its organization proof against spiritual wastage. And no doubt organization could do very much to retard the inevitable and to keep some sort of Christianity in being through times of spiritual deadness, but just as an engine is kept working by a series of explosions, so the Church was kept alive by fresh bursts of spiritual energy, and not by the rules and systems into which that energy froze and petrified.

The Cluniac revival had tried to bring back to its pristine purity the old monastic rule of Saint Benedict. But early in the twelfth century the Cluniacs themselves incurred the censure of earnest Churchmen for the pride and splendour that were rife in their wealthy foundations. Accordingly, a reversion was made to a puritanical sternness and simplicity. A new order of monks, the Cistercians, of whom one of the founders was an Englishman, Stephen Harding, but which derived its brightest inspiration from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, started a reaction against even a communal magnificence. By the end of Henry I's reign, they had commenced to found their

settlements in the remotest parts of the country, and particularly in those northern districts that had been laid waste by William the Conqueror. The good fathers were by no means content to save their souls in ascetic idleness; they were industrious and skilful agriculturists, and, most of all, sheep farmers, and their exertions not only helped to revive these wasted districts, but also to strengthen England's economic position by fostering her export of wool.

The Church, then, in England as elsewhere, was intensely alive throughout the twelfth century. It was a time of constant experiment and new departures. Her mind-training system was from time to time being brought up to date. Even the canons, the laxness of whose discipline had been the despair of earlier reformers, were frequently assimilated to monks by the institution, which dates from the preceding century, of orders of regular canons. An interesting departure was that of the only purely English order in monastic history, that founded by Gilbert of Sempringham, which reverted to the old Anglo-Saxon practice of including both canons and nuns in the same foundation.

The most conclusive witness to the vitality of the Church is that of the churches themselves. We are apt to talk of the Norman style as if it were some fixed and determined thing, instead of being, as it actually was, in a state of continuous development for over a century. Indeed, it would hardly be difficult for an expert to fix, within a decade or two, the date of any fairly complete Norman building he happened to come across. The development is from the massive and imperial sternness of a conquering race to the joyous exuberance of native craftsmen free to express their individual and national personality. It is the light before the dawn of English Gothic.

The ever increasing exuberance of ornament received a salutary check from the Cistercian asceticism. It was the ideal of this order to eschew every form of deliberate adornment. The conscious pursuit of beauty was abhorrent to their notions of single-hearted piety. But the monks must have had beauty in their souls, for they loved to plant their monasteries not only in the remotest but the loveliest spots. And their denying themselves ornaments in their churches only compelled them to fall back upon the essentials of construction, and thus achieve a beauty of an even higher order than that which they professed to scorn. The Cistercian builders had no small share in preparing the ground for the transition to the pointed-arch style known as Early English.

So long as King and ruling class spoke a foreign language and

despised the name of Englishman, the European outlook of Rome might be indirectly favourable to the growth of patriotism in England. The Church was often the only power that stood between the common people and the worst abuses of feudal tyranny. We read how the Bishops and learned men cursed continually the anarchs of Stephen's reign, too often in vain! Even Henry II, if he stood for efficiency, set up an iron bureaucracy which, if it curbed the magnates, bore hardly, both in theory and practice, on the common people. To our notions, the proposal of the Church to set up a jurisdiction independent of the royal courts seems, as indeed it seemed to Henry, sheer anarchy. That a clerk who had committed murder should be snatched from the arms of the law and that anybody who could read or remember the Latin version of the 59th psalm could qualify for a clerk, was a negation of ordered government worthy of Gilbert's *Mikado*. And yet, in despite of logic, it let in a gleam of mercy upon that hard time that must have been welcome indeed to those whose lives had little other alleviation.

In the Constitutions of Clarendon, the manifesto of royal policy that brought to a head the quarrel between Henry of Anjou and Archbishop Thomas à Becket, the Londoner who championed the extreme claims of the Church to be above the law, occurs the following significant clause.

"Sons of villeins should not be ordained without the consent of the lord, on whose land they are known to have been born."

The Church did, in fact, offer the only ladder by which a poor man could hope to rise above the disabilities of his class, even, like Nicholas Breakspear, to the headship of all Christendom. The one English monastic order, that of Gilbert of Sempringham, was, in particular, largely recruited from among the poor.

So that in judging between the King and the Archbishop, we must first clear our minds of modern prejudices. Both were true, but imperfect heroes, each was standing for a cause which he honestly believed to be essential to the welfare of the realm. Henry's Empire was to collapse, and his bureaucracy to turn to tyranny in the hands of his youngest son; Becket's Church was shortly to become a gigantic leech, sucking the wealth of the country to further a miserable crusade not against the Saracen, but against the Christian Commander of the Faithful. Whatever were the Archbishop's faults, the English loved him. "Blessed is he," they cried, "that cometh in the name of the Lord!" When, just before his murder, in his own Cathedral, by a party of superserviceable "King's men", a knight brought him

a message from the court to quit London and return to Canterbury, "Will the King," cried he, "drive off the shepherd that the wolf may tear the flock? Let God see to it!" As one lingers among the cloisters of Canterbury, there comes before the mind's eye that tragically grotesque vision of the Archbishop being hustled along by a crowd of panic-stricken monks, and trying vainly to preserve the dignity of his office, or at bay in the gloom of the vast cathedral, foul-mouthed, struggling, and then bending his head meekly to receive a martyr's crown. There is the still stranger scene of the warrior and statesman, Henry of Anjou, his forehead pressed against the cold stone of the tomb, his back scarred with the weals of penance, crying like a child over the bones of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Lastly there is the strangest scene of all, that of another English monarch, after the lapse of nearly four centuries, reversing his predecessor's verdict against himself, and casting the sacred bones out of the tomb no man knows whither. All three, kings and archbishop, were working, according to their lights, to ends not ignoble:—

> "in tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be; passions weave the plot,
> We are betrayed by what is false within."

15

The Seed of Patriotism

While Saxon England was being conquered and held down by Normans, Brythonic Wales had not escaped scathless. Even while Edward the Confessor sat upon the throne, a Norman community had been planted on the Wye at Hereford, and it was not long before the expansive energy of the conquerors began to seek fresh fields. With the Norman came the castle, and this threatened checkmate to a foe whose strength had lain in ambushes and guerilla war among the mountains. Powerful earldoms, Chester, Shrewsbury, Hereford, were established upon the border, and in Northern Gwynnedd and Southern Deheubarth the chain of castles crept along the coastal lowlands. Then there was a surprising rally of Welsh arms and national sentiment. The anarchy of Stephen's reign weakened the intruders, and large tracts, including most of Gwynnedd, were recovered. Wales had all the tenacity of life that springs from a low grade of organization. She had the advantages of ambush and evasion afforded by her mountains, and she had, besides, a pride of race and tradition that made the very idea of conquest unthinkable to her sons.

The struggle for liberty fanned the national pride to a white heat, and produced a notable revival of native poetry, some fiercely patriotic, some tenderly sympathetic with the things of nature. We quote some examples from Professor Lloyd's classic History of Wales :—

> "The King of England came with his battalions—
> Though he came, he returned not with cattle."

And this

> "Gwalchmai am I called, a foe to all the English."

And, in a more tender strain :—

> "I love that sea-strand of Meirionydd,
> Where a snow-white arm was my pillow,
> I love to hear in the thickets of privet,
> The nightingale's note in the far-famed meeting of waters."

But not even the sentiment of nationality was capable of imparting to the Welsh that unity of action which would have given them their only chance, and that but a faint one, of preserving their independence once the full weight of England should be brought to bear upon them. A powerful chief like Llewelyn the Great might, by sheer force of personality, create the semblance of unity, but anything like an efficient central government could not be imposed on the tribes of mountaineers. Yet if England was, ultimately, to conquer Wales, there is another and just as important sense in which Wales may claim to have conquered England. Five and a half centuries after the last Welsh King had died, by an obscure hand, there was in England a poet who voiced, with singular accuracy, the sentiments and patriotism of his countrymen. This poet had certainly a rather vague and deprecating reverence for Norman blood, but when he wanted to construct something in the nature of a national epic, it was not to William the Conqueror nor Rolf the Ganger that he turned for a hero, but to the British Arthur, the shadowy lord of the Welsh Mabinogion.

That British and not French or Norman tradition should have come to be the theme for heroic legend marks the transition from a conquered England to one united in sentiment and a common pride of achievement. For though French may continue to be the language of the law and the educated class, this has no more significance, by itself, than the fact that Marcus Aurelius chose to write his reflections in Greek, and Frederick the Great failed to be a poet in French.

The Normans, ever adaptable, were not long in making themselves at home with their Welsh neighbours. Along the marches were

a good many men, like that engaging priest of the world, Gerald de Barri, who hardly knew their own nationality. "I am sprung," wrote he, "from the Welsh princes and Marcher Barons, and when I see injustice to either race I hate it." Such a contact was exactly what Welshman and Norman-Englishman needed to bring out the best points in both.

There was living, in the first half of the eleventh century, a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Monmouth, bearing the Norman name of Geoffrey, though he has been suspected, with some reason, of Breton antecedents, and has had his name rendered in Welsh as Griffith ap Arthur. We have no reliable information as to his origin, but in spirit he is certainly a Norman through and through, a Norman saturated with Welsh influences and Welsh tradition. It is owing to this fortunate conjunction that he was able to produce a book whose influence was not only British but European. He, in fact, took the old, dreamlike, Celtic Arthur of the Mabinogion, a shadow King moving among shadows, and transformed him, by a stroke of the pen, into just such a hero as the typical Norman lord had always dreamed of being. Even the ruffian Rufus had seriously discussed plans of conquering France, and had talked of some day crossing the Alps, and sacking Rome like another Brennus. What the Red King would have liked to do was just what Geoffrey's Arthur did.

The Norman was, in fact, what his buildings proclaim him to have been, a born imperialist. The original Arthur, if we grant his existence, had been a King or general desperately defending his native soil against an invader who could be at best checked for a time. But this defensive warfare no more sorted with the Norman ideal than Arthur's wild hunt after the Twrch Trwth. Geoffrey's Arthur is too practical to bother about pigs; with all the methodical energy of the Norman he reduces, in succession, the Saxons, the Scots, the Irish, Iceland, Gothland, the Orkneys, Norway, Dacia, Aquitaine, and Gaul, placing vassals of his own upon the vacant thrones. He is then crowned at Caerleon with a pomp and ceremony truly delightful to the feudal imagination. This modest programme having been fulfilled, it is now the turn of Rome. "How sweet will be even death itself," exclaims a royal follower of Arthur, "when suffered in revenging the injuries done to our ancestors, in defending our liberties, and in promoting the glory of our King!" Arthur does, in fact, annihilate the Roman army, and is just crossing the Alps when the news of Mordred's treachery recalls him to England and his last battle.

Geoffrey works up another British legend, which he may have found in the Welsh historian Nennius, and was destined to be of influence in the formation of patriotic sentiment. This was the supposed origin of the British from Brutus, the grandson of Aeneas. We have already stated our reasons for suspecting that this legend may have some substratum of historical truth, but it is only fair to admit its extreme convenience for the purpose in hand. Nennius had been a little hazy as to who Brutus really was, and seems to hover between a Roman consul and a patriarch, but the reason for making him a son of Aeneas is obvious. England wanted a hero who should stand in the same relation to her history as the pious Trojan to that of Rome. Hence springs a crop of stories about old Kings of Britain which have given to our tradition and literature such time-honoured names as Sabrina, Leir, Locrine, and Guendolen.

Never was a book more timely than this of Geoffrey. He may have been as consummate a liar as another chronicler, William of Newburgh, made out; his Welsh scholarship may have been as defective and his Latin as canine as his most ill-natured critics have maintained; all this will not alter the fact that he provided, just at the time when it was needed, a bond of sentiment strong enough to bind together Norman and Englishman as fellow-countrymen of no mean nation, children of Trojan Brutus, and heirs to the glory of British Arthur.

In the year that Geoffrey died, Henry of Anjou came to the throne. Such a dominion as his including, in one form or another, the British Isles and half France, might well claim comparison with Arthur's conquests, and demand such a legendary background. A Welsh poet had sung, in a line of tremendous impressiveness :—

"But unknown is the grave of Arthur."

The Norman was not content to rest upon the unknown. Henry caused the Gate of Remembrance to be opened at Glastonbury, and the remains of his distinguished predecessor were duly unearthed, in a coffin inscribed with full particulars of identification. This had the double advantage of providing our royal line with the actual bones of their presumed ancestor, and of proving to those Celts, particularly Bretons, who still looked to his coming again to deliver them from the Normans, that Arthur was well and truly dead.

Even the chroniclers of contemporary fact bore their part in helping to create a common bond of sentiment. Henry of Huntington, in some rather turgid verse with which his prose is interspersed, depicts England as calling on King Henry to deliver her from the

scourge of anarchy, and Henry as replying to the " Land of my sires " that her own red cross leads him on to win for her freedom and glory. William of Malmesbury, the leading historian of this time, though writing as a Norman, praises in eloquent words the courage of Harold and his men, and refers to England as " our dear country ", and Ordericus Vitalis, who was carried off from England at the age of nine to be brought up in a Norman monastery, never forgets to display his love for England, a love tinged with monkish pity. These things may be straws, but they show which way the wind is blowing.

It is in the writings of John of Salisbury, a churchman of English origin and one of the foremost scholars of his age, that we find an English patriotism, not to say jingoism, in the fullest, modern sense. John's conception of the State is almost innocent of feudalism, and he resembles no one so much as Herbert Spencer in his application of biological analogy to the social organism. To him the English are " our countrymen "—he has a chapter on the examples of valour given by " our countrymen ", another on the mischiefs that have befallen them through lack of discipline. Harold and Rufus, though for dynastic and moral reasons respectively John is bound to disapprove of them, have to be lionized as examples of national prowess. And John is very careful to point out that Henry II's army, that brought Stephen to terms, was of " our countrymen ". Those orthodox medievalists who delight in repeating their formula that patriotism was inconceivable to the medieval mind, must have some trouble in finding a convenient explanation for so uncompromisingly Bullish a John as him of Salisbury.

16

Magna Charta

Henry II, with all his ability, was not equal to the task of defending the ramshackle and heterogeneous collection of French provinces that gave him more French territory under his direct sway than his overlord, the King of France. There was no reason whatever for such an arrangement; even economically there was no community of interest to bind together the scattered provinces, and Henry lost his only chance of providing this when, early in his reign, he tried to get an outlet on the Mediterranean, found his French overlord barring his path at Toulouse, and drew back.

Already in France, a sense of nationality was awake, radiating outwards from the royal town of Paris, and as yet hardly affecting

the outlying provinces. Before the story of Arthur had begun its work of turning Norman to Englishman, minstrels were singing of Roland who had died for "sweet France". Paris, with her famous university, was already becoming the centre of culture she has remained ever since. The work of centralization and consolidation was going on briskly under the House of Capet throughout the twelfth century, and the new spirit was expressing itself, after the fashion of that age, in stone. March Phillips has shown how exactly the rise of Gothic in France corresponds in time and place with the growth of natural consciousness, and how the twelfth century Gothic cathedrals on the map give the impression of shots on a target whose bullseye is Paris. This awakening of Gothic energy, this fierce and riotous assertion of communal personality, sounded the death knell of the power which, for no reason except the higgling of the matrimonial market, was exercising a strangle-hold on "sweet France", and keeping her King from the possession of her fairest provinces.

The hour brought forth the man in the shape of King Philip Augustus, one of those typical French statesmen whose lives are devoted to realizing, with a ruthless and unscrupulous logic, a policy thought out on simple lines. Philip's idea was that of Philip the Fair and Louis XI, that of the great cardinals and Louis XIV, to unite as large a France under as strong a government as possible. He had behind him the nascent energy that expressed itself in the cathedrals, the awakened self-consciousness of the towns with which he was careful to ally himself. The Angevin empire had as much chance of withstanding the outward pressure from Paris, as the eggshell when once the chicken inside has begun to peck its way out.

The details of the desultory feudal warfare, in which Henry was pitted against his own sons, egged on by Philip, are unimportant. What does concern us is that the long period of comparative peace, that had enabled our Kings to build up their administrative system, is now at an end, and that system has to bear the strain of chronic and ultimately hopeless warfare. So far from the French inheritance of the Angevins being a source of strength, it committed them to a task to which their resources were inadequate. Genius and energy could only postpone the inevitable crash. By the end of Henry's reign he was a baffled and beaten man, and had been forced to a humiliating peace with his sons and Philip, which, though it only lost him an insignificant amount of territory, had fatally revealed the weakness of his "empire".

His son and successor, Richard, who, as governor of Aquitaine and ally of Philip, had helped to bring down his father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, found himself in the same impossible position, A first rate soldier, he went in for fighting in much the same spirit as some modern gentlemen for big game shooting, and since the best fighting was to be had in Palestine, he recklessly added to his already excessive liabilities by going, in company with Philip and others, on a crusade, after having bled his Kingdom white to foot the bill. But Philip, who was in no sense a sportsman and knew exactly what he wanted, soon found an excuse to get home and was no sooner home than in defiance of his pledged word, he began operations against Richard's French dominions. His task was lightened by the fact that Richard himself fell, on the way home, into the hands of one of his own crusading allies, and needed a crushing levy on the wealth of his Kingdom to ransom him. The rest of his ten years' reign was passed in a sordid, cruel and on the whole successful war against Philip. The Angevin inheritance was preserved for the moment, and Richard endeavoured to perpetuate the division of the Seine valley by building an impregnable fortress overlooking the river, but in the task of postponing the inevitable he was exhausting the resources of his Kingdom, devising new and more drastic methods of taxation, conferring privileges right and left for cash down, putting a dangerous strain even on so powerful an administrative machine as that which had showed its efficiency by functioning smoothly during his absence and captivity.

Richard, who had now entered into partnership with a mercenary ruffian of the worst type and was engaged in an ignoble treasure hunt, had his expensive career cut short by a well-directed arrow. His brother John, who succeeded him, was, perhaps alone among our Kings, of an unmistakably criminal type. A born adventurer, he lacked for nothing in cunning and energy, but these inherited qualities were marred by the fitfulness and lack of concentrated purpose that are the inevitable handicap of the moral degenerate. He was soon in trouble with Philip, and stood by in helpless and resourceless apathy while that persistent monarch quietly appropriated one after another of John's French provinces, leaving him only the southern Aquitaine, which, being most remote from the national centre of Paris, was still capable of loyalty to an England that offered a market for her wines. The fact is that the resources of England had proved definitely inadequate for the defence of half France, and the feudal magnates, without whose money and

man-power the King was helpless, had discovered the aristocratic equivalent of downing tools.

To add to John's embarrassments, he became involved in a violent quarrel with the Pope over the right to appoint an Archbishop of Canterbury. Relying on his foreign mercenaries and the strength of his administrative system, he successfully defied the power of the Church and the terrors of interdict and excommunication for some years, but the breaking point was reached when he found himself threatened with a French invasion, and with his baronage on the verge of passing from passive to active resistance. As a last resource, he tried a desperate but not unplausible gamble. He became the Pope's vassal, a more abject surrender than had been required of him, and thus having turned Rome from an enemy into an ally, tried to win back his lost provinces by means of an alliance with Germany, as represented by the Emperor Otto IV. This alliance was shattered by Philip in a decisive battle among the Flanders marshes at Bouvines. This disaster brought the disaffection at home to a head. John, who had been co-operating with the Emperor by invading France from the west, returned to England with his prestige shattered, his coffers empty, and his foreign policy in ruins. The discontent of the baronage now broke out in a flame of revolt, and they were joined, in defiance of the Pope, by the Archbishop of Canterbury and most of the higher clergy, and by a London which had already attained a large measure of self-government. Practically defenceless, John was driven to gain time by sealing the famous charter of liberties, presented to him by the rebels, and known to subsequent ages as Magna Charta.

Magna Charta is a document about which there has been much misleading talk. It has been described as instinct with an almost inspired wisdom, prompted by pure, self-sacrificing patriotism, and, more recently, as a mere reactionary manifesto, putting back the clock of progress. It would argue but small knowledge of human nature in general, and that of the feudal lords in particular, to imagine that the interpretation they would put on the law, when they had the King at their mercy, would be wholly disinterested. It is easy to point out that the "liberties" they safeguarded were, in fact, their own privileges as against the Crown, that the "lawful judgment of his peers" to which every man had a right, might easily be interpreted as putting the magnate beyond the power of the King's judges. But we ought to take a wider and more generous view of the Charter as a whole. The mere fact that it was accepted by

subsequent generations as the cornerstone of our liberties, that its confirmation was constantly demanded and its principles constantly appealed to, ought to save it from the charge of being merely reactionary.

The Charter is twofold in its intention. One part of it was not destined to survive John, and, indeed, was never put into effective operation. It consisted of an impracticable scheme for controlling an impossible King which, in effect, transferred the powers of the Crown to a committee of twenty-five magnates, along with other terms of surrender by which John had not the faintest intention of abiding. The other part was the real Magna Charta, which subsequent ages regarded with an almost superstitious reverence as the foundation of English, not to speak of American, liberties. This was no dictated peace imposed by subjects on their sovereign, but set out to be a statement of an already existing law, by which the relations between sovereign and subjects were regulated. It amounted to this—His Majesty has not played the game; in future he must undertake to keep the rules, and in case there should be any doubt about it, here are the rules in black and white.

A charter of liberties was no new thing. Such a one had been issued by every one of John's predecessors since the Conquest, with the exception of Richard. That of Henry I had been peculiarly comprehensive, and Magna Charta was merely this document elaborated and brought up to date. It may not have seemed so great a thing for the most disreputable of English Kings to be required to follow in the footsteps of the Lion of Justice.

That the Charter is something more considerable than a mere incident in a struggle between tyrant and feudatories is due partly to the variety of interests John had united against him, which render it more of a national pronouncement than any of its predecessors, and partly to the English love of precedent that made it not an attempt to formulate a new settlement, but to return to the state of things that had existed under the two Henries. Credit is also due to the genius that inspired its composition, in which we may perhaps detect the hand of the public-spirited Archbishop, Stephen Langton. There is a grandeur and simplicity about its leading clauses that made them, as late as Blackstone's day, the simplest summary expression of the Englishman's fundamental rights. Such reactionary elements as crept in were not destined to survive. The writ *praecipe*, which called up cases of disputed tenure from the feudal to the royal courts was, indeed, abolished, but a writ was substituted for it under another

name. No lapse of time can, however, detract from the grandeur and relevance of such words as : " To no man will we sell, to no man will we deny or delay right or justice." The spirit of the Charter is, in fact, the spirit of England. The mere fact that it deals in a practical manner with concrete grievances, and that it appeals not to the abstraction that ought to be but to the custom that has been, makes it more English than ever.

In one sense, it may be true to say that the work of the Conqueror and the two great Henries was shattered at Runnymede. In a truer and deeper sense it was crowned and brought to completion. The task of the Normans, and particularly the Norman kings, had been to bring method and order out of slovenliness and anarchy. That order was now established on impregnable foundations. The administrative machine continued to function unimpaired, but so long as the Charter stood firm, it must function by law and not by any man's arbitrary caprice. And that law was not the centralized despotism of Rome, but the Common Law of English liberties.

CHAPTER V

ENGLAND A NATION

1

The Growth of National Feeling

John, with the Pope to back him, lost no time in tearing up the scrap of parchment he had sealed at Runnymede. His mercenary army was soon back again, and the baronial forces in arms against him were getting so much the worst of it that they offered the crown to Louis, son and heir to Philip Augustus of France. The accident of John's fleet having been crippled by a storm allowed the new claimant to effect the last overseas invasion of England on any considerable scale, and the tide of war had again begun to turn when a surfeit of peaches rid the earth of John. This ended any chance Louis might have had of making good his claim; his summons had been a policy of desperation and now even the magnates had no further use for him. And while his English supporters were changing sides, his prospects of obtaining French reinforcements were gravely compromised, for, unlike the Conqueror, he had left an unsubdued Dover on his communications.

And now a national hero had arisen in the person of Dover's defender, Hubert de Burgh, who, despite his foreign name, is entitled to an honourable place on the roll of English patriots. Determined to prevent a new French army from getting across, he roused the fisher folk in burning words. "If this folk lands, England is lost," he told them, and when they protested that they were only poor fishermen and not sea warriors or pirates, he added that they might hang him if he surrendered the Key of England. The fishermen were moved to tears; one cried "who is ready to die for England?", another answered "here am I", and presently the fleet, thus hastily collected, and far inferior in numbers to the enemy, was beating up towards Calais to get the weather gauge of him. A victory, as complete and decisive as Trafalgar, was the result, and Louis, cut off from support, was quickly disposed of. It is small wonder

that when, fifteen years later, Hubert had fallen out of royal favour, so beloved was he by the common people that a poor smith refused, according to Matthew Paris, to strike fetters on the man who had saved England.

This seafight off Dover is important not only for the fact that it prevented another foreign conquest of England, but from the evidence it gives of England having begun to find herself and to glow with a spirit to which it would be pedantry to deny the name of patriotism. The existence of this spirit is a fact which the modern school of historians, that has done such sterling work in transforming our notions of medieval history, is a little prone to obscure. It is, after all, rash to take medieval man entirely at his own feudal valuation. No doubt he was apt to explain every political relationship in personal terms, to talk of states as if they were estates and nothing else. It is also true that the country was as yet, in many ways, far from perfectly united; that a Kentishman might have found it as difficult to explain himself to a Yorkshireman, as he would, nowadays, to a Celtic-speaking Welshman; that the men of the Cinque Ports might have come to equal loggerheads with Normans, and Cornishmen or East Anglians, and that the municipal authorities of Bristol carried on negotiations with those of Winchester and of Rouen on much the same footing. French was still the speech of the court and the magnates, and the Church, with her centralized discipline and universal language, was still an influence making for a larger patriotism of Western Europe.

There were then many forces making against what we now know as nationalism, and particularly in the beginning of the century, when the magnates, the men who supported the French candidate for the throne, were only just learning to think and act as Englishmen. None the less the thirteenth century is remarkable for the vigorous growth of this spirit, which was never more actively in being than during the reigns of the third Henry and his son.

As early as the reign of Henry II, Englishmen were beginning to think of themselves no longer as a conquered but a conquering people, sons of Brutus and countrymen of Arthur. By the time Henry III came to the throne, England had severed most of her continental connections, and was beginning to acquire her own system of law, her national universities, and a flourishing export trade, besides having something like a national hero in that most un-English of sovereigns, Richard I. The new spirit was reflected in art, and above all in the most expressive of all medieval arts, that of building.

As early as the middle of the twelfth century, it had become evident that the old bottles of Norman imperialism could no longer suffice for the new wine of the English national revival. The awakening of French Gothic was bound to be answered by a similar outburst north of the Channel, since the same spirit of vigorous nationalism was astir in both countries.

For England had acquired what was even more important than a national hero in the person, or rather the remains, of a great national saint. The foreign ancestry of Thomas à Becket need not concern us; to the medieval Englishman he was Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and the dramatic circumstances of his martyrdom in his own cathedral and of the King's penance at his tomb combined to bring pilgrims and—what the Canterbury monks cared for even more—rich gifts from all parts of Western Christendom to his shrine. By what was certainly, to the devout imagination, a natural consequence of the tragedy, four years after the murder the Norman choir, completed forty years before under the auspices of Prior Conrad, was consumed by fire. The monks at first thought of rebuilding it on the old lines, but in those days architecture was alive and not imitative, and it was impossible to put back the clock.

Seventy miles to the South East of Paris, at Sens, had arisen one of the first though by no means the most complete and ornate of the French Gothic cathedrals. From thence came to Canterbury the master-builder, William, in order to supervise the erection of a new choir and a sanctuary fit to house the shrine of so distinguished a martyr. He proceeded to teach the English masons to work in the new pointed style which was taking the place of Romanesque in his own country, and this combination of foreign tuition and native craftsmanship resulted in a building—the choir we see to-day—which is not only a beautiful work of art, but an important historical event, in that it bridges the transition from the Norman method of building to one that is not only in name but in fact English. The French master-builder was, with his work only half done, incapacitated by a fall from the scaffolding, and his work was taken up by another William, known as "the Englishman", who showed himself in no way inferior to his teacher. This English William, though the main lines of his work had already been determined, was by no means minded to be the copyist of his French namesake, and there is no more fascinating spectacle for the lover of architecture than to go from the Trinity Chapel, the Englishman's first independent work, to the side aisles and the Eastern Corona, and see him gradually

evolving a style at once national and individual, with slender detached shafts and graceful lancet windows.

Canterbury choir stands midway between the old style and the new, but the full transition was inevitable. The Norman, as the nation recovered spirit and began to assert its individuality, began to take on an ornamental exuberance altogether foreign to its massive simplicity, and provoked the Cistercian reaction in favour of discarding ornament altogether and concentrating on pure architecture. This had the effect not only of discrediting the methods of the old-fashioned Benedictines, but also of stimulating a search for fresh constructional methods, and the discovery of the greater freedom and energy implied in the supersession of the round by the pointed arch. Foreign influences, to which so centralized an order as that of Cîteaux was peculiarly susceptible, no doubt played their part in hastening the transition. It is notable, at any rate, that the new style comes triumphantly into being under the auspices of Saint Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, and a native of that Burgundy which played such an important part in the development both of the round and the pointed styles. The East Transept and the westernmost of the two choirs of Lincoln Cathedral, in their chaste and rather sombre magnificence, signalize the final break with the Norman tradition, and the birth of a style which is equally entitled to the names of Gothic and Early-English.

Whatever may be said of Canterbury, here at least is an architecture that owes nothing essential to the imitation of French models. So distinguished a French critic as Viollet-le-Duc has disclaimed any suggestion of French influence in this part of Lincoln Cathedral. "The construction is English, the ornaments are English, the execution of the work belongs to the English school of workmen at the beginning of the thirteenth century." [1] In some ways, indeed, this choir of Saint Hugh represents a more advanced development of Gothic than anything in contemporary France. Its building occupies the last eight years of the twelfth century.

Another evidence of the growing sense of nationality is to be found in the establishment of our first universities. These institutions were of great and increasing importance all over Western Christendom, and their rise heralds the transition from a theocratic to a secular order of society. It is true that the universities were founded under ecclesiastical auspices for the training of clerics and were, in theory,

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May, 1861, quoted in Bell's Cathedral Series, "Lincoln."

as purely ecclesiastical bodies as the monasteries themselves. But there were clerics and clerics in the Middle Ages, and many who called themselves by this name were scholars and officials enjoying the status and immunities of churchmen, but in other ways little distinguishable from laymen. Upon such men the bonds of ecclesiastical discipline and corporate loyalty would be less potent than upon the regular army of monks and the staff of beneficed or paid priests. This independence expressed itself in two ways, first in a rowdy and aggressive nationalism, strikingly at variance with the super-patriotism favoured by the Church, and secondly in a liberty or boldness of thought that might easily lapse into heresy.

Down to the latter part of the fourteenth century, to speak of English university life is much the same as to speak of Oxford, for Cambridge, which was started by an Oxonian exodus during the troubles of John's reign, plays an altogether secondary rôle, and though attempts were made at starting other universities, they never got properly going. There were certainly schools at Oxford as early as Henry I's reign, but the main centre of attraction for scholars was the University of Paris, at which students of all Western nations congregated. However the growing rivalry between an England and a France, each more and more conscious of her own nationality, was bound, sooner or later, to put an end to this state of things. It was when Thomas à Becket had fled from England and a not altogether unbiassed French sympathy was aroused in his favour, that the English students appear to have been expelled, or at any rate to have migrated from Paris. From this time forth Oxford becomes a full-blown English university, a *studium generale*, as it was called.

" English " is perhaps too narrow a word, for students resorted thither from every part of the British Isles, the Irish being distinguished, even in those days, by an excess of rowdiness. The bitterness born of wars and oppressions had not yet entered into the souls of the four nations, and there seems to have been no particular obstacle, so far as we can judge by the evidence of Oxford, to the growth of a national sentiment embracing the whole of the British Isles. The " nations " into which the students grouped themselves for the purpose, largely, of chronic rows, lay North and South of the Trent line—Wales and Ireland counting as South.

The atmosphere of the medieval University was certainly the opposite of what nowadays we associate with the word " clerical ". There was in fact a proverb which ran,

" When Oxford draws its knife,
England's soon at strife."

The undergraduate of those days was a handy man with his weapon, and possessed a militant interest in politics which nowadays is more characteristic of the Continental than the English university. It is no wonder that Oxford is found in the van of the struggle against foreign and Papal pretensions that went on throughout the long reign of Henry III.

The Church and the Nation

In the epoch of transition that is comprised in the fifty-six years of Henry III's reign, the main interest centres in the Church. The pontificate of Innocent III saw her at the height of her prestige and influence. It was no small triumph for the Western Empire, in its spiritual reincarnation, to have regained the formal sovereignty, not only spiritual but temporal, over the lost province of Britain. The King of England was the Pope's vassal, and had the Church found it possible to live up to her highest ideal, and make her yoke easy and her burden light, there is no reason to believe that such an arrangement would have been resented by the Englishman of that time.

For the English people, as distinct from the French-speaking aristocracy, had every reason for affectionate gratitude towards Mother Church. To some extent at least she had blunted the edge of royal and baronial oppression; the last of the good old English Kings was one of her saints, and her martyred champion, Saint Thomas of Canterbury, exercised more power from his magnificent shrine than he ever had from the chair of Saint Augustine. It was Saint Hugh of Lincoln who set up what Bishop Stubbs has justly characterized as a landmark in constitutional history by successfully resisting one of Richard's exorbitant war levies. It was Archbishop Stephen Langton who was the brains of the national movement that produced Magna Charta.

If the Church asked for allegiance and even money, she could fairly claim to have earned both by the services she performed. In that rough age she exercised an influence that was, on the whole, both civilizing and humane. Pope Innocent III presided over a General Council which at last succeeded in abolishing the barbarous superstition of trial by ordeal, and the Church also set her face against the Norman innovation of trial by battle. The Christianized version of Roman Law, called the Canon Law, which she applied

in her courts to the wide range of human relationships that fell within her jurisdiction, was kinder and more scientific than that of the lay courts. The universities were her training schools [1]; the noblest works of art and architecture were created under her auspices; such rudimentary science as emerged was the product of clerics, because clerics were the only educated men. A steadily increasing number of schools testified to the Church's activities in training up each rising generation. It was the Church too, and most of all the monasteries, that supplied a rudimentary system of poor relief, and was responsible for the numerous hospitals in which the sick, and particularly the lepers, were cared for, and which were counted by the hundred—so small a township as Berkhamsted, for instance, having no less than three.

If the Church could have concentrated peacefully on her civilizing mission, she might have maintained and even increased her power. But there was a rival candidate for the headship of Christendom in the German monarch who aspired to be Roman Emperor, and the long and wearisome struggle between the two was entering upon its final and most embittered phase. The last of the great Hohenstaufen Emperors, Frederick II, was more fitted for the fifteenth century than the thirteenth. He had all the sceptical and pagan spirit of the Renaissance, and was a man whom the Papacy instinctively felt it must crush at all costs. Towards the middle of the century, and particularly during the pontificate of Innocent IV, the Holy Father subordinated every other consideration to that of defeating and uprooting the House of Hohenstaufen. Like all prolonged life-and-death struggles, this one was ruinously expensive, and the Popes had to keep on raising money, from whatever source it could be obtained, regardless of consequences. When at last the Hohenstaufen were out of her path, the Church found that her spiritual arm was crippled; her provinces were becoming nations and made light of her claims to dominate their temporal affairs. But by this time the best of her work had been done.

Thus to the Englishmen of Henry III's reign the Papacy appeared partly as a civilizing and spiritual influence, and partly as a rapacious foreign power using her vassal province as a milch-cow. The situation was complicated by the fact that among English churchmen the spirit of patriotism was beginning to conflict with that of Roman super-patriotism. In theory there was no such thing even as an English

[1] Mr. Coulton's *Medieval Studies* have shown how defective that training too often was.

province within the Roman Church; there were two separate and independent provinces of Canterbury and York. Nobody as yet dreamed of questioning the allegiance owed by churchmen to the head of the Church. But theory and practice were no more necessarily the same in the Middle Ages than in our own day, and the demands of the Pope bore heavier upon ecclesiastics than upon laymen. The very Archbishop Langton whom the Pope had forced, after interdict and excommunication, upon a King of England, was one of the first to prove that a good churchman could also be a good Englishman, even to the extent of refusing to enforce a papal censure against John's insurgent barons.

Henry III's reign witnessed the growth of a militant nationalism even among clerics and magnates. The King himself was a weak and devout man whose very piety led him to play into the hands of Rome. He neither thought nor acted as an Englishman. He still had hankerings after restoring the old Angevin Empire, and his feeble attempts to accomplish this by force of arms were as unpopular in England as they were unsuccessful in France. But he had no hesitation in filling his court with foreigners, on whom he lavished his favours. This alone was an incentive to the disgruntled magnates to take their stand upon the principle of England for the English. And it is by no means inconsistent with what we know of human nature that they should have eventually chosen for their champion a naturalized Frenchman in the person of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, and brother-in-law of the King.

It was shortly after the King had, in 1227, declared himself fit to govern, which he neither was nor ever became, that the struggle between Pope and Emperor waxed acute, and His Holiness began to apply the screw to both clergy and laity. His claims were pressed with the ruthlessness and pertinacity of a Shylock. One legate, Otho, was said to have taken away with him more money than he left in the Kingdom. To extortion was added jobbery. The Papacy found an easy way of paying off its supporters by jobbing them into fat English benefices. To crown all, the Pope induced Henry to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for him by embarking on wild-cat dynastic schemes in the Empire and Sicily, to be financed with English money. Henry, who was at heart a foreigner and who cared less for his country than for the Church that had shielded him during his minority, proved his docility by confessing that he had neither the right nor the wish to oppose the Pope in anything whatever.

This, as a wise churchmanship might have foreseen, had the

effect of discrediting the Roman cause not only in the State but in the Church. The cry " it's your money we want " is no more popular in ecclesiastical than in lay circles. Thus we have the curious situation of the King taking the side of Rome and the more enlightened among the clergy that of England. One Archbishop of Canterbury, the sainted and scholarly Edmund Rich, actually went so far as to threaten the King with excommunication unless he would dismiss his foreign favourites, and stood up manfully against Papal extortion until at last his gentle spirit broke under the strain.

The greatest of all nationalist churchmen of this reign was undoubtedly Robert Grosseteste, a poor man's son who rose to be Bishop of Lincoln. He was the friend of Simon de Montfort, an ally of the Franciscan movement, and his eminence in the science of his day is acknowledged by no less an authority than Roger Bacon.

" A manifest confuter of the Pope and King," says the monkish historian, Matthew Paris," . . . the hammer and despiser of the Romans." He was, in fact, the nearest that age could produce to an Anglican High Churchman, sedulous in his assertion of ecclesiastical privilege, but firm against dictation from abroad. In 1251 he chose to be suspended from his diocese rather than admit an unlearned Italian to a benefice, and the next year we find him firm in resisting the demand of both King and Pope for a subsidy for a crusade. When told that the French had given way under similar circumstances, he drily retorted that twice makes a custom. Even if we reject, as unproven, the story of his final grand remonstrance to the effect that the Pope's power is only valid in so far as it tends to edification, a doctrine which Luther might have endorsed, we must at least admit the significance of such stories having grown up around Grosseteste. For though his unpopularity with Rome prevented an otherwise certain canonization, the people from whom he had sprung knew their champion, and at his grave, like that of his friend Simon de Montfort, miracles attested the common fame of him.

Open revolt against Rome was still a course hardly dreamed of in England, but the common people no longer looked to Rome as their shield against alien tyranny; her champion was no longer greeted with, " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The appearance of a legate was as likely as not to be the signal for a riot, and the indiscretion of the legate Otho's cousin, a master cook, in splashing hot water into the face of an English beggar, produced the first recorded instance of an Oxford rag, in the course

of which a Welsh student succeeded in skewering the cook neatly with an arrow.

It was nine years later, in 1247, that a Parliament or assembly of magnates, lay and clerical, was held in London, from which letters of strong protest were sent, one to the Pope and the other to the Cardinals, signed with the mark of the City of London. For London, now indisputably the capital city, had suffered more than any other part of the Kingdom from the blundering partiality of Henry III, and her citizens were assuming the character they were to maintain for centuries, of the most intractable and politically alive section of the community. The money exacted by the Pope is, the remonstrance points out, wanted for defence against foreign enemies and to provide for the poor.

Impatience of oppression was by no means the only force at work making for national self-consciousness. The Common Law, not made, but begotten out of immemorial custom, had now definitely established itself as the law of the land, and was developing a complex and highly technical system, losing thereby some of its earlier adaptability. There was now no question of Roman Law becoming dominant in the King's courts, where the lawyers were already becoming a powerful and highly conservative body, with a vested interest in the tangle of precedent and procedure that they alone were competent to unravel. It is the age of Bracton, whose exposition of the laws provided English jurisprudence with its first classic, unless we are to include the treatise of Glanvill in the reign of Henry II.

The law was the King's law and administered in his court, or rather the separate courts into which the original court, or "Curia Regis" was, by a natural process of evolution, beginning to split up. But Magna Charta had already given national sanction of the most solemn kind to the doctrine, that the law is an independent entity, above the King himself. The idea had hardly yet dawned that the law was the product of human will, and could be altered at pleasure by whatever person or body of men happened to be sovereign. The Great Charter set out to be no more than a restatement of an already existing law which the King had set at defiance. And it was by a sure instinct that in times of oppression men should have turned to the Charter as to the bulwark of their liberties. For by confirming the Charter, the King was making his formal submission to that law, and to a law so broad-based on prescriptive right and so illogically complex that no tyrant nor benevolent despot could hope to bend it to his purposes.

3

An Experiment in Nationalism

In 1258 the accumulated grievances of the realm came to a head. The King's policy was discredited and his treasury empty. The magnates, lay and clerical, forced upon him a system of government resembling in principle the Whig settlement of 1689. The power of the Crown was to be transferred to an oligarchy, consisting of a number of committees. A clean sweep was made of the foreign favourites, and the ambitious foreign policy was replaced by a strict "Little Englandism". But the system was too cumbrous to work, and the magnates had neither the unity nor the capacity for ruling the roost in the abeyance of monarchy. The members of the lesser baronage, the small country gentlemen, were by no means disposed to leave their destinies in the hands of their powerful neighbours, and with the backing of the King's son and heir, the future Edward I, thronged the court held next year at Westminster, and obtained an additional series of provisions securing the right of feudal subtenants from encroachments by their lords. A third estate—if we may use the term in the modern sense—was, indeed, beginning to raise its head, an estate that after many vicissitudes was destined to dwarf the other two. The machinery provided by the now obsolescent shire moots, and the long established habit of choosing representatives for a variety of judicial and administrative purposes, provided a means of overcoming the difficulty of getting from so large and scattered a body of constituents an authentic expression of its will.

It now only remained to add to the representatives of the country gentry those of the town burgesses to complete, so far as that age would allow, the Commons of England. This was accomplished six years later, when, after a confused time of experiment and personal intrigue, the differences between the Royalist party, to whom many of the magnates had now gone over, and the nationalist coalition of barons and Londoners, led by Simon de Montfort, flared up into civil war. The King started by getting the best of it and might have won but for the tactical genius of his opponent, who took him prisoner after a fight on the downs above Lewes, and held him, though with every mark of outward respect, a prisoner. Earl Simon was now virtually sovereign of England, and at once began to put into force a policy of thorough-going nationalism, including the protection of

English craftsmen by keeping English wool for English looms, which were not as yet anything like numerous enough to absorb it, and by inducing Englishmen to sacrifice convenience to patriotism, and clothe themselves in the coarse fabrics of their native country.

Simon was naturally anxious to establish such a policy on as broad a basis of national support as possible. It is for that reason that he summoned to a Parliament not only the magnates, lay and ecclesiastical, and two knights from each shire to represent the lesser gentry, but also two burgesses from each of a number of towns selected for their loyalty to his cause. There is no need to credit the Earl with any particular love for constitutional principles in the abstract, or desire to be the father of representative government, and little need to stress the Continental precedents that he may or may not have had in his mind. He was merely playing what to a man of his intelligence must have been an obvious card in a dangerous and, as it proved, a desperate game. He was doing what every ruler of England has had to do—squaring those sections of the community who were sufficiently powerful to bring down his government if he did not. In spite of royal waste and papal extortion, Henry's long reign had been, on the whole, a time of peace and prosperity, and the towns, now fortified by charter against the worst feudal exactions, were increasing rapidly in wealth and importance, and could no longer be left out of the reckoning. Once they had come into the general assembly of the nation, they had come to stay.

Earl Simon's experiment of a nationalist government under his own auspices was doomed to failure. The magnates, though they had shown themselves capable of standing together for the law of the land, instead of separately, as in Stephen's time, for their private liberties, were too deeply infected with the feudal virus to hold together for very long, and least of all under one of themselves. Simon himself was not altogether free from the suspicion of family jobbery, and perhaps his foreign blood disqualified him from the English faculty of compromise. He had been but a year in the saddle when he found himself faced by the necessity of fighting the civil war over again, and this time at a hopeless disadvantage and against an opponent, the young Prince Edward, whose military genius was equal to his own. His little army, largely made up of Welshmen, was neatly pinned in the bend of the Avon at Evesham and cut to pieces with its leader. Some of his followers, however, held out long enough to secure a reasonable compromise and prevent an unqualified Royalist reaction. The virtual ruler of the country was now Edward,

who was as thorough-paced a nationalist as Simon, and capable of continuing the Earl's policy of ruling England by her own laws and as the interpreter of her will.

Gothic Christianity

The time when the Papacy was loosening its hold upon England was one not of diminished but of increasing religious fervour. This may partly account for the fact that a course of long-continued fleecing and jobbery did not provoke even the suggestion of a break away from Rome such as occurred in the sixteenth century. If we were asked to name a time when the Church was at her zenith of enthusiasm and creative activity in England, it would be safe to put it about the middle of the thirteenth century, the time that saw the building of Salisbury Cathedral and the West front of Wells.

There had been a period of comparative barrenness in the first quarter of the century. The interdict of John's reign had produced an almost complete suspension of church building and decoration, and this, as it turned out, was all to the good, as the partial breach of continuity enabled the English masons and craftsmen to start with a clean sheet, and create a purely English style of architecture free from any lingering vestiges of the Norman tradition.

In France, as in England, the thirteenth century is the supreme period of Christian Gothic architecture. Philip Augustus had united the greater part of France and given her the rank of a great European power; his grandson, Saint Louis, presented the spectacle of the ideal Christian King, as Christianity was then understood, a warrior and statesman who allowed full scope to the chivalrous instincts of the French nobility, and the love of glory that is inherent in the French temperament. He was a crusader, at a time when the crusades were already becoming an anachronism, from no calculation of personal or national interest, but from pure, disinterested Christianity, and in two magnificent forlorn hopes against the infidel he strained the resources of his Kingdom to danger point. It is the great age of the Sorbonne, of the almost free towns, of the culmination of Gothic in such masterpieces as Rheims and the Sainte Chapelle. Such a France cut an incomparably greater figure in the world than an England struggling to realize her nationality in the teeth of misgovernment and papal oppression.

It is only natural, then, that we should look to France for the

full realization of the Gothic spirit, in an architecture of pure energy, displayed in towering heights and soaring vertical lines, in a visible and never-ending conflict of thrust and counter-thrust. It is the exact opposite of the intellectual beauty that informs the Greek temples and even in their ruins breathes of balanced thought and a serene philosophy. In a pure Gothic cathedral there is about as much inducement to thought as in the rough and tumble of a well-contested tournament. There is heroic or saintly aspiration in the upward rush of the clustered stone ; there is a depth of mystery in the cavernous, dark spaces ; there is a riot of joy in the innumerable carvings and grotesques, in the stained glass of the windows, in the painted surfaces of the walls. But this architecture is no more disposed to reflection than Saint Louis in his blundering thrust at Cairo, or his fatal and futile landing in Tunis.

To the Gothic conception of architecture France of the thirteenth century gives the most logically complete expression. Her cathedrals rush skywards with a fierce intensity of aspiration ; the conflict of stone is waged with an unrestrained virility ; the whole building is informed by one concentrated and single hearted enthusiasm that makes it as harmonious a unity as the Parthenon or the Taj Mahal in their different kinds.

The Early English Gothic of the reign of Henry III has neither the outspoken virility nor the logical completeness of the contemporary French style. From this easily demonstrable fact some critics have been tempted to write of the English builders as if they were merely incapable of applying the Gothic principle, and as if the English style were something second-rate and inferior to the French. If the pushing of one idea to its logical conclusion were essential to greatness, the inferiority of the English to the Latin mind would follow as a natural consequence. The Englishman has a temperamental aversion from extreme views or courses ; he would rather strike a balance between several than commit himself unreservedly to one. It is probably an impossible and certainly an unprofitable feat to prove the superiority of either the French or the English mind ; to pit Amiens and Rheims against Lincoln and Wells displays as futile a prejudice as that of small boys who shout for Oxford or Cambridge on boat-race day.

Whether we are to praise or blame them for it, the English builders and the English people to whose deepest feelings they gave expression failed to push the Gothic principle to its logical extreme, not because they could not but because they would not. More than

one attempt was made to acclimatize the French style in England, the most notable of all being Henry III's favoured Abbey of Westminster, the East end of which that Gallophile and artistic monarch had planned on the French model of a rounded apse with its cluster of side chapels. Into one transept of Hereford Cathedral the Italian Bishop Aquablanca introduced a style more suggestive of Lombardy than the Welsh marches. But no importation of foreign architects or ideas could avail against the unformulated English determination to express the national spirit in the national way. The square apse, which the Anglo-Saxons had taken over from the Celts, survived every attempt to supersede it, and certainly produces an effect of spaciousness that makes the typical French apse seem cramped in comparison. And as in the larger buildings the French tendency is to culminate in a towering West front, so in England the mass tends to group itself round the central tower, with a suggestion of four-square immovability.

These, however, are but external and almost casual manifestations of profound and spiritual differences. What must be evident to every understanding student of our architecture is a certain reserve about the chief English buildings to which the French are strangers. This may partly be accounted for by the monastic associations of so many of the English cathedrals, and the tendency, by means of cloister and chapter house, to assimilate even communities of canons to those of monks. The English cathedral is shut off from the world in its close, or enclosed space, whereas the French stands in the heart of the city, jostled by houses, and with its enormous doors inviting all and sundry to snatch a few moments of holy calm from the turmoil without. The whole spirit of the English building is typified by its deliberate withdrawal into the peace of the close. Not only are the heights less stupendous, the entrances less cavernous, but the openly displayed thrust of the buttress ribs is tempered, so that the form of the upper or clear story is more serenely apparent than in the typical French cathedral.

With the interior it is the same. Only in Westminster is there any real approach to the full steepness and uprush of the French Gothic, and even Westminster is, in this respect, a poor second to Amiens. In so typically English a production as Salisbury the eye is checked, as it mounts from floor to ceiling, by the restraining gesture of a continuous horizontal line at the base of the triforium. The interior of Wells, despite the exuberance and caprice of its detail carving, breathes an almost Anglican discreetness, there is such

a deliberate avoidance of anything that could be remotely described as tumultuous—here the eye is guided, as if by some invisible sacristan, along and not upward.

The English Gothic of the thirteenth century no doubt sacrifices much that is possessed by the French. Despite the modern school of critics that tries to reduce all building to the solution of technical problems, no architecture was ever great that did not give the most exact expression to the spirit that inspired it. The reason that French thirteenth century buildings are instinct with a full-blooded exuberance, a pride and joyousness lacking in our own, is partly because England had not the same pride of national achievement as the France of Louis IX, and still more because the English towns, usually with a royal or baronial castle to keep them in order and the hand of the central government heavy upon them, could not emulate the militant, municipal patriotism of the French communes.

Nevertheless these English buildings have a sweetness and solemnity all their own, that goes far to compensate for the more obvious attractions of the French style. If the stupendous West fronts and the towering interiors of Amiens and Rheims strike the beholder with an instant admiration that has something in it almost of terror, the charm of Wells and Lincoln and Salisbury is one that grows upon him with a more gradual and persuasive appeal. If it is English in its absence of logic and its occasional perversity, as in that irrelevant West front of Lincoln which masks the towers, it is English also in a certain undercurrent of melancholy, and a poetry compared with which the French style seems the most superb of rhetoric. And we must never forget that we see but the gaunt and mutilated skeletons of what were once veritable Houses of God, aglow with colour and enriched with ornaments long since despoiled.

The coming of a purely English style witnesses a revival of that art of figure sculpture in which the Normans, for once, had been unable to rival the achievements of the native craftsmen. In the thirteenth century the leeway was gloriously made up and the exuberant but rather crude enrichment of doors and arches in the later Norman style was replaced by an English statuary both admirable in itself and perfectly adapted to the general scheme of the building. The culmination of this art is the glorious West front of Wells, with its presentation of the Christian brotherhood or communion of saints; with Christ, his angels and apostles (a later addition) above; the Resurrection portrayed in a frieze of

touching beauty, and below, the pick of God's elect, Kings and warriors, saints and ascetics, bishops and nuns and deacons, together with the promise and actuality of the Saviour's coming as revealed in His Old and New Testaments. Here at least it would be safe to say that nothing, even in the sculpture of the French cathedrals, can rival the scope and grandeur of this glorious conception, realized by native craftsmen whose very names have been forgotten, and at the bidding of a Somersetshire bishop, one of two famous sons of a small landowner called Trotman.

Those who doubt the existence of an English patriotism in the thirteenth century have only to look at what stares them in the face from this multitude of niches. The elect whom the craftsmen chiefly delight to represent and the people of Wells to see are not the " holy Norman Saints " on whose relics Harold was tricked into renouncing the succession, but such English worthies as Elphege and Erkenwald, Godric and Ethelburga, and instead of Norman Dukes, the company of sainted English monarchs, Edmund and Ethelred, Kenelm and Oswin, and many another, whose merits the proud clergy of the Conquest, headed by Lanfranc himself, had united in depreciating. It might be a commentary of Milton's declaration that if God were beginning some new and great period in His Church, He would " reveal it, as His manner is, first of all to His Englishmen ". Even the more than half French Henry III had no object nearer to his heart than to lavish wealth and skill upon beautifying the foundation of his predecessor, the last of the good old Anglo-Saxon Kings.

It was not only by stone figures that the churches and principal buildings were adorned. Medieval man was always a lover of colour, though his taste was more subdued than that which is fostered by the strong lights and clear atmosphere of Oriental countries. But to rest content with grey stone was not in his nature. Walls, windows, floors, pillars, sometimes even the stone figures, were coloured over as means or skill permitted. In the art of manuscript illumination, which is the foundation of medieval colour decoration, the Norman Conquest, so far from causing a breach of continuity, had a strengthening effect on the exquisite Anglo-Saxon treatment of flowing line. The school already established at the royal town of Winchester continued its work, and it is only with the coming of the thirteenth century that Winchester yields its supremacy to that great centre of art and learning, the Abbey of Saint Alban's.

Of the painting of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and of the earliest stained glass, the ravages of time and man have left

behind but pitiful fragments. During the twelfth century much of it is as crude as the statuary, but that unrecorded artists even in those days were capable of fine work is shown by such stray gems as the Saint Paul in the Anselm Chapel at Canterbury. During the thirteenth century the English primitives were creating a national style which entitles our native art to a more honourable place than it has yet been accorded. Such a masterpiece as the Madonna in the Bishop's Chapel at Chichester shows that the Anglo-Saxon tradition had never been lost, and that thirteenth century England possessed at least one master of the flowing line whose wizardry challenges comparison—to put it at the highest—with the best Chinese work of this kind. Hardly inferior is the Saint William, in the Feretory of Saint Alban's, a creation of exquisite tenderness, by one of that school of monkish artists for which the Abbey was renowned,[1] and by one of whom the Chichester Madonna was not improbably painted. Among the foremost artists of this school was the historian —the most vivid of his time—Matthew Paris.

It was not only the Church that gave employment to artists. Henry III, if he made a bad King, would have made an excellent President of the Royal Academy, and in the decoration of his palace of Westminster he displayed as much connoisseurship as in the rebuilding of the neighbouring Abbey. It is notable that the unpatriotic King could in neither the ecclesiastical nor secular sphere escape from the influences of his time. As the Abbey was devoted to the glorification of the last acknowledged Anglo-Saxon King, so the palace walls blazoned forth not only that King's coronation, but the exploits of the new national hero, Richard the Crusader. The prestige of English painting, and particularly that of Saint Alban's, is shown by the extent to which the art of Norway, a country closely bound to us by ties of trade, was swayed by its influence.

The fairest of all medieval colour effects were those that the light shone not on, but through. The stained glass window is a development of the Byzantine glass mosaic, the pieces being bound together by a framework of lead. Some of the earliest surviving stained glass is contained in the Ascension window at Le Mans, which was in the Conqueror's dominions and was put up not long after his death. Doubtless it was by this path that the art came to England, but no relics of it have survived of an earlier date than the late twelfth or early thirteenth century. Of the thick and heavily leaded medallion glass, with its deep colouring and crude figure design, we have no

[1] The church of Toddington, in Bedfordshire, contains one of the best examples of what is obviously Saint Alban's work.

Chartres to show what its effect was like on a grand scale. The best specimens are in the Trinity Chapel and Corona at Canterbury, but the accursed zeal of the Puritan Blue Dick has denied us forever the opportunity of judging their effect when, as at Chartres, no light is admitted to the interior save through such a medium.

Of the great rose windows which are the crowning glory of the French Gothic cathedral, the thirteenth century has left us only one, though a glorious example, in the "Dean's Eye" at Lincoln. It is with a pang of bereavement that we contemplate those petalless roses of Westminster transept, and think of what they must have been and might still be. But at least, we have one triumph of the glassmaker's art with which we may truthfully claim that there is nothing to compare in any place or period. This is the transept window at York, known as the Five Sisters. Here there is no attempt to turn windows into bibles; the glass is allowed to speak direct to the soul in its own language of pure colour. This art is no longer representative but musical, a music of light as subtle and intimate as any of sound. If we were asked what is the loveliest spectacle ever created by man, we might hesitate between the Taj Mahal in the moonlight, or the Five Sisters at that sunset hour when the great West window is a sheet of living gold and the East warm with deepest crimson and blue, and yet, facing Northwards beneath the central tower, we have difficulty in turning a glance either to the right or to the left.

Although the same principles were applied by the same craftsman to secular as to ecclesiastical art, the standards of the mid-thirteenth century are spiritual to a degree never attained in succeeding times. Thus there is comparatively little stress laid on individual personality, still less on the externals of rank and fashion. The figures of the great company of Wells are often hard to identify; we are just told, in the simplest fashion, "this is a King, or a Bishop, or a deacon or a queen Abbess," but in truth what we behold are less of historical characters than states of the soul. There is undoubtedly much that is sordid and grossly superstitious in the religious life of this time, when forgery was one of the most effective weapons in the Church's armoury and the trade in relics was pushed with a keenness that would put to blush the shadiest modern company promoter, but such as it was, the Church's teaching was, in England, implicitly accepted, and the drama of human salvation possessed an importance in the minds of men that the competition of worldly interests was destined gradually to diminish.

The parochical system, which had been comparatively neglected

at the time of the Norman Conquest, now, with the recovery of England for the English, not only made up the leeway, but was becoming the most active and vital part of the Church in this country, since the tendency of the monasteries was more and more to drop their pristine enthusiasm, and instead of being islands of holiness in the sea of the world, to content themselves with a fair, average respectability and the maintenance of their vested interests. Whatever may be said of the comparative merits of the English and Continental styles in the greater buildings, it can hardly be denied that in our parish churches we possess a wealth of beauty and historical interest unsurpassed of their kind anywhere. If anything can bring before us the reality of medieval civilization, it is to find quite obscure country villages and hamlets possessed of these buildings, each one in itself a treasure house of art and a mirror of taste utterly beyond our modern powers of reproduction, and to think of the labour and munificence that must have gone to their making.

The struggle of the Church for independence under her great Popes from Hildebrand to Innocent III, had borne fruit in raising the status of the parish priests. They were now in fact as well as in theory the local representatives of the Church and in no sense the " men " or private chaplains of some lay lord. Just as the Holy Father himself had had to secure his independence by the acquisition of territory, so the rector was in a much stronger position now that he himself had acquired the status of a small landowner, with a house and glebe as part of his benefice. The long battle for priestly celibacy which the Church had fought relieved her representatives from temptations to a divided loyalty. There were, of course, abuses that the Church from time to time tried to reform, and particularly in the practice of monastic bodies acquiring the patronage of livings, and filling them with vicars who lived, not on the proceeds of the benefice, but on a starvation wage.

Two features strike one about the religious life of this time, neither of them an innovation but each a strengthening of an already existing tendency. One of them is the enhanced splendour and ceremonial of the Mass sacrifice, the perpetually renewed miracle on which the power and prestige of the Church had come to depend. A study of parish churches will show in how many instances the plain oblong of the Norman church was enlarged or modified about this time for the purpose of providing a chancel in keeping with more exacting eucharistic requirements. The other feature, especially noticable in the large churches, consists in the

elevation of the Virgin Mary to the status, almost, of a goddess, as efficacious for most practical purposes and considerably more popular than the Members of the Trinity. The intense realism of the Middle Ages, to which the Persons of the Trinity were as real as persons in the street, could not stop short at the sort of vague reverence that is the common attitude nowadays. Not only Kings but also Deities were judged by results, and the Father, with His characteristics of wrath and implacability, might be feared, but could hardly be loved with any especial fervour. The Son was visualized as the damning judge of the future rather than the gentle Saviour of the past, and was understood to connive at the institution of Hell. It was only natural, then, for the ordinary sinner to keep his chief affection for the mild and tender-hearted lady who, as he firmly believed, was capable of wheedling her Son into overlooking all but the worst crimes of anyone who could get into her good graces, and who regarded human frailty not with the sternness of a judge but with the partiality of a mother and perhaps something of a woman's caprice. The wish being father to the thought, medieval man delighted in investing Our Lady with divine powers and dignity. Hence it came about that by the fourteenth century none of the greater churches was considered complete without the addition of a Lady Chapel, usually in the place of honour at the East End.

The vitality of a church, or in fact of any human institution, is to be measured, in the last resort, not by the excellence of its laws or system, but by the creative energy it is capable of engendering. Spiritually as well as physically, life proceeds not with smooth continuity, but by a series of explosions. And during its greatest period, the history of the Catholic Church is marked by a succession of great, creative efforts embodying themselves, finally, in some rule or system, and cooling down into routine. So long as these efforts were renewed and so long as the Church could maintain her mastery of them she had a moral force on her side that made her practically impregnable. The last two of these fresh leases of spiritual life, the last that the Church was to enjoy for almost three centuries, occurred almost simultaneously in the third decade of the thirteenth century.

The one cry that is common to all great Christian reformers, orthodox or heretical, is "Back to Jesus". In the whole course of Christian history, no man has come so near the spirit of the Founder as Francis of Assisi, and the Castilian Dominic, if his fame has been somewhat eclipsed by that of his more illustrious contemporary, was a single-hearted enthusiast with a genius for organization that

Catholicism reproduced so conspicuously, later, in Ignatius Loyala and Theresa. The two great orders known as Franciscan and Dominican had this in common, that they genuinely set out to attain the ideal of apostolic poverty and simplicity. The Dominicans were at first the more militant and intellectual of the two, the black hounds of the Church who drove out the wolves of heresy, for in Southern France and Italy heresy, the beginning of a pagan revival, was awake within the fold of the Church.

The Dominicans were essentially fighters, and where argument failed were quite ready to employ the sword of persecution. But the Franciscans, while the first glow of enthusiasm was in them, conquered not by striving but by the daily beauty and Christlike simplicity of their lives. While the Pope's legate was going about in state, with a bodyguard especially told off to protect him from the people, and filling his coffers with English money, the mendicant friars or brothers were also going about, begging their bread from door to door and having not where to lay their heads, as joyous and usually as illiterate as children, yet bringing physic and spiritual consolation to the poorest and most outcast of the people, ministering to the very lepers, who might not come within the precincts of the Church.

Both orders, like other human institutions, were all too soon to lose their first ardour; they were to produce the inhuman inquisitors and toad-eating "pardoners" of later days, but not before they had enabled the Church to escape the immediate danger of schism, and the Papacy, later in the century, to survive the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of its triumph over Caesar.

5

British Thought in the Scholastic Age

It is not only in stone that England's spirit finds expression during these years of dawning nationhood. During a period of great intellectual progress throughout Western Europe, her thinkers and philosophers are in the van. The University of Oxford was acquiring a reputation scarcely inferior to that of Paris and Bologna. It was, however, very different from the home of aristocratic culture and monarchial sentiment it was afterwards to become; no one, in the thirteenth century, would have ventured to call it the home of lost causes. Its students were mostly poor men, fired with a consuming zeal for knowledge, and in small matters as well as great,

robustly "agin the government". They were in the forefront of the nationalist movement against Henry III and the Pope, and the most revolutionary innovations in thought and politics are found in the works of medieval Oxonians.

When we talk of English or of Oxonian thought we must bear in mind that in no subsequent period was thought so European as in the days of the schoolmen. What is now an ideal after which we are seeking by such tentative expedients as Esperanto, was, in the Middle Ages, an accomplished fact. Latin was the universal language, and that it should have been so is among the greatest triumphs of the medieval Papacy. Despite the badness of communications and the ignorance of printing, there was an interchange of thought and thinkers between the different universities far superior to anything that obtains nowadays. Wherever he might go, the man of learning found himself welcomed, appreciated, understood, so long as he could avoid the fatal imputation of heresy. The Lombard Anselm becomes Archbishop of Canterbury, Duns the Scot lies buried at Cologne, an Englishman, Baconthorpe, a connection of the great Bacon family, keeps alive the spirit of the Mahommedan Averroes at the University of Padua.

Nevertheless, there is a sense in which we may speak of as definite a British contribution to thought as to architecture. Gothic is European but Early English is national; scholasticism is European but the spirit of Bacon, Occam, and Wycliffe is English, and this rich harvest of thought and building springs from the soil of a patriotism new-born. The twist that English thinkers give to European thought is characteristic of the English contribution to thought throughout subsequent ages. "Cut out the fine talk and get down to facts," has ever been the Englishman's motto. It reveals both his strength and his weakness.

The never-ending stricture that the English are lacking in ideas, is one that, if they understood its full bearings, few of them would desire to rebut. The facts of life are never simple, and even if they were ruled by logic, the premises are too involved and shifting to render chains of deductive reasoning a humanly practicable way of arriving at the truth. The English mind is resolutely inductive, and most of all in dealing with the affairs of life. Where the Frenchman talks of the Rights of Man, the Englishman talks of Magna Charta and bases his liberties upon precedent. The Frenchman in the story who wanted to write about the camel, dashed off to the *Jardin des Plantes* and thence to his house, where he composed an

essay sparkling with epigram and admirable in its lucidity—"*Le voilà, le chameau!*" The Englishman, after two years' research in the desert, produced a tome of valuable facts, too badly arranged for anybody to read. This fable gives us a clue to much in the history of two nations, whose gifts are not opposed, but complementary in the service of mankind.

The great controversy of the Middle Ages was specifically concerned with this very question of ideas and, as anyone acquainted with the history of the word might have divined, dates back to Plato. According to his philosophy, the ideas or archetypes of things are more real than the things themselves. What is essential about Tom, Dick, and Harry is their membership in the ideal or abstract man. That which distinguishes them from each other and makes up the individuality which alone interests the novelist is, to the philosopher, an accident of minor importance. This out and out idealism was somewhat qualified by the more cautious and scientifically minded Aristotle, but the superior reality of universals over particulars is nevertheless implicit also in his philosophy. In the thought, as in the life, of Greece, it is more essential to Tellos the Athenian that he is an Athenian than that he is Tellos.

This philosophy of Aristotle had pursued a strange course during the Dark Ages. Through the medium of the Nestorian Christians it had come to Bagdad, then at the height of its greatness under Haroun al Raschid and his successors in the Caliphate. Thence it had travelled to Mahommedan Spain, where it found the most brilliant of all its exponents in Averroes, who carried his belief in universals so far as to deny the immortality of the soul. For if the universal is the only thing that matters, it is only the universal that survives. Samuel Butler was unconsciously harking back to Averroes when he maintained that a man has no separate existence apart from his progenitors, and, in effect, that there is no more reason for postulating a separate immortality for John than for John's hair or wheelbarrow.

It was through Spain that Aristotle's complete works came to Christendom, though for some of them there were already direct translations from the Greek. They rapidly came to exercise a sway that put them almost on a par with the Bible and the Fathers. Aristotle was not a philosopher but *the* philosopher; the young Alexander would sooner have thought of questioning his authority as a tutor, than the doctors of the thirteenth century. The two intellectual champions of the Dominican order, Albert the Great

and Thomas Aquinas, used his logic to build up a system of universal philosophy worked out with amazing thoroughness and ingenuity. Such an intellectual *tour de force* as St. Thomas's *Summa Theologica*, not to speak of his other works, has probably never been equalled in its own kind. And one achievement of permanent value must certainly be conceded to these heroic logicians. If men are going to discuss questions of philosophy they ought to be quite certain that the words they use correspond, all the time, with the same definite things or conceptions. When you and I talk about God, it does not follow that we are both talking about the same thing. St. Thomas will distinguish and define with voluminous persistence until he has at least decided what the word God does or does not mean. So in discussing the still vexed question of distributive justice, nothing will satisfy St. Thomas but to go to the root of the matter by defining and minutely examining the whole conception of property.

The weakness of such a system of universal knowledge lay in its divorce from the facts of life. The instrument by which such knowledge was sought was formal logic; the material upon which logic was set to work chiefly consisted of the Bible, the Fathers, and the often villainously translated works of Aristotle. That philosopher had so far anticipated scholasticism as to force upon the universe of things an order which properly has its existence in the human mind, but he had at least applied himself to as minute and impartial an examination of the facts as was possible in his time. But while Aristotle had gone to life, the schoolmen went to Aristotle. The criticism not unjustly levelled at St. Thomas was that he taught everything but knew nothing.

The very genius of this friar in orders black, the completeness of his system and its almost impregnability, once its assumptions were granted, made it a formidable menace to any sort of mental progress. The Church delighted in it, on account of its unimpeachable orthodoxy. Hildebrand had claimed for her the Kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, but St. Thomas had gone even further, in asserting the despotism of her theology over the whole Empire of human thought. For in St. Thomas's system there is no room, outside theology, for philosophy, science or political thought. Whatever there is to know, he knows it, and what he does not know is not only not knowledge but probably heresy into the bargain. It was from the Dominican order that the inquisitors were mostly recruited.

To St. Dominic persecution was the hammer to drive home

argument. In this spirit he had informed the Waldenses, who continued to differ from him, that now gentle measures had failed they should have blows and plenty of them. More in harmony with the Christian spirit was that of St. Francis. Rigidly obedient though he was to Papal authority, his sweet spirit had nothing in it of the pride that imagines it can set up its human thought as the norm of the universe. The twin virtues of humility and love drew him forth to communion with the things of nature. "Don't hurt brother fire," he had said to some brethren, when the garment he was wearing began to smoulder, and they wanted to put it out.

All things, animate and inanimate, were his brothers and sisters. "Be Thou praised," he cried to God," on account of Sister Water, "who is very useful and humble and precious and pure." To minds constituted on these lines there could be no finality in a system of texts and abstractions from which all these brothers and sisters were tacitly excluded, and their study, in the spirit of humble curiosity which is that of science, debarred.

We are now in a position to appreciate the work of British thinkers in breaking the shackles forged by St. Thomas, and its harmony with nationalist resistance to the claims of Rome. The greatest of them, Duns, Occam, Bacon, are, as we might expect, Franciscans. The name of Duns Scotus, known by his contemporaries as pre-eminently the Subtle Doctor, survives, by the strangest vicissitude of language, as a term of scorn. Little does the small boy, made to stand on a form with the dunce's cap, imagine that he is being invested with the pointed head-gear of the great medieval sage. Duns has been claimed by all three nations, England, Scotland, and Ireland. The bent of his genius is, however, so characteristic of the Lowlands, that we may, without much hesitation, accept his title, "Scot," in the modern sense. At first sight Duns is more orthodox, more realist, and more remote from anything in fact or nature than St. Thomas himself. He is more thoroughgoing and consistent both in logic and metaphysics, less concerned with diverting his thought to a plausible conclusion. If his logic leads him to extraordinary or paradoxical results, he gravely accepts them.

With all his orthodoxy, St. Thomas had come dangerously close to subjecting not only nature but God Himself to the requirements of his system. Certainly God is almighty, but then He is also perfect, perfectly good and perfectly rational, and therefore only

able to act in a good and rational way. Consequently if St. Thomas, with his philosophy, can find out what is good and rational, he is able to lay down a line of procedure for God himself, and God becomes much the same in his system as the world-reason in that of Hegel. But Duns, with an inconveniently consistent orthodoxy, makes short work of this deity in leading strings. If God is to be both personal and almighty, He must be free in the widest sense. He makes the rules of the game, and a thing is good not for any quality it possesses in itself, but because God chooses to make it so. Just in the same way the workings of nature are the expression of God's arbitrary choice ; He has chosen that the sun should rise in the East to-day—it would be just as natural for Him to start it in the West to-morrow. Thus, with ruthless logic, Duns offers, as the sole escape from the pantheistic rationalism towards which St. Thomas is drifting, an arbitrary universe under an arbitrary God.

Very convenient this, at first sight, for orthodoxy ! For it follows that the only notion we can form of good is through what God has chosen to reveal, and the sole authority on earth for interpreting this revelation is God's Church, in other words, Rome. Therefore the whole duty of man is summed up in blind submission to Rome. But in fact Duns has furnished what amounts to the *reductio ad absurdum* of medieval theology. He has cut away from the conception of Deity its props of reason and goodness. He has demonstrated that it is impossible to prove God, he has made it impossible to love God. An arbitrary Supreme Being is revolting to human nature, and Duns has carefully excluded any other possibility short of complete scepticism. While ostensibly out-thomasing Thomas in his orthodoxy, what he has really done is to undermine the whole fabric upon which orthodoxy reposes.

The work accomplished by this Scot was, after all, negative. It was reserved for a strange, isolated being, an Englishman, Roger Bacon, to lay new foundations upon the ground which Duns Scotus was busy clearing. If we were better acquainted with the details of his early life, before he became a Franciscan friar, we might know the origin of that nervous, fiery disposition, so fatal in the Middle Ages, which impelled its owner to react with furious hostility against any sort of accepted authority, and with entire disregard of tact and prudence. Such a nature was born for suffering ; first silenced and deprived of the very means of research or expression, finally languishing for fourteen years in a dungeon, all because he

had seen a little further through the darkness than his contemporaries, Bacon had small joy of his learning. But the heroes of thought do not work for reward.

Bacon was no modern scientist; he was a man of manifest imperfections, and if he rose above the limitations of his environment, it is but as a man, fallen by night into a bog, raises himself waist and shoulders above it, while the rest of him is floundering in mire. He accepted the current assumptions, that the end of all wisdom is to enable man to live according to God's will, and that all truth is contained in Scripture. He believed in astrology, the philosopher's stone, and the possibility of squaring the circle; his very philology, on which he laid such stress, is marred by the strangest errors. The marvel is that with all the handicaps that his time and contemporaries imposed upon him, he obtained such a Pisgah view of subsequent developments.

With true English practicality, he goes straight for the weak points in St. Thomas. He shows the absurdity of a blind acceptance of Aristotle through translations that distort his meaning, and how far the schoolmen are from following the example of Aristotle when they neglect nature. "If you want to know about God"—that is the gist of his message—"study God's works." The pompous and unnecessary parade of formal logic he scouts as a pedantic way of achieving what every man is capable of doing by the light of nature. Get to the facts, and let this grinding of wind be!

The third of our great British Franciscans belongs to the first half of the fourteenth century. This is the "Invincible Doctor", William of Occam in Surrey and Merton College, Oxford. A schoolman himself, he drives the last nail into the coffin of scholasticism by laying down that entities are not to be multiplied more than necessary.[1] The mere fact of a thing's existing is warrant enough for its reality. Thus did Occam, himself neither a constructive thinker nor a scientist, by mere insistence upon facts, as opposed to words, help to clear the path for a humanism more fruitful than the logical *tours de force* of the schoolmen.

6

The English Justinian

Earl Simon had fallen largely because of his own good qualities. They were the good qualities of the Latin temperament, firm in its

[1] Even if he was not the actual author of this phrase, it is implied in his teaching.

grasp of general principles but uncompromising and autocratic in their application. His conqueror, the lord Edward, who during the few remaining years of Henry's reign was virtually sovereign and who succeeded him as Edward I, proved, despite his foreign speech and blood, as thorough paced an Englishman by temperament as any scion of that West Saxon House from whom his name was derived. A magnificent figure of a man, standing six foot three, he was up to a certain point a sportsman and a gentleman. He was capable of that tender and enduring married love which is a feature of English life and English poetry, and distinguishes the English from the Latin conception of romance. He was kindly, open and impulsive in the expression of his feelings, perhaps a trifle sentimental at times. He was one of the first soldiers and organizers of his age, a legislator great enough to earn the title of the English Justinian, and prided himself on being a man of his word.

But he was English also in that his kindliness and sportsmanship were not proof against opposition to his will. When that was crossed, his conscience came into play. William Wallace, for loving his Scottish country more than his English King, was done to death not only with cruelty but shameful insult, and the Countess of Buchan, who had been so indiscreet as to place the crown on Robert Bruce's head, was exposed, by orders of the pattern of chivalry, in a cage on Berwick walls. Other nations have frequently surpassed us in unscrupulousness, but it takes an Englishman, when vital interests are at stake, to camouflage his real motives, even from himself, with all the sincerity of conscious innocence.

England at last found herself under a sovereign whose good and bad qualities were equally characteristic of her. For quite a generation after the triumph of Evesham, Edward s record is one of almost unbroken success. He takes up the work of his great-grandfather, Henry of Anjou; only now, instead of a foreigner setting up an efficient bureaucratic despotism, we have an Englishman, the type and hero of his people, acting in thorough harmony with them. Even their quarrels, we feel, are lovers' quarrels—a soldier-king, who can burst into repentant tears before his Parliament, is pretty sure of a warm place in the hearts of his subjects.

Seldom had an English monarch such opportunities of influencing the course of history; few would have been so capable of rising to them. What form our institutions would take still largely depended on the sovereign's personality. The decision of Evesham had put out of court, for the time at any rate, the idea of running the

government through a committee of magnates, and an effective Parliamentary control was far in the future. The King was thus left in control of the most powerful administrative machine in Western Europe. The bureaucracy which had grown up under the first two Henries had never ceased to develop, even under the feeble auspices of Henry III. It was now a fairly well differentiated system of government departments, with its own traditions and routine. In theory, however, the King was still a private lord on a grand scale; his Kingdom was his estate and his chief ministers were the officers of his household. Thus we find that Edward I's war-office, through which he financed and supplied the great simultaneous contest with Scotland and France, was none other than his wardrobe. The efficiency of this system was naturally dependent on the constant supervision of all departments by the royal householder.

The King was not only an administrator; he was also a legislator and even, to some extent, a judge. Towards the end of the thirteenth century English law was passing through a very interesting and critical phase of transition. During Henry III's reign it had gone far to establish itself as a system of national jurisprudence, with an individuality proof against time or the prestige of imperial Rome. English law had indeed availed itself of Roman scientific method, and the classic treatise of Bracton, who died in 1268, is inspired largely by his study of the Italian civil lawyer, Azo of Bologna. But by the time of Edward I's accession the English Common Law had taken to itself about as much of Roman jurisprudence as it could conveniently absorb, and from henceforth it was to work out its own development on lines definitely national. This insular tendency was increased by the growth of a legal profession, or rather gild, jealously conservative of tradition and steeped in the lore of English, judge-made precedent. And indeed, it must have required a lifetime of study to master the forms and conventions, whose accurate observance counted more than a just cause in securing a verdict.

When Edward came to the throne, he found this national law just beginning to take shape, and already becoming defined by the recorded decisions of its judges. It was, however, still waiting for a legislator to take a comprehensive survey of it and mark out the lines on which it should develop during the ensuing centuries. The initiative in such legislation could come from none other than the King himself, for neither a feudal council of magnates nor the Court

in Parliament was remotely capable of furnishing it. Edward himself was as much a lawyer, by disposition, as he was a fighter, and indeed was only too much inclined to limit righteousness and statesmanship by the letter of the law. But he was a sufficiently law-abiding king to recognize the necessity for a good law.

So thoroughly did he go to work that during his reign more was done—in the opinion of Sir Matthew Hale, cited and endorsed by Maitland—to settle and establish the distributive justice of the Kingdom, than in subsequent ages. "For ages after Edward's day," says Maitland, "King and parliament left private law and civil procedure, criminal law and criminal procedure, pretty much to themselves." [1] If we are right in holding that the spirit of our Constitution is that of the Common Law, and that the one has grown out of the other, this achievement of Edward's—and by far the greater part of it was accomplished during the first thirteen years of his reign—is memorable beyond that of any monarch or statesman in our history.

7

The Constitution on the Anvil

Those first thirteen strenuous years of peaceful legislation, during which the foundations of our English law were established for all time, saw only part of the great King's work for England. The two ideals that inspired him may be comprehended in the words, "order" and "unity"—that Britain should be one, and that all things within his realm should be ordered and settled on the best and surest foundations.

Edward is not only the English Justinian, he has also some claim to be called the father of the English Parliament. It was during his reign that Parliament began to assume the form which it has kept ever since of King, Lords and Commons. No doubt an immense amount of sentimental or misinformed nonsense has been written about this phase of our constitutional development. The word Parliament has, in the course of centuries, gathered associations of which Edward and his subjects never dreamed. Modern research has made it plain that the very word signified, to them, not half so much a body of representatives as—in its literal meaning—debate. They spoke of "The King in his council in Parliament", meaning "in discussion", or the "High Court of Parliament", as who

[1] *The Constitutional History of England*, p. 19.

should say, " the High Court of Debate," and it was only gradually and after a great deal of experiment, that the habit established itself of applying these names to a particularly constituted assembly.

Whatever the underlying reality may have been, the theory of our thirteenth century institutions was still personal and feudal. The King was the supreme landowner, and he held his court, from time to time, just as every great or petty landlord held his. The King's court was a manor court on a grand scale, in which the tenants declared the law, justice was done, complaints dealt with, and matters of importance to the estate discussed and settled. But, however much we may agree to treat the State as an estate, there are differences between the two that make the parallel break down in practice. The lord of one or several manors knew, or could find out from his bailiffs, exactly what he had a right to demand in the shape of labour, produce, or customary dues. The custom of the manor was fixed; and after the occasional levy of arbitrary tallages had fallen into disuse, there was no question of the lord's coming, at irregular intervals, to coax or bully the tenants into granting extraordinary contributions to tide over alleged emergencies. This, however, was precisely what the King was under the constant necessity of doing, and as the loyalty of his subjects seldom rose to the point of conceding something for nothing, he was compelled to purchase supply by redress of grievances.

In theory the King was expected to " live of his own " like any other lord. If he wanted more than " his own ", he was asking for something not sanctioned by custom, something in the nature of a favour. Even under the most despotic Kings, the right to make unlimited calls on their subjects' property had been neither claimed nor conceded. Whether it was the Anglo-Saxon assembly of Wise Men or the Norman feudal court of tenants-in-chief, some body, more or less indeterminate in its composition, generally had to be consulted and, in fact, " squared ", before any levy, that was more than a matter of mere routine, could be imposed. The reason for this was not any reverence for constitutional principles, but the fact that to embark on any sort of taxation was a venture of considerable uncertainty and even danger. Nowadays, if we read of another penny or shilling being put on to the income tax, we do not openly defy the revenue authorities, though recent experience among manual workers suggests that an unpopular tax, even if sanctioned by Parliament, may prove so difficult to collect as to make it not worth the candle.

What is exceptional now was, for many centuries of our history, a chronic difficulty. Strong though an English King may have been, his power was not without limits, and by the time of Edward I, the habit of resistance to unpopular demands had become ingrained. During the fourteenth century we repeatedly find that it is one thing to impose a tax and quite another to get it collected. On the morrow of Edward III's great victory at Sluys, his minister, De la Pole, had to report his inability to collect a subsidy already sanctioned by Parliament. Just after this we find Parliament pleading that they must consult their constituents before granting more money for the French war, and promising to use their influence to obtain it. The expedient of a poll-tax brought on an actual rebellion in 1381, and then had to be dropped. Not only could taxes be refused but evaded. The medieval King had nothing at his command like the fiscal organization with which the Caesars had bled their empire to death. The collection of tenths and fifteenths was reduced to a farce by fraudulent local assessments, until the practice was adopted of naming a definite fixed sum for each local authority to raise in its own way.

Thus we find the King confronted with a situation of a kind that must be only too familiar to employers in modern labour disputes. It is one thing for a delegate conference to come to an agreement, it is quite another to get the men into the shops or down the mines on the strength of it. The Kings certainly regarded their first Parliaments much as a good employer regards a strong union, as a body by means of which he has the best chance of coming to a working arrangement with his people. He wanted to have some way of getting into touch with the nation as a whole, or that part of it, at any rate, which was capable of either payment or resistance. And it was not only money that the King wanted, though this was by far the most important of his needs. He wanted to feel that the nation was behind him in any important act of policy, as, for instance, when he had a special Parliament summoned to Shrewsbury to approve the condemnation of his prisoner, Davydd, the last native Prince of Wales.

This expedient of calling together representatives of his subjects, and getting them to pledge the money of their constituents, must have seemed a veritable gold mine to a needy King, and an unmitigated nuisance both to the representatives, who disliked, as much as any modern juryman, the imposition of a troublesome and thankless duty, and to the constituents, who saw in the whole

affair a device of His Majesty to touch them for money, and who, in fact, were sometimes not above bribing the sheriff to disfranchise them. The prospect of Parliament coming to overshadow the King was at first little suspected by either side. For the knights and burgesses, in particular, the only attraction must have lain in the fact of their being summoned to meet all the prominent people of the realm in the palace at Westminster, and perhaps, with very great luck, to be witnesses of something in the nature of a scene between the King and some great man, perhaps the Earl Marshal or the Archbishop of Canterbury. But the knights and burgesses had even less opportunity of debate or defiance in open court than the members of a modern jury, to whom their position offers a fair parallel. They were represented by their Speaker or foreman, and if they could not at once agree on their answer to any particular demand, they would leave the Palace and troop over the way into the Chapter House or Refectory of the Abbey, where they would thrash out among themselves what sort of answer they would instruct their Speaker to give.

It was still the King's feudal court that the representatives were summoned to attend—his Court in Debate. It was the same court that sat at other times without any knights or burgesses at all, and to which these representatives of the commons or communes were an occasional and not by any means a necesary addition. Sometimes it was a court pure and simple, at which the question of granting supplies was not even broached, but in which the King sat to determine important judicial or legislative business, and to deal with the complaints and petitions of his subjects. It would have taken a very far-sighted observer to guess that the silent and respectful commons, who crowded at the far end of the hall, would eventually have the game in their own hands, and reduce the Crown to a cipher and the magnates to a political anachronism.

And yet, barring accidents, such a process was dictated by conditions obtaining as early as Edward I's time. The key of the situation consisted in the fact that the King's resources did not permanently suffice for him to carry on the government without his having to supplement them by extraordinary means. To avoid bankruptcy and ruin he must obtain the money, not by force nor of right, but by favour of his subjects, whose representatives he had the best opportunity of approaching in his Court of Parliament. And this court, from the very comprehensiveness both of its composition and functions, was an ideal body for enabling the King to do

business with his subjects as a whole, and his subjects to treat with him.

The chief danger was that—as happened nearly everywhere else abroad—the King might succeed in striking different bargains with different sections or estates of his subjects, a method ultimately fatal to constitutional development. It was long before this point was finally decided, even in England. Among Edward I's devices was that of dealing separately with the English and even the foreign merchants. This latter was a particularly questionable expedient, since, in return for a liberal percentage of dues from the foreigners, the King used his royal power to break down the municipal privileges by which the internal and retail trade of the country had been kept in native hands. Even a private bargain was not invariably beneath the royal dignity. So late as 1370 we find Edward III addressing a series of piteous appeals to the Bishop of Carlisle. He has got a huge bill, he says, to meet by St. Thomas's day, "or else incur great dishonour and danger to our Kingdom," and later, the Bishop evidently proving unkind, "consider," urges the King, "our present necessity, which is so great that we can hardly write or express it."

But Parliament, unlike the foreign assemblies of estates that flourished for awhile only to succumb to the nationalist monarchies of the Renaissance, was based on strong enough foundations to be proof, in the hour of trial, against such a power as that wielded by the Tudors, and such pretensions as those of the Stuarts. Paradoxically enough, the very strength of the Norman and Angevin Kings made for the strength of the body that was ultimately to overshadow the King. For the strength of the Norman military power, and of the administrative machine fashioned by the first two Henries, was so tremendous as to crush out local and sectional pretensions to an extent undreamed of on the Continent. The practical independence of Flemish cities or German princelets or the outlying French provinces had nothing corresponding to it in England. Even the Church, which wielded so tremendous a power in the first half of the thirteenth century, was brought to heel when Edward I coolly informed the Archbishop of Canterbury that if the clergy pleaded immunity from lay taxation they would be denied the protection of the lay law.

It is only when sectional feeling is kept within bounds that patriotism has a chance to lift its head. The whole strength of the English Parliament, from its very beginnings, consists in the fact that it is the nearest approximation the Middle Ages could produce to the ideal of a national assembly. At no time was it in any sense

an assembly of estates. When the more recent additions, the members representing shires and boroughs, grouped themselves into a separate "House", the line of division was not that between a noble or priestly caste and mere commoners, but rather that between individuals qualified or chosen to be the King's counsellors, and that of members elected *ad hoc* to represent the shire courts and municipalities whose assent, though not as yet whose advice, it was expedient to secure for important decisions. Thus we have not so much to think of Lords and Commons in the modern sense, as a House of persons or—to adopt one of Professor Pollard's luminous phrases—experts, and a House of proxies for Communes or governing bodies.

The National Assembly—for such it was in fact if not in name—that gathered round the King in his Council in Parliament had, from the first, other business than that of unloosing the nation's purse-strings. It was also the court in which the King dealt with the petitions of his subjects. These petitions might come from any individual or corporation, and the King no doubt disposed of them according to his own discretion and the advice of his immediate counsellors. But the lever that this habit of petitioning gave to the Commons was not likely to be lost on such shrewd bargainers as medieval men of affairs usually were. If His Majesty chose to petition them for these extraordinary and unpopular levies, tenths and fifteenths of everyone's goods, surely the least they could do would be to return the compliment and petition His Majesty. It was only tentatively, and after a good many decades, that they advanced from individual petitions to petitions adopted by the whole House, and from thence the next step of presenting petitions in the form of Bills, to be accepted or rejected but by no means altered by the Lords and the King.

From the very beginning of Parliament, therefore, we find what we may call the positive and negative poles of constitutional development, redress and supply. Under whatever forms of respect or loyalty the fact might be masked, the King's necessity for supply was a lever that Parliament might use to levy constitutional blackmail on him to an extent only limited by the urgency of the need. The elements of kingcraft, as revealed in the light of history, are of the simplest. The powerful King is he who can live of his own, who can carry on the government out of his own resources without applying to his subjects. Once his expenses exceed his regular income, he is involved in a sea of troubles. The sovereign may possibly manage to increase his resources, either by a windfall of confiscated property,

like Edward IV and Henry VIII, or even by direct bribes from a foreign power, like Edward IV and Charles II. But speaking generally, the successful King is the one who practices strict economy, and above all keeps clear of that most ruinous form of expense constituted by war. Such was the secret of those two great Tudors, Henry VII and Elizabeth. On the other hand even a powerful sovereign like Edward III cannot indulge in a prolonged war without finding his power continually encroached upon.

The opposition between the King pressing for more than his normal income, and Parliament pressing for more than its normal powers, is one that, after many centuries and vicissitudes, can only be settled in one of two ways, either by a thorough-going absolutism, in which the sovereign can get what he wants without asking anybody —this was what happened eventually in most Continental states—or by Parliament taking the sovereignty into its own hands and reducing the King (who strictly speaking is part of Parliament) to a crowned figurehead. That this happened in England is due to the fact that Parliament was from the first a true national assembly, as distinct from a concourse of estates. And for this we have to thank the strong, levelling policy of our foreign Kings, and the genius of that French-speaking Englishman to whom, of all English sovereigns, we can most readily accord the title of " patriot King ".

And yet it was the same Edward of whom, after his overthrow by Simon at Lewes, an upholder of constitutional principles had been moved to write, " O Edward ! You want to be King without law ; wretched indeed would they be who are ruled by such a king," and then, with an appreciation of the main issue that could not be bettered in the light of subsequent history, " therefore let the general body (*communitas*) of the Kingdom be taken to counsel, and what the whole (*universitas*) feels, let it be known." If the Earl Simon could, thirty years after his death, have been present in spirit at Edward's model of all subsequent Parliaments, well might he have echoed the words he had used when caught in the trap at Evesham :

" By the arm of Saint James, they come on wisely, but it is from me that they learnt the method ! "

CHAPTER VI

THE AGE OF CHIVALRY

1

Expansion in Wales

It is among the first requirements of statesmanship to gauge, as exactly as possible, the amount of effort that a community is able to put forth without exhausting its strength. Are the resources of England equal to the task of fighting Bolshevik Russia, or undertaking the defence of Singapore, or bringing cheap electricity into every home? If sovereigns and governments had been accustomed to such reckonings, who shall estimate the amount of waste that might have been avoided? As it is, we find history strewn with the wreckage of enterprises foredoomed from the start by lack of means.

This is the tragedy of England in the Middle Ages. We have selected the year 1295 as the turning point, because up to that time England's record had been one of fairly continuous progress since the Conquest. This is largely due to the fact that she had enjoyed, thanks to her insular position and strong government, a measure of peace denied to any Continental folk. The burden of maintaining the Angevin inheritance had been taken off our shoulders by Philip Augustus. One easily repulsed invasion there had been, and civil strife, not of a very prolonged or obstinate character; riots and private feuds not even the firmest government had been able wholly to suppress. The Crusades, after the first, had excited no great enthusiasm in England. On the whole, we had got off lightly, and had built up strength faster than we had wasted it.

With Edward I, however, the process takes place which is often the accompaniment of a vigorous national life. Energy seeks an outlet; the people, having waxed fat and strong, desires to impose its will upon others. Edward himself was, both as a tactician and as a military organizer, far in advance of his age. The experience of the Barons' War had taught him that an independent Wales was a thorn in the side of his Kingdom that would best be plucked out once and for all; Scotland, with her disputed succession and her

close connection with England, was a fatally tempting prize; the door for our wool in Flanders had to be kept open at all costs; what was worst of all, a piece of the old Angevin inheritance was still left in the South of France. Edward was strong enough to crush Wales; he might possibly have done the same by Scotland if he could have devoted all his forces to her alone. But he was not strong enough to fight the French King in Flanders and Gascony, and the Scottish insurgents across the Border, and to suppress Welsh risings, at one and the same time.

Edward is scarcely to be blamed for his failure to estimate the strains that his social edifice was capable of standing, when we reflect that even his present-day critics seem as incapable as he was of realizing the impossible nature of his Gascon inheritance, exposed as it was to the full weight of a French attack, and only connected with England by a precarious sea-route. An attack on Gascony was a trick that the French King could always play to paralyze any English effort elsewhere. England had to raise forces to fight simultaneously on two or more fronts, and this was more than her resources or magnates would stand. Edward, bound for Flanders, orders the Constable and Marshal of England to lead an army in defence of Gascony; they refuse; their duty binds them to follow the King but not to go off on separate enterprises. "By God, Sir Earl," blazes out Edward, "you shall either go or hang." "By God, Sir King," retorts the Earl of Norfolk, "I will neither go, nor hang," and neither did he.

The first military venture to which Edward set his hand was defensible enough, as a continuation of the policy of the old Heptarchic Kings, whose object it was to master their Celtic Hinterlands. What the Romans had done with comparative ease in Wales, the English had been unable to accomplish in the course of eight centuries. Norman adventurers might plant their castles along the strip of Southern Lowlands; the Marcher Lords might gain ground in the East; but there was no permanent military organization capable of holding down the mountain tribes, and the feudal armies could only waste their strength against an enemy that would not fight and a country that could not feed them.

The thirteenth century had seen a considerable revival of Welsh power. The Princes of Northern Gwynnedd, from their headquarters in the Snowdon district, took advantage of England's domestic troubles to establish a supremacy over the whole of Wales, and Simon de Montfort, in his last campaign, had drawn his strongest support

from Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, who was strong enough actually to secure the recognition by England of his title, "The Prince of Wales."

When he came to the throne, Edward resolved to make an end of the Welsh nuisance once and for all. His practical English mind had no sympathy with the incurable incapacity of the Celt to evolve any stable system of government, and the Welsh law must have seemed to him little better than no law at all. He had all the English lack of sympathy for an ideal of life different from his own, and his attempts to force English law on the Welsh did not make his task of conciliating them any the easier. It was certainly with no qualms of conscience that he concentrated the whole might of England upon the task of annihilating Welsh independence.

The business was done with workmanlike efficiency in two wars, the first of which left Llewelyn crippled and restricted to his mountain fastnesses, the second, after English oppression in the annexed territories had moved the Welsh and their Prince to desperate revolt, completed the conquest. Edward quickly shed the feudal levy and relied, as much as possible, on pressed soldiers, meanwhile impressing labour to cut broad roads through the mountain forests which were more formidable than the enemy. The Channel sailors held the sea; armies closed in from divergent bases on the enemy's last refuge in the Snowdon district; the gallant Llewelyn lost his life, by sheer bad luck, in a skirmish; and Wales became, once and for all, a province of the English Crown, secured by a chain of magnificent castles of the new concentric pattern, from Rhuddlan to Harlech.

But to make a formal conquest of a Celtic people is a very different thing from subduing its natural spirit. The very strength of its tribal organization, which is such a check to political progress, is what renders it all the more tenacious of its native spirit. Edward's attempt to force English law upon the Welsh was more or less of a dead letter, though more successful was his policy of encouraging the formation of towns, which, though at first mainly peopled by Englishmen, soon filled up with Welshmen. The economic development of the country was greatly stimulated, and Wales was able to carry on a brisk export trade in her raw materials, metals and wool. As early as Henry I's reign, a certain number of Flemings had been imported into the South-West, and gradually there sprang up the manufacture of a rough, but very warm, kind of cloth that went by the name of frieze.

In the country districts the pride of race and nationality lived on,

and the century following the conquest saw a revival of poetic genius. The old bards of the North, those fierce and ardent patriots, were indeed silent when the hearthfires of their princes were cold, but in the South another, less militant school, was shortly to arise, whose genius, touched by foreign and particularly Provençal influence, was essentially lyrical, delighting in the two great themes of nature and love. These bards, the untranslatableness of whose works alone prevents them from ranking with the troubadours and minnesingers, resisted all attempts to suppress them. When the Welsh muse seemed to be flagging and getting out of hand, Eisteddfods, or general gatherings of bards, would be called for the deliberate purpose of revival. Over one of the most famous of these, held about 1330, presided the greatest of all Welsh singers, Dafydd Ap Gwilym.

Of him we cannot refrain from letting George Borrow speak, Borrow, who used to carry a copy of the bard's works on his wanderings through Wales. "Ap Gwilym has been fairly styled the Welsh Ovid. . . . He was something more than the Welsh Ovid; he was the Welsh Horace, and wrote light, agreeable, sportive pieces equal to anything of the kind composed by Horace in his best moods. But he was something more, he was the Welsh Martial, and wrote pieces equal in pungency to those of the great Roman epigrammatist, perhaps more than equal. . . . But he was something more; he could, if he pleased, be a Tyrtaeus; he was no fighter—where was there ever a poet that was—but he wrote an ode on a sword, the only warlike piece that he ever wrote, the best poem on the subject ever written in any language. Finally, he was something more; he was what none of the great Latin poets was, a Christian; that is, in his latter days, when he began to feel the vanity of all human pursuits, when his nerves began to be unstrung, his hair to fall off, and his teeth to drop out, and he then composed sacred pieces entitling him to rank with—we were going to say Caedmon—had we done so we should have done wrong; no uninspired poet ever handled sacred subjects like the grand Saxon Skald—but which entitle him to be called a great religious poet, inferior to none save the protegé of Hilda."

After lying dormant for more than a hundred years, the Welsh spirit did flame up, during the first decade of the fifteenth century, in one wild passion of rebellion, under that mysterious lawyer and reputed magician Owen Glendower. He was believed by all Welshmen then and by some now to have been as uncanny as Merlin himself, to have had the power of making himself invisible. Nobody knows

what was his end, but strange stories are told of it. His very success seemed to have about it something magical; towns and fortresses went down before him, it looked as if England would be swept clean out of Wales. Armies were launched against him in vain; one great force of some hundred thousand men, with the future victor of Agincourt among its commanders, was dispatched to round him up, and found itself striking blows in the empty air—Owen simply vanished, to reappear in greater strength than ever as soon as his foes had withdrawn. Nor was the patriot bard lacking to the patriot hero. At Owen's side, and linked to him in close bonds of friendship, was the venerable Iolo, surnamed the Red, who had, in his youth, seen Ap Gwilym presiding over the assembled bards. He was, as might have been expected, a native of Northern Gwynnedd, and no small part of Owen's success was due to the patriotic ardour with which Iolo's songs fired his countrymen. And then the revolt subsided almost as strangely and inexplicably as it had arisen, the fire seemed to die out of it, the concentrated obstinacy that made a people like the Dutch capable of wearing down the pride of Spain was not in the Welsh nature. Gradually the resistance ceased and Owen, offered a pardon and a commonplace old age, chose rather to vanish out of human ken.

Expansion in Scotland

Edward I had successfully accomplished his task of subduing the Mercian Hinterland which, though it had taken the English some eight centuries and a half to complete, had been accomplished with comparative ease by the Romans. Now, with the consciousness of a nation behind him and buoyed up on the crest of its new-found patriotism, it was only natural that Edward should seek to round off his task by subduing that larger territory that lay beyond the Northumbrian border. When a minority, followed by a disputed succession, put the prize within his grasp, it would have been less than human if a man, constituted as Edward was, had refrained from seizing it.

Had he been wise, with a wisdom beyond that of his age and our own, he would have seen the inevitable tragedy that was preparing for England and Scotland alike. To hold down a territory so extensive and so difficult, against its will, was utterly beyond an English King's power. Even to hold the Lowlands had proved

too much for Rome. The flourishing Kingdom of Northumbria had been ruined in the attempt to expand northwards. Edward was confronted with a thing more dangerous than had faced either Rome or Northumbria, in the shape of a folk already keenly conscious of its nationality, and determined never to submit to

> " proud Edward's power ;
> Chains and slaverie ".

Amid the confusion of races, Goidelic, Brythonic, Pictish, Norse and Angle, it was a dynasty of the Goidelic Scots, out of Ireland, that ultimately came to prevail. But in conquering the East strip of the Lowland coast, the Scots had taken to themselves a conqueror. The fertility of the country, the constructive genius of its inhabitants and their superior access to English and Latin influences, made it inevitable that they should eventually come to the top. This, in fact, took place under Malcolm Canmore, or Big Head, the slayer of Macbeth, who had lived at the Court of Edward the Confessor, and who married a sister of Edgar the Atheling. From this time to the War of Independence the History of Scotland is, on the whole, one of steady progress under wise and capable Kings.

During all this time she enjoyed the blessing of a comparatively peaceful development. Her relations with her Southern neighbour were not unfriendly ; the Border had not yet become the cockpit it was to be later, and England was Scotland's best customer. There were, from time to time, claims to a feudal sovereignty of England over Scotland, but these did not do much more than act as pinpricks to stimulate the growing sense of Scottish nationality. The Scots were, in fact, ready to pay quite a considerable amount of cash down to Coeur de Lion, in order to free themselves from the homage which William the Lion had performed to Henry II. There was a similar trouble in the Church. Rome was always indifferent if not hostile to national sentiment, and would have preferred to put Scotland under the English Archbishopric of York. On this point the Scots did not hesitate to put up a fight with so formidable a Pontiff as the third Alexander, and in the end they got their own way, though a Scottish Metropolitan Archbishop was not appointed till long afterwards.

Meanwhile the royal authority was steadily being extended over the mixed assortment of races. The Scottish court, though it had no intention of being subject to England, had no hesitation in taking England as a model. Frequent grants of land had been made to Norman nobles, who had sometimes property on both sides of the

Border. Gradually South of the Forth and along the fertile Eastern coast up to the Moray Firth the King's Peace asserted itself over the old tribal jurisdictions. Even in the Highlands some progress was made towards establishing the royal authority. English law and trial by jury were imported into Scotland. Unfortunately, alongside the King's Peace a number of imperfectly subordinate peaces were allowed to spring up which, as James VI complained long afterwards, went far towards wrecking the Kingdom. Great nobles were allowed to possess a gallows for hanging men and a pit for drowning women, a privilege wholly inconsistent with either justice or sovereignty.

If Scotland was behindhand in that she had developed no Parliament, except the court of feudal tenants, she was also fortunate in not needing one. Her Kings, unlike their English rivals, did actually succeed in living of their own. The reason for this must be sought in the fact that Scotland was singularly free from war. The one task of this kind imposed upon her was that of clearing her Northern fringe of the remnants of Viking sovereignty. This was accomplished, without any excessive drain on her resources, during the thirteenth century. The Scottish Kings were less concerned with running after glory than in the development of peaceful activities. They encouraged the growth of burghs and of a trading class. A brisk trade sprang up with England and, to a somewhat lesser extent, with Flanders.

In Scotland, then, we see a native monarchy strong enough to make English ideals prevail among a population largely Celtic. Gradually we find the Northumbrian or Anglian influence becoming predominant over the whole of the Lowlands, while the Celtic tribal organization lives on in the mountainous country in the North and West that we know as the Highlands. The Celtic strain is certainly less pure here than in either Wales or Ireland, and the clan system is not precisely the same as the old Celtic tribalism; it is touched to a certain extent with feudal ideas of land tenure, greatly strengthening the authority of the chief. But these clans are handicapped by the incapacity of the Celt for constructive political action. Terrible warriors as the Highlanders always were, they were never capable, under their own chiefs, of forming a reliable army; they might win victories, but as likely as not the army would melt away on the morrow. Again, never could the clans be brought to combine. So late as the eighteenth century, a Macdonald would fight for Prince Charlie, while a Campbell would be for King George; never were Highlanders found in any quarrel without other Highlanders being on the

other side. This enormously minimized the peril they might have become to their more civilized neighbours of the Lowlands.

During most of the thirteenth century the relations between Scotland and England had been singularly happy, and there appeared every prospect of a peaceful union of the two crowns by the marriage of Edward's son, the young Prince of Wales, with the child who inherited the Scottish throne on the death of Alexander III. But this happy consummation was defeated by the death of this little Maid of Norway; Scotland was faced with the calamity of a disputed succession and Edward began to cast about for other means to accomplish the union of Great Britain on which he had set his heart.

His policy was no doubt fatally mistaken, and fraught with centuries of hatred and calamity to both countries, but his mistake will seem pardonable if we remember that it is one to which the most advanced historians of our own day are liable. Edward was a lawyer, and he reconciled his conscience and intellect to taking the personal fictions of feudal law for realities, and leaving out of account the great fact of national sentiment. According to his own lights and the principles of feudal law, he was acting the part of a just and upright King in maintaining his rights against rebels and traitors. But to a patriotic Scot it was unthinkable that the King of England should under any pretence or circumstances impose his will on Scotland, and events were to prove that Scottish patriotism was capable of becoming an ultimately irresistible force against any foreign invader, despite the fact that many of the Scottish nobles, of Norman descent and with possessions on both sides of the Border, were anything but patriotic.

There were a number of claimants to the crown, but the only serious ones were two Norman-descended lords whose family names were Bruce (or Brix) and Balliol (or Bailleul). Edward with his shadowy claims to overlordship was the natural person to arbitrate, and he did so with painstaking thoroughness, deciding finally on Balliol as King of Scotland with Edward as his overlord, a decision that, from a lawyer's standpoint, was by no means unplausible. Unfortunately Edward, with the true Englishman's instinct for putting himself in the right and exploiting it to the utmost, pressed his overlordship to an extent that Scotland had never known before, and treated the unfortunate Balliol as a veritable puppet King. This insult to Scottish national feeling was supplemented by a more material grievance. In 1294 the inevitable quarrel with France flamed up into open war, and the French King, who had got control

of the Count of Flanders, was able to close the Flemish market to Edward's domains, thus crippling the Scottish wool trade. To complicate matters still further, Edward, who could not afford to send sufficient troops to Gascony and who had to resort to violent and unconstitutional methods of taxation, had to deal in person with a Welsh rebellion. The opportunity was too tempting to be missed. The Scots threw off allegiance to Edward and made an alliance with France.

Furious as he always was at the suggestion of treason, Edward determined to cut by the sword this knot that diplomacy had failed to untie. One of his first feats, one that sounded the death-knell of Anglo-Scottish friendship, was to storm the most flourishing of her ports, Berwick-on-Tweed, and massacre, it is said, more than seven thousand men, women and children in the sack. The country was soon at his feet, her poor puppet King a prisoner, and the strongholds in his hand. This time there was to be no fiction of an independent Scotland. Balliol, under feudal law, was a vassal who had defied his lord, and to that lord his estate was rightly forfeited. The plain fact of the matter was that Edward, having conquered Scotland by the sword, intended to hold the country under martial law.

The situation was not unlike that which obtained in the Transvaal after our annexation of it in 1877, a stubborn people chafing under the rule of a martinet, the part of Sir Owen Lanyon being anticipated by Lord Warenne, a harsh governor and a feeble commander. It was not long before the patriotism of the Scottish people was fanned to a blaze, and the whole country was up in arms under a great national leader, William Wallace, who, taking advantage of Edward's commitments elsewhere, soon succeeded in leading Warenne into a trap and destroying the English army of occupation. The indomitable Edward was now faced with the task of conquering Scotland all over again. A desperately contested battle at Falkirk ended in a triumph of the English or Welsh longbow over the spear forest of the Scottish infantry, and after a few years' waste of blood and treasure the English king, who patched up his differences with France in 1303, was again master of Scotland, and this time tried the effect of as mild and conciliatory a system of government as was practicable under the circumstances.

It was too late. The spirit of patriotism was not to be quenched, and to hold down Scotland, with its inhospitable tracts of moorland and mountain, was even less possible for Edward than it had been

for the Romans. On one occasion he got as far north as Inverness, an empty feat when it was impossible to remain there. A new Scottish leader arose in Robert Bruce, a nobleman of a very doubtful record who got himself crowned King in 1306, and after some reverses, vanquished an English army under the Earl of Pembroke. The now aged Edward, with his finances strained almost to bankruptcy and his accounts in hopeless disorder, assembled an army at Carlisle, and was about to resume his Sisyphean task of conquering Scotland when he was struck down by the hand of death.

What was not to be accomplished by the hero-king was plainly beyond the capacity and even the inclination of his successor and namesake, an amiable waster who soon had enough troubles on his hands at home, and left Scotland to look after itself. Within seven years the key position of Stirling was the only footing that the English retained in Scotland, and even this was about to fall when Edward II, who had managed to obtain a windfall out of the plunder of the Knights Templar, marched with a great army to its relief. The King, who was as ignorant of military organization as he was of tactics, arrived with a weary and disgruntled army in front of Stirling, where he found Bruce in position behind a stream called the Bannock Burn, and without giving his men time to rest, blundered forward into the most disastrous defeat ever sustained by an English army at Scottish hands. Though it was some years before England would acknowledge it, Scottish independence was won, and it was now Bruce's turn to take the offensive in Northern England.

The net result of Edward I's expansionist policy in the North was that England had exchanged a peaceful friend for an implacable enemy, in constant alliance with France and always ready to take advantage of any English military commitment overseas to throw an army across the Border. The Border itself was now a belt of anarchy where chieftains of either side kept up a perpetual desultory warfare of raid and counter-raid. It is impossible to compute the waste of blood, of treasure, of the kindly fruits of civilization, involved in this long-drawn, unnecessary tragedy of a Britain divided against herself. The only gain that England has to set against all this weight of evil was one certainly not contemplated by her Kings. It lay in the fact that the King's difficulty was the Parliament's opportunity.

Scotland, too, has something to set in the scale against the ruin of her cities and the weakening of her government. Her trial in the fire of invasion taught her to value her freedom like no other blessing

on earth, it gave her a self-respect and pride of achievement that nothing could ever efface.

> "What, weeneth the King of England
> So soon to have all Scotland?"

The figures of her two patriot leaders, Bruce and Wallace, soon became immortalized in rude epics, the former by Barbour and the latter by Blind Harry the Minstrel, whose Wallace is to a large extent imitative of Barbour's work. Bruce, as befits his time, though scarcely his record, is a pattern of chivalry, a very perfect, gentle knight, the Sir Lancelot of Scotland, though he has as little hesitation as Napoleon in conniving at the slaughter of prisoners whom he cannot take with him. The language is not Gaelic, but the English dialect of Northumbria, which was to become the Scottish language immortalized in the songs of Burns. But "Scots wha hae" is not nobler music than Barbour's

> "Ah, freedom is a noble thing!
> Freedom makes man to have liking,
> Freedom all solace to man gives,
> He lives at ease who freely lives;
> A noble heart may have none ease
> Nor else nought that may him please."

The awakening of this flame was the most permanent and the best result of England's attempt to impose her will upon Scotland.

Expansion in Ireland

It would have been well if Ireland, like Scotland, had been able to find a champion capable of focussing the national spirit and of securing Irish freedom once and for all at some second Clontarf. This was not to be, and the twelfth century witnessed the beginning of Ireland's agony, the longest and most unrelieved that we have recorded of any nation in history, except the Jews. It is a phase that the most impartial historian cannot approach without some feeling of pity and, if he is an Englishman, shame. The wise Camden, writing in 1607, thus temperately sums up our record:—

"If I may be allowed to speak freely, the piety and wisdom of the Kings of England has not been more defective in any one thing than in a due administration of this province, and I may add, of all Ireland, as to the propagating religion, and modelling the state, and civilizing the inhabitants, which things, for many ages, have been

very little regarded. Whether this neglect is to be attributed to carelessness or parsimony I know not; but one would think that an island so great and so near, where the soil is so good and the pastures so rich, which has so many woods and mines, so many rivers and commodious harbours on all sides, convenient for trading to the richest parts of the world, with the customs and revenues arising from thence, and lastly, an island so full of inhabitants, and a people who, in respect of minds and bodies, are capable of the highest employments in peace or war, all these together (one would think) should deserve and challenge our future care."

The fact is that before Tudor times England was near enough to injure but not to destroy the Celtic civilization of Ireland. It had taken the whole weight of the nation to crush Wales, and this could not be brought continuously to bear upon Ireland. At the same time the utter lack of organizing power evinced by the Irish must, in fairness, be held partly accountable for the tragedy. After Clontarf, Ireland had the opportunity, had she possessed the capacity, of putting her house in order. Except in the Church, nothing of the sort was attempted, in fact the ambition of Brian Boru had fatally weakened the prestige of the High Kingship, which now became the prize of contending families. Even in Dublin the Danes were unconquered, and their settlements along the coast remained, like so many fortified bridgeheads, for the entrance of an invader akin to them in blood and sentiment. Had anyone in Ireland been capable of taking stock of the situation, he would have seen that the growing power of the adventurous and imperialistic Normans on her Eastern flank constituted a deadly menace. The Red King, in his wild way, had talked of bridging the Irish Channel with his ships, and making himself lord of the whole island. But the Irish, long isolated from the rest of Europe, had not been taught, even by the Danish invasions, to think out the necessity of national organization and national defence.

Meanwhile Celtic civilization throve and flourished all the more from the Danish blood it had assimilated. The Danes, as in England, brought with them the impulse to trade abroad, and flourishing sea-ports round the coast assumed an importance that in a subsequent age was too frequently testified by their ruins. Great fairs held inland supplemented the business of the ports. Numerous raw materials of the country were exported, and there were the beginnings of a cloth manufacture, besides the metal-work for which the Irish were justly famed. That this civilization was something more than

mere squalid barbarism is testified by the fact that nearly all the imports were luxuries. Lord Dunraven admirably sums up the matter when he says, "inferior the Irish were, no doubt, in those characteristics that make for cohesion and solidarity, but they were certainly not inferior in all that is comprised in civilization". Unfortunately, it was this one defect that ruined everything else.

Very gracious and beautiful was this civilization of Ireland between the overthrow of the Danes and the coming of the English. It was during this time that most of the legends of Finn and Ossian were produced; the profession of a bard was held high in honour, and great gatherings of the people in presence of the High Kings fulfilled the same function of keeping literature alive that was performed by the Welsh Eisteddfods. A church architecture developed upon national lines, not with the grandeur and uprush of the English and French Gothic, but of a quiet and familiar sweetness as befitted the character of the national faith. Beautiful decorative work kept alive the Celtic tradition, continuous since the Bronze Age, and included such masterpieces as the processional Cross of Cong.

During the first half of the twelfth century an attempt was made to bring order into the ecclesiastical chaos, and to institute a proper diocesan system. Prominent in this reforming movement was the friend of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, the sainted Malachy, who brought the Cistercians to Ireland and strove to bring his native land into line with the rest of Catholic Christendom. But Rome was not to be easily disabused of the notion that the people of this remote island were uncivilized barbarians, in need of being subjected to her discipline by force. And when the only Englishman in all the line of Popes from Peter to Pius XI donned the tiara as Adrian IV, he appears to have remained enough of an Englishman to have issued a Bull granting the lordship of Ireland to so disinterested an apostle of civilization as Henry II. The genuineness of the celebrated Bull has been disputed, though the weight of evidence supports it, and its policy was endorsed by Adrian's even greater successor, Alexander III.

Henry, however, had too many irons in the fire to permit of his wasting his energies—Bull or no Bull—on an Irish crusade. But certain of his Norman feudatories enjoyed more freedom and less responsibility. The adventurers who had overrun South Wales were already seeking fresh fields for their activities, cramped as they were by a strong central power in England, and an enemy, in Wales,

too elusive to be subdued and too poor to be plundered. Their opportunity came in much the same way as that of the Emperor Claudius for bringing the legions to Celtic Britain. In the course of endless civil wars of petty Irish Kinglets—worse than ever now that the High Kingship was one of the prizes—a certain Dermot, King of Leinster, whose tyranny had got him expelled from his Kingdom, conceived the notion of coming back with any Norman lords who could be enlisted in the venture. They were nothing loath, nor was Henry sorry to kill two birds with one stone by getting rid of some of his most troublesome subjects and bringing Ireland into his vassalage.

It is improbable that Dermot had the faintest inkling of the woe he was bringing on Ireland. He was merely playing a particularly astute move in the endless game of tribal warfare. Had not Brian Boru availed himself of Danish aid ? The Normans, however, had come to stop ; the half naked Irish had no chance against these heavy-armed lords of war, and where the Norman planted his foot, the castle, before long, reared its head. The Danes in the Eastern ports readily assimilated with the conquerers, and these ports, and particularly Dublin, became the gates of Ireland, permanently open.

From the very first we see that fatal intolerance and misunderstanding which was to be so conspicuous a feature of English dealings with Ireland. We have had occasion to notice the not wholly ungenerous account of Wales by that sprightly churchman, Giraldus Cambrensis. A Norman in spirit, with his epigrammatic lucidity, Giraldus was half a Welshman by blood, which may account for the fairness of his description. Unfortunately he went over to Ireland as one of the chaplains of Prince John, and here he had no pride of birth to hold him in restraint. He saw Celtic civilization from the practical standpoint of a governing race, he saw only too plainly the Irishman's slovenliness and incapacity for organization, without any of his good qualities, his passion for the beautiful, his capacity for dreaming dreams, his Christianity. "Abandoning themselves to idleness"—it is Giraldus writing and not an anti-nationalist pamphleteer of our own day—"and immersed in sloth, their greatest delight is to be exempt from toil, their richest possession the enjoyment of liberty." The Irish are, in fact, to Giraldus, utter barbarians, without agriculture, arts or manufactures. "As this people inhabit a country so remote from the rest of the world, and lying at its furthest extremity . . . secluded from civilized nations they learn nothing and practise nothing but the barbarism in which they are born and bred."

If this was so to the cultured and intelligent Giraldus, what better could be expected from the rough men of action who were only too glad for any excuse to pose as champions of civilization, conquering the wild Irish for their own and everyone else's good! It was not long before the adventurers were followed by the King, who, after the murder of Thomas à Becket, had every reason for keeping out of the way of a possible excommunication, and was, besides, pursuing a line of policy which he knew to be agreeable to Rome. To cure what Giraldus calls "the enormous offences and foul lives of the people of that land" by bringing the chaotic Irish Church into line with that of England no doubt seemed as righteous a policy to the Popes as that of exterminating the Waldenses. The packing of the Irish Church with Englishmen soon excited protest even from Rome, as when, in 1217, the justiciar in Ireland was instructed that no Irishman should be elected or preferred in any cathedral, a procedure which called forth energetic protest from Honorius III. But England was near, and Rome far off and not sufficiently interested to stop the work of Anglicanization in such parts of Ireland as England could bring under her control.

The best thing that could have happened for Ireland, once the invasion was fairly afoot, would have been a complete conquest by the English Crown, and an establishment of the reign of law impartially over Irish chiefs and Norman barons. But the Crown during the Middle Ages was never strong enough to do this and seldom wise enough to attempt it. The Norman barons, who were of the same stock as the "devils and wicked men" who had made a Hell of Stephen's England, were as superior, from the military point of view, to the Irish, as the Gaelic vanguard of the Iron Age had been to the bronze-using aborigines in the twilight of history. The chronic strife among the Irish clans prevented anything like an organized national resistance to the foreigner. The treachery of Dermot was no isolated phenomenon, and the last High King of Ireland had to deal with a Norman invasion aided and abetted by his own son, whom he subsequently captured and blinded. It is no wonder that under these circumstances the new conquistadors penetrated every province of Ireland, picking out the fairest lands, and blighting the gracious civilization that had flourished for so many centuries.

But the Norman baronage, with which the Kings found it hard enough to cope even at home, was not likely, in distant Ireland, to be any more loyal to the court at Westminster, nor had the Kings

of England the resources, either in men or in money, to make their sway permanently effective in Ireland. Their best chance was to make friends of the Irish themselves, and to insist upon fair play and equal law for both races alike. It is one of the few things to be said in favour of the disreputable John that, during the time of his excommunication, he did make a serious attempt to set up an effective government in Ireland, with the traditional English organization of counties and sheriffs, and that in the course of a whirlwind expedition through the country he made it clear that Ireland had at last a King who meant to be obeyed. But John's difficulties at home loosened his control of the Irish as well as of the English baronage, and Henry III was never strong enough during his long reign in England to be much more than a cipher in Ireland. And so matters took their course; the barons, playing each for his own hand, oppressed the Irish and carried on their feuds against each other with little hindrance, and a despairing attempt of the three principal Irish families to sink their differences and restore the High Kingship was quenched in blood.

The turning point of England's fortunes in Ireland comes in the reign of Edward I. The English Justinian, whose supreme hope it was to unite the whole of the British Isles under his sway, was sincerely desirous that his Irish subjects should enjoy the same blessings of law and a High Court of Parliament as existed in England. But Edward, whose energies were more than fully employed at home, was not able to govern Ireland in person, and was consequently at the mercy of his subordinates. And he had that peculiarly English lack of imaginative sympathy for "native" ideals or institutions. The law which he wished to impose on Ireland was English law; the old Brehon law was a "damnable law that is no law, hateful to God and man". But to abolish the Brehon law was to deprive the ordinary Irish clansman of his communal, but none the less genuine, rights in the land, and to make it the private property of the chief or the feudal lord who superseded the chief.

The spirit by which Edward and his servants were actuated is only too plainly revealed when Robert de Ufford, the Justiciar or viceroy, was summoned to England to account for the murderous success of his policy of sowing dissension between the native chiefs. Robert coolly replied that he thought it expedient that one knave should cut off another. Edward, whose English sense of humour was evidently tickled by this remark, merely smiled and sent back the viceroy to his post without more ado.

Nevertheless Edward did at last find a viceroy who was also a statesman in Sir John Wogan, and in 1297 a Parliament representing settlers under the English law was set up in Dublin, copied from the Model Parliament at Westminster of two years before. But it was impossible to pursue any consistent line of policy whatever under the hopeless conditions that prevailed during the twenty years of Edward II's reign, and the threads that had been gathered up by the strong King and his viceroy dropped from the hands of their successors. Indeed the Irish were presented with a golden opportunity of freeing themselves from English rule altogether, when the redoubtable Robert Bruce, not content with hurling the English out of Scotland, dispatched his brother Edward, with an excellent army of trained soldiers to act as the deliverer of Ireland. But it was the old story. The Irish were as incapable as ever of sinking their family differences and uniting in one grand effort to achieve their independence. Some chiefs joined Bruce, some opposed him, others stood aloof. Bruce himself imported the methods of Border warfare into Ireland, and marched about burning and plundering, leaving famine and pestilence in his train. At first he carried all before him; ultimately he was brought to action by superior forces and killed, but not before his many successes had grievously weakened the prestige and demonstrated the vincibility of the dreaded Anglo-Norman lords.

Though the immediate danger to English supremacy was thus removed, it was henceforth, for the next two centuries, to be steadily on the wane. The fact was that the expansionist policy started by Edward III and continued throughout the Hundred Years' War put a strain upon England's resources that they were wholly inadequate to bear, and it was, if we may use the expression, a matter almost of historical certainty that while she was bleeding herself to death in France, Ireland would slip from her grasp. It is useless to describe this process in detail. The Irish clans gradually recovered their strength, and though they were never able to bring their military equipment and methods of fighting up to English standards—they were as hopelessly butchered at Stoke at the end of the fifteenth century as they had been before Dublin in the twelfth—they considerably increased their military efficiency by the employment of professional soldiers. What was even more serious, the great Anglo-Norman families, with characteristic Norman adaptability, began to intermarry and mingle with the Irish nobility, until, from being a foreign garrison they became the leaders of the Irish people, more Irish, it has been said, than the Irish themselves. The family

that had produced the bitterest of Ireland's detractors in Giraldus Cambrensis was to give birth, as the Fitzgeralds, to some of her noblest patriots and martyrs.

As the Crown and its representatives found their authority slipping away, their hatred of all things Irish, and still more, Anglo-Irish, increased with their fear. All manner of abuse, in the true spirit of Giraldus, was heaped upon the unfortunate Irish, who were described as brute beasts, given over to filthy customs, and the Hibernicized Englishman was, if anything, more hated than the Irishman. By the middle of the fourteenth century England had tacitly abandoned her attempt to goven effectively the whole of Ireland, and endeavoured to form a reservation or pale of English colonists, who should be prevented from mingling in any way with the wild tribes without. An Englishman who married an Irishwoman was, in the reign of Edward III, rendered liable to be hanged, drawn and quartered. The crowning act of this policy was the statute of Kilkenny, passed under the auspices of Edward III's son, Lionel. This Act, after attributing all the disorder of the country to the influence exercised by the Irish over the English, not only forbade intermarriage, but the very use of the Irish language or the entertainment of Irish minstrels, a fine unconscious tribute to the influence of Irish song. Brehon Law was banned, and all benefices and religious houses closed to Irishmen.

Such legislation was no more effective than Mrs. Partington's broom in stemming the tide of resurgent Irishry. Gradually the English Pale shrank till, by the middle of the fifteenth century, it consisted of a little patch of country round Dublin. In 1460 an Irish or Anglo-Irish Parliament, summoned by Richard, Duke of York, who was ready cheerfully to sacrifice to his dynastic ambitions the last vestiges of English authority in Ireland, actually went so far as to assert its own complete independence of the laws of England and to demand a separate coinage. Ireland was now to all intents and purposes a free country, but she was no nearer unity than she had been in the days of Henry II. It was certain that as soon as the English monarchy recovered its strength, advantage would be taken of this chronic disunion to start the whole dreary business of conquest over again.

Despite every disadvantage, despite anarchy deliberately fomented by authority, the Celtic civilization not only revived as the English power weakened, but entered upon a period of rich fruition, materially and spiritually. Trade and industry both flourished,

Irish rugs and mantles were particularly sought after and, in 1899, Sluys was made the staple for the sale of Irish cloaks. English and Irish combined in keeping alive the spirit of Celtic culture. To quote the words of Mrs. J. R. Green: "Not one of the hereditary houses of historians, lawyers, poets, physicians, seems to have failed. . . . In astronomy Irishmen were still first in Europe. In medicine they had all the science of their age. Nearly all our knowledge of Irish literature comes from copies of older works made by industrious scribes of this period. From time to time Assemblies of all the learned men were called together by patriotic chiefs. . . . From sea to sea scholars and artists gathered to show their skill to the men of Ireland; and in these glorious assemblies the people learned anew the wealth of their civilization, and celebrated with fresh ardour the unity of the Irish nation." [1]

Unfortunately for Ireland, her sons appeared to be incapable of organizing themselves to maintain that unity, so much to be desired. The dreary tale of tribal feuds went on, and it was only a question of time until England should gather strength for a new and more dreadful onslaught on Irish liberty and Irish civilization.

4

The Culture of Chivalry

The mission of that great mind-training society, the Church, of transforming raw barbarians into civilized Christians, achieved its greatest measure of success during the thirteenth century. Never had the ideal of a united Christendom seemed nearer to realization than in its opening years; never did the flame of holiness burn brighter than among the first Franciscan and Dominican friars; never had the spiritual power achieved a more striking victory than in breaking the imperial House of Hohenstaufen. And yet in this, as in most wars, the victor had injured himself almost as much as his antagonist. In that skin game of Pontiff versus Caesar, the Church had not only overstrained her resources, but had impaired beyond recovery the spiritual prestige that was her most valuable asset. She was no longer alone as a civilizing agency; the revulsion from the things of the next to the things of this world had unmistakably set in before the close of the century, and the dream of a united Christendom was fading into the common day of national self-sufficiency.

[1] *Irish Nationality*, pp. 115–16.

Even before the dawning of the thirteenth century, signs might have been observed of an approaching change. Influences from the rival civilization of Islam, against which the armies of Western Christendom spent themselves with such heroic futility, could not be prevented from making themselves felt. The South of France, largely no doubt owing to its neighbourhood with Moorish Spain, was peculiarly susceptible. It was here that a revolt against the dogma and wealth of the Church kindled and spread into Northern Italy, a revolt that it required all the ardour of the preaching friars, all the rigours of the Inquisition, all the brute force of a crusading baronage, to stamp into submission. It was here that the courtly minstrelsy, composed by troubadours, chiefly flourished, and in this, too, we can trace the Moorish and Eastern influence.

Such strains as those of the troubadours were not for the poor and simple. It would have been of no use discoursing to serfs or craftsmen of the refinements of courtly love. A new, aristocratic culture was, in fact, coming into being, of a tendency essentially pagan. The feudal nobility throughout Western Christendom was in fact, though formally as orthodox as ever, beginning to break away from the leading strings of Mother Church and transform itself into an hereditary and highly exclusive caste, with its own standards of honour and courtesy comprehended in the word chivalry. The idea was born long before the thirteenth century: the Song of Roland, which was chanted at Hastings, is full of it, and even Rufus was, according to his lights, a pattern of chivalry. But courtesy and refinement were not conspicuous among the qualities of Rufus, though his ne'er-do-well brother, Robert, displayed the spirit of a great gentleman when he missed his chance of seizing Winchester on account of his sister-in-law's approaching confinement—" he would be a villain who should besiege a lady in such a case ".

Henry II's French empire, extending South into Aquitaine, brought England into contact with troubadour influences, and Richard I, a Poitevin by birth and a Southerner by temperament, had courtly and chivalrous traits that will invest his memory for ever with a halo of romance. But Richard, like that later and worthier monarch, Saint Louis of France, was a soldier of the Church, and so long as the crusades lasted, the pagan element of chivalry was baulked of its full development by the countervailing force of Christian idealism.

With the shattering of the Church's prestige in the struggle with the Hohenstaufen, the crusading spirit waxed faint and cold, and

though the troubadours had been slaughtered and dispersed in the brutual heresy hunt that, during the third decade of the 13th century, had enabled the French King to ruin the gracious Provençal culture and grab the rich County of Toulouse, it was the troubadour spirit, and not that of the Church, that inspired aristocratic culture after the death of Saint Louis. Already the wonderful young Emperor, Frederick II, had displayed to a scandalized Europe the spectacle of a court in which Islamic and Christian influences were blended impartially, in which science and experiment were honoured with entire freedom from ecclesiastical restrictions.

Edward I stood for the finest chivalric ideals of this time of transition. He had been the destined companion of Saint Louis on the last of the crusades, and on arriving at Tunis to find the Christian hero dead, he determined to go on to Palestine, at all hazards, to fulfil his vow. On returning from this forlorn hope, he distinguished himself by his victory, in tournament, over the Count of Chalons. It is during his reign that a new spirit begins to come over English art and life, which shows plainly how the old religious fervour is beginning to give place to aristocratic pomp and circumstance. The new phase of English art has been happily named the Decorated, from the architectural style that was gradually evolved out of the earnest and religiously inspired Gothic that is known as Early English.

Hitherto the most obvious triumphs of Gothic art had been the great French cathedrals. But the Gothic aspiration did not long survive the crusades, and while French craftsmanship retained its supremacy in the plastic arts until the catastrophe of the Hundred Years' War, a strange paralysis came over French architecture during the closing years of the century. Even the completion of yet unfinished buildings appeared to be a task beyond the capacity of an age which had forgotten the secret of Chartres and Rheims. With England it was different. To the beauty of holiness, as displayed in Salisbury and the West front of Wells, succeeds the ordered exuberance and sheer joy of life that inform such masterpieces of decorated art as Exeter Cathedral and the Angel Choir at Lincoln.

This is an altogether more worldly phase of art than that which preceded it, but it is even richer in colour and ornament. And though it rejoices in the adornment of churches, many of its most characteristic triumphs are in the castles and palaces of the great. Even the pious Henry III, the crowned connoisseur, had encouraged secular art, especially in his palace at Westminster, from which his

successors were to be crowded out by Parliament. The King's great or painted Chamber, unhappily destroyed by fire early in the nineteenth century, must have displayed the power of the medieval colourist as no surviving English relic of that age possibly can. The artist, who was employed for many years on this and similar tasks by his royal patron, was like the finisher of Canterbury choir, one William, an Englishman,[1] a monk of Westminster. But the pious Henry, though he might employ monkish artists, by no means restricted them to monkish subjects. His palace walls were adorned with the exploits of Alexander the Great, with the labours of the months and—most significantly of all—with the deeds of the national hero, Richard I. Henry, we may imagine, like other people who get constantly bullied in real life, must have derived much pleasure from identifying himself in imagination with these swashing champions.

Edward I was no connoisseur, like his father, but he was no despiser of the arts. He was not the man to lavish more treasure than necessary on the service of the Church, and in fact he generally seems to have thought it more blessed for her to give than to receive. His chief buildings consist of that magnificent chain of castles by which he secured his newly conquered Welsh province. These castles, fashioned on the Byzantine plan of a ring, or concentric rings, of bastion towers connected by walls, not only represented the latest word in fortification, but also, in a very real sense, embodied the chivalric ideal of life which was coming more and more to dominate an upper class already fast sliding into paganism. We have only to look at the royal castle of Conway, with its magnificent, if awkwardly sited, Great Hall, and the exquisite little private oratory in the Queen's apartments, to recognize the gayer, more frivolous and luxurious spirit that was abroad. This age sees a corresponding development of the manor house from a gaunt fortress to a luxurious dwelling, in which life could not only be preserved from attack, but refined and ennobled with all the lavishness of decorated art. It is now that the garden ceases to be a mere appanage of the kitchen, and becomes an enclosure, walled off from the world, in which a few privileged souls can realize their notion of an earthly paradise.

The brightest and tenderest aspect of this spirit is displayed in the Eleanor crosses which the heartbroken monarch planted at every

[1] See introduction to *Catalogue of Exhibition of British Primitive Paintings*, 1923, by W. G. Constable.

nightly halting place of his Queen's body on its journey to Westminster. It is difficult to believe that the statues that adorn these crosses can be separated by so short a period of time from those of the queens and holy women who stand on the West front of Wells. We can hardly imagine the most thoughtless tourist speaking of one of these Wells figures as a good-looking, still less as a pretty woman. Their clothes fall in severe lines, designed to focus the attention on each figure's spiritual significance. There is a sublime impersonality about them; their names, differently guessed at in different catalogues, are irrelevant. But Eleanor, as she appears on her crosses or in her recumbent bronze in the Abbey by an English goldsmith, named Torrell, is a great and individual lady, exquisitely clad, her lovely hair falling over her shoulders, and her fascination not dead. *Chère reine*! She differs from the Wells figures as a love poem differs from a hymn.

For now love itself was being sublimated into a form of worship that, in theory, at any rate, retained nothing of the animal. This was partly due to the troubadours, to whom love was one of the fine arts, with its proper laws and technique. Something must be allowed for Celtic influence, as evinced in the Tristram and other romantic legends, but most of all is the "maiden passion for a maid" born of the Madonna cult, in which a simple virgin is elevated to the queenship of Heaven. No doubt this idealism of the beloved was often but the thinnest veneer over a reality of animal and mercenary desires, but even so it was enough to effect a humanizing change at least in upper class society by the new dignity with which it invested womanhood. For this we have, as indeed we might expect, the evidence of female costume. Instead of the tunic hanging loose from the shoulders or secured at the hips by a belt, my lady's clothes are, in the fourteenth century, tailored coquettishly to display every seductive curve of figure. Fashion is a product of the Renaissance, and constitutes the ever-changing medium through which feminine charm finds scope for expression.

We can hardly wonder that the Arthur legend, "the matter of Britain," now as famous throughout Christian Europe as the Homeric poems in classic Greece, takes on an ever increasing importance at the court of Arthur's presumed successors. It was only to be expected that Edward I should have presided over a stately ceremony at Glastonbury when the remains of Arthur and his Queen were transferred to a new and more splendid resting place, Edward and Eleanor acting as bearers. Those many-towered castles, so brave

without and so gay within, seemed to reproduce the very atmosphere of that imagined court at Camelot, and certainly were far more like it than anything known to the real victor of Mons Badonicus. In the reign of the third Edward this romantic idea was pushed to its extreme conclusion, and that by no means unworldly monarch posed as a second Arthur and presided over a Round Table of his own at Winchester.

As was the King, so were the noblemen, and there was growing up a veritable romance of aristocracy that was not without practical consequences. The rough and ready feudalism of the Norman barons by no means sufficed for their descendants. A science of heraldry was beginning to be cultivated; every noble house blazoned its own chosen device; the red chevrons of Clare and the white crosses of Berkeley were as well known in battle and tournament as are the dark and light blue at Lord's and Putney. Even the House of God was no longer His monopoly. The tombs and private chapels of the great claimed more and more space, obscuring the main design of the building, and impeding its ostensible purpose of worship. Stained glass windows no longer served exclusively as the Bibles and hagiologies of the illiterate; escutcheons were blazoned on them with more splendid effect than on the stone of the tombs, and sometimes, as in the choir at Tewkesbury, instead of saints and martyrs appear armed warriors, distinguished scions of particular families.

What is remarkable, however, about English history, is not the growth of aristocratic pretensions, which was a European phenomenon, but the extent to which, in England, it was held in check, despite the fact that at the beginning of the fourteenth century the great landowners, monastic as well as noble, were reaping immense profits from the raw wool which, before a native cloth manufacture had time to establish itself against Flemish competition, formed an overwhelming proportion of our export trade. But the strong Kings after the Conquest, and the governmental machine they built up, secured firstly that even the greatest feudatories were not able to maintain an individual independence of authority, but at best to combine as members of a party, and secondly that there should be no noble caste, hedged about with privileges, and passing on its blue blood to all lawful issue. A nobleman had few privileges, and at best could transmit his nobility to nobody but his eldest son. For a long time it was doubtful whether he had the right to do even that; as late as the reign of Charles I it was a moot point amongst lawyers whether the summons of a baron to Parliament conferred this right

upon him and his heirs for all succeeding Parliaments. The younger sons, instead of taking their stand on the privileges of their ancestors, freely combined with the burgesses and lesser gentry to form the Lower House of Parliament.

The fact is that England's insular position and the levelling effect of the Norman Conquest saved her from the excesses of Continental feudalism and allowed her to develop upon national as opposed to class lines. Of monarchs such as Edward I and his grandson it is a nice point whether they imposed their will on the nation or whether they were not, in the last resort, but the mouthpieces and right arms of public opinion. England, merrie England as she was now to be called, had passed through the dark night of foreign conquest; she had got a monarch of her own who was capable of making short work of her vassalage to the Pope, she was beginning to enjoy the sweets of victory and the more substantial profits of commerce, she was becoming proudly and joyously self-conscious. A note of robust confidence is that of the new age, an aspiration less after Heaven than the joys of this world—in the song of the time it seems to be one perpetual May.

Decorated art could never have blossomed out as it did if it had been entirely the expression of class consciousness. The reason for nothing of the sort having developed across the Channel is, we cannot help feeling, because the proud and exclusive French nobility was able to choke the expression of national sentiment. It took a century of English aggression and conquest to recall the "sweet France" of Roland to a sense of her nationality—and not until the noble caste was swept out of the country at the Revolution was that lesson fully learnt. But the English riot of tracery, of sculpture, of tabernacle work, which is as evident in the humblest parish churches as in the proudest cathedrals, is merely giving expression to the same phase of public sentiment that is beginning to inspire the growth of native literature.

5

Expansion in France

The death of Edward I in harness, between Carlisle gates and the Border, ushers in twenty years of reaction and discomfiture. Even if the new King had been the man his father was, he would have found it hard to govern a nation whose resources had been cruelly overstrained, and to go on with the Sisyphean task of governing

Scotland against its will. With such a hopeless scatterbrain as Edward II, the only wonder is that the end was deferred so long. But the magnates who opposed him were, with the possible exception of the trimmer Earl of Pembroke, hardly more competent and much less amiable.

The great contest of the reign was between the King and the magnates for the control of the administrative machine. It was the same situation that had led to civil war in the reign of Henry III. Parliament, in the most comprehensive sense, hardly counted in the struggle, for the Commons had not yet learnt to act for themselves. This time there was no Earl Simon to lay the foundations of a national policy, nor Lord Edward to build on them. The great lords were too selfish to unite for long on a policy of any kind, and the King too inept to profit by the opportunities that the turn of events more than once gave him of retrieving the situation. In the course of these ignoble squabbles England was swept out of Scotland, much to her own benefit, and had her Northern counties harried with impunity.

But so strongly fashioned was the bureaucracy that it survived every effort to weaken or capture it, and when Edward II was at last turned off the throne by his fiendish French wife and her paramour and they in turn were forced to yield their power to a third Edward, the young King found himself in control of an administration as efficient as that of his grandfather, and England, which had had leisure, during twenty inglorious years, to recuperate her energies, was ready to start afresh on the career of expansion and conquest that had been suspended at the warrior King's death.

The new Edward was thoroughly representative of the worldly spirit that was beginning to dominate Western Europe during this, the century of Petrarch and Boccaccio. He is a true Renaissance type. There is a sternness and simplicity about Edward I and his contemporaries that we miss during the reign of his grandson. If we wish to know precisely in what that change consisted, we can hardly do better than study their two visionary heads, as drawn by Blake. Whether by sheer coincidence or inspiration, the artist seer has admirably hit off the difference not only between two men but two periods. Edward I is narrow and cruel, but a man obviously of iron will and a certain rough-hewn grandeur. The visionary Edward III is sensual and full-lipped, clever enough, but cast in a mould of pettiness, a man, one would say, of low and not always consistent aims. There is a veneer of romance about Edward III's

military adventures, but their motives and methods are more those of the huckster than of the hero. Nobody, in fact, ever had a sharper eye for the main chance than the victor of Cressy, and even of that pattern of chivalry, the Black Prince, his son, the clearest vision we have is of a sick conqueror, borne on a litter through the streets of blazing Limoges, watching unmoved the hacking to death of men, women and children, and then kindly sparing the lives of three gentlemen who, having no prospect of quarter, were defending them with convincing vigour. If we want to find the real hero of that time, we must look not to the self-styled Arthur and his "Table" of aristocratic mummers, but to the green-clad figure of Robin Hood, the representative of the great unrecorded host of free Englishmen.

To give him his due, Edward III was one of the best tacticians as well as one of the subtlest statesmen of that age. He started his reign with one somewhat dangerous asset of which he knew how to make the most. He had at his command a weapon and a system of defensive tactics that would enable an English army to repulse, at almost any odds, the attack of any force that was likely to be brought against it for a century. The long bow, drawn to the ear, was, in its origin, more a Welsh than an English weapon, and its deadly efficacy depended less on the fashioning of the bow than the training of the bowman, which was a life's work. At any range under a furlong the goose-shaft had the deadliness of a bullet; it would pierce armour and was capable of much more rapid fire than the old-fashioned cross-bow.

Again, while the French army was still in the feudal stage, the strength of the central government had allowed our Kings, since the days of Henry II, to lay the foundations of a national army, and to see to it that every free man was possessed of weapons appropriate to his rank. The army that fought at Cressy was no more or less fortuitous concourse of lords with their retainers, but a trained and disciplined force, each with his fixed rate of pay, from the Black Prince to the humblest man at arms.

The English system of tactics was the result of long and painful experience. Falkirk and Bannockburn had shown that the charge of feudal cavalry could be broken by infantry in position. Falkirk had shown that the steadiest infantry could be shot down by archers, and Bannockburn how unsupported archers could be ridden down, from a flank, by cavalry. A perfect example of the combination of archers and infantry was afforded in 1322 at Boroughbridge, when the Earl of Lancaster, the most powerful of Edward II's rebellious

magnates, attacked a small Royalist force under Sir Andrew Harclay, and was utterly overthrown.

Edward III soon had a chance of applying the lesson on a grander scale. Three years after Bruce's death the old succession feud of Bruce and Balliol broke out again, and this time the Balliol faction, which had secured the irregular aid of a small English force, got the best of it, the whole Scottish host being overthrown by a comparative handful of English archers and men-at-arms. Edward was quick to intervene in the dispute; his treaty obligations to the young King David Bruce, his prospective son-in-law, went by the board, and he recognized Balliol as King on almost the same humiliating conditions as his grandfather had recognized an earlier Balliol. This was too much for the Scots, who were not long in getting rid of their puppet King. This brought Edward openly into the field on the side of his vassal, and he had no difficulty in putting his new tactics into practice and shooting to pieces the columns of Scottish spearmen who were rash enough to attack him in his position on Halidon Hill, a victory that laid Scotland once again at the feet of an English King. This time Edward avoided the mistake of his grandfather of trying to impose his sway on the whole of an unwilling Scotland, and contented himself with what, even according to modern theories of race, might have seemed a subtle and scientific move. He annexed the East Coast strip up to Edinburgh, the old Anglian district that had been part of the Northumbrian Kingdom. Unfortunately the spiritual bond of nationality was stronger than the blood bond of race, and Edward's hold on his new possessions gradually relaxed. Besides, Scotland would never tolerate a creature of England on her throne, and before many years King David was back from France in undisputed sway of his father's kingdom.

The centre of interest now shifts to France, where the inevitable conflict could not much longer be delayed. There were two permanent sources of quarrel. One consisted in the English possession of Aquitaine, in the natural desire of the French monarchy to round off its dominions in the South-West, and in the irritating homage that every French King expected from his English neighbour for these possessions. The other and even more serious difference consisted in the rivalry for the possession of the Flemish wool market. The King of France here secured a notable advantage in making the feudal Count of Flanders as much his puppet as Balliol was that of Edward. French influence in Flanders rendered even more hopeless the attempt of the English King to hold Scotland, since it enabled

France once again to close the Flemish market to exporters from Edward's dominions.

Flanders was no more enamoured of a puppet Count than Scotland of a puppet King, and France could not take England's place as the feeder of Flemish looms. A patriotic revolution broke out in the cities, and at the suggestion of its leader, Van Artevelde, Edward revived a claim, defensible from a legal standpoint, to be the rightful King of France. This at once got rid of any question of homage or awkwardness about treason to an overlord. Edward was not sufficiently blind to reality to imagine that even the not too loyal French nobility, which had unanimously rejected his claim when it had been first advanced, would tolerate the King of England on the throne of Saint Louis.

Edward's opening of the war, which, after two years of irregular hostilities, formally commenced in 1339, was not auspicious. He revived John's plan of a German alliance, and got himself appointed Vicar General of the Imperial forces. But his attempts to invade France at the head of an Anglo-German-Flemish army were an utter and costly failure. Edward's resources were not equal to financing the venture, and he was in constant trouble with his allies, who would not fight unless he paid them, and his Parliament, that grudged him the necessary supplies. The French King wisely allowed Edward to fritter his strength against fortresses and gave him no opportunity of fighting a pitched battle. In this opening phase of the war, England's solitary gleam of success was the naval victory off Sluys, the ever-changing port of Bruges, which, as Damme, had given its name to the first of our naval victories, and which, as Zeebrugge, was to be associated with an achievement more glorious than any victory. The command of the sea was, however, of little avail in view of Edward's incapability of profiting by it on land.

The war was therefore a stalemate, and died down from mutual exhaustion, until in 1346 it broke out again as fiercely as ever. This time Edward determined to force the hand of his Fabian opponent—for it is only fair to give so skilful a soldier the credit of knowing what he was about when, instead of resuming his futile operations from the Flanders base, he countered a French thrust at Gascony by an advance on Paris up the Seine valley. It was a gamble on exterior lines, in which failure spelt annihilation, as the King of France, with an army immensely superior in numbers, was advancing to cut off the English retreat, and only the lucky chance of Edward's finding a ford over the Somme saved him from being caught like a

rat in a trap. Find it he did, however, and then, turning to bay in a chosen position on the edge of the forest of Cressy, had his long-awaited opportunity of practising the English system of dismounted tactics against the frontal attack of feudal cavalry. The result must have been a foregone conclusion to anyone who had served in the Scottish wars. A force of Genoese crossbowmen were easily put out of action by the superior rapidity of our long-bow archery, and the successive detachments of mailed cavalry, who attacked without any sort of co-ordination or discipline, were shot down by a converging fire of arrows as they dashed into the crescent of the English line. Only once did they succeed in closing, to be driven back by a prompt counter attack of Edward's reserve. The affair was a massacre and, except where there was a chance of extorting ransom, a massacre without quarter.

This was not the only success of this eventful year, for David of Scotland, who invaded England in the absence of her King, was routed by a force hastily levied in the North, and brought a prisoner to the Tower. These victories brought Edward no whit nearer to establishing what he called his "right" to the French crown. Nor, realist as he was beneath his romantic exterior, is it probable that he took this right very seriously except for bargaining purposes. Instead of resuming his threat to Paris, he took advantage of Cressy to march off to the coast and sit down before the fortified port of Calais, which he eventually took and Anglicized, thus securing for himself the command of the Channel at its narrowest point, as well as an ideal port of entry for English exports to the Continent and an open gate for any future invasion of France.

Even so, the war dragged on its weary and wasteful course, since it was equally impossible for Edward to force a decision or conclude a satisfactory peace. An English army might be invincible in the field, but the long bow, though it could pierce a door four inches thick, was powerless against stone walls, and it was the French policy to retire behind their fortifications and allow the English to wear themselves out in fruitless marches. Even the fearful visitation of the Black Death or bubonic plague, which swept off anything up to half the population of Europe, could not discourage the survivors from continuing to plague each other with undiminished vigour. It was a mere question of how long the resources of England would stand the strain.

Ten years after Cressy, a small army, largely Gascon in composition, which the Black Prince had led on a looting expedition

out of Aquitaine, was brought to battle near Poictiers by a vastly more numerous French army. The new King, John of France, with more chivalry than commonsense, launched a blundering attack on the Anglo-Gascon position. The result was an even more sensational victory than Cressy, and the King of France went to join his ally of Scotland in captivity. Four years later sheer weariness compelled the conclusion of a peace, or breathing space, that left England in possession of an enormous province of South-Western France, as well as Calais and the surrounding country.

Such an unnatural arrangement could obviously be no more than temporary. The inevitable end was hastened by the wanton stupidity of the Black Prince who, instead of peacefully consolidating his swollen province of Aquitaine, must needs waste his army and treasure interfering in a dynastic quarrel for the throne of Castile. On his return, with a decimated army and shattered constitution, he sought to relieve his embarrassments by the imposition of a hearth tax. This was more than his French subjects were prepared to stand, and the French monarchy naturally took advantage of the situation to revive its claims to the suzerainty of Aquitaine, and, in 1369, to renew the war.

By this time John of France was dead, and his successor, Charles V, was no romantic knight but one of those cool-headed Latin realists of the type of Philip Augustus. He made no mistakes. The English were never allowed to try conclusions in a pitched battle, and their armies marched about the country burning and looting and exhausting themselves, while their recent conquests slipped from their grasp and returned to their natural allegiance. Even on the sea we were no longer dominant, for the Black Prince's vagaries in Castile had had the effect of bringing in that Kingdom on the side of France, and her fleet succeeded in destroying an English force destined for the reinforcement of our Southern army, and in impeding our communications with Aquitaine. Not even our shores and Channel ports were now safe from enemy raids.

By the end of Edward's reign, without the loss of any considerable land battle, the English possessions in France were reduced to Calais in the North and a few coast towns in Gascony. All the waste of blood and treasure, all the glories of Cressy and Poictiers, had left England with even less territory than before, while the exercise of English sovereignty on French soil still poisoned the relations between the two countries, and a fresh irritant had been set up by the claim of the English Royal House to the French crown. Even in Flanders

our policy broke down when, in 1382, the Flemish democracy was decisively overthrown, at Roosbeke, by the pro-French nobles.

The price paid by both countries for this glorious means of failing to settle their differences was incalculable, both materially and spiritually. France had suffered the worse, because her territory had been the seat of war. The spirit that had inspired her Gothic cathedrals and made her the artistic and intellectual leader of the West, was now cold indeed, and the pressure from England was hardly relaxed than she began to slide down into a chaos of faction and civil war. In England the chivalrous monarch of the Round Table and the Garter was dying in a disreputable and premature old age; his subjects were divided by political and religious hatreds, with brutal reaction growing on the one hand and agrarian unrest on the other. The stage was set for the miserable reign and end of Richard II.

6

Merrie England

The work begun by Geoffrey of Monmouth of creating a pride in the past of England, Saxon and British, was being steadily carried on. The separation of England from Normandy was appropriately marked by the appearance of an Arthurian chronicle in the English tongue, written by one who, like Geoffrey of Monmouth, was a native of the Welsh marshes. "There was a priest in the land who was called Layamon . . . he dwelt at Ernley, a noble church on the Severn's bank, good there it seemed to him . . . it came to him in mind, and in his chief thought, that he would tell the noble deeds of the English." This worthy priest, in fact, made it his care that while the "matter of Britain" was spreading all over Europe, the English should have a version of their own in which the patriotic motive was not overborne by chivalrous romance. There is no doubt about Layamon's love of England. There is burning indignation when he recounts how Gawain was slain and deprived of his life-blood by a Saxon Earl—sorry be his soul!—and his book ends with that most beautiful of all the Arthurian traditions, that there was a sage called Merlin, and he said with words—his sayings were sooth—that an Arthur should yet come to help the English.

Nor is Arthur the only worthy of England on whom tradition fastens. The proverbs of Alfred are resurrected, and perhaps invented in the process; the very feudal romances, by which the

long, bookless evenings of the baronial castle were rendered tolerable, become tinged with the pride of nationality. The names of Athelstan and Edgar occur in these romances, while the time of good King Edward the Confessor is looked upon as a veritable golden age. Such Saxon heroes are revived as Bevis of Southampton, the knight who marries the beautiful Paynim, and Guy of Warwick, who vanquishes the champion of the Danish invaders in single combat, and fills the same place in English as the youthful David in Hebrew and the Horatii in Roman legend.

It was to be expected that the spirit which fired England in the reign of Edward I, and impelled it to manifest its prowess at the expense of surrounding peoples, should find expression in epic form. Sure enough, the need is supplied by a rhyme which enables us to understand, in all its rude strength and brutality, the temperament of the average Englishman who broke the pikemen at Falkirk and amused himself by watching Wallace, in a paper crown, being dragged on a hurdle to Smithfield. The hero is, ironically enough, Richard Coeur de Lion, the Poitevin who, more than any other of our sovereigns, set at naught his English subjects. But a century had passed and England meant to have her own Richard as she had her own Arthur. He may truly be said to be fashioned after the heart of his people, such a King as they would have liked an English King to be, such a King as they liked to imagine their own Edward Longshanks. "Lord, King of Glory, what favours didst Thou bestow on King Richard! How edifying is it to read the history of his conquests!"

The English hero is certainly a mighty warrior, both in person and as a commander of armies; he has a militant devotion to what he calls Christianity; he is, moreover, a blood-thirsty ruffian of the most unredeemed stamp. The real Richard had not been too tender or clean-handed an opponent, but he had had noble impulses and could evince a generous respect even for Saladin. No trace of this redeeming chivalry is allowed to appear in the legend; he not only revels in the ruthlessness but the cannibalism of himself and his Englishmen; his last message to Saladin is a polite hope that the devil may hang him with a cord. When he is sick of an ague, he is cured by having served up to him, as pork, the flesh of a fat young Saracen prisoner, and at the appearance on the table of the grinning head, roars with laughter at the joke, and declares that he and his followers will in future eat "all as many as we can get".

He is naturally highly favoured of Heaven, and when he is in

momentary doubt as to what to do with sixty thousand prisoners, he is granted a vision of the holy angels, calling out, " Lords, kill ! kill ! Spare them not but behead them," whereupon King Richard, having first duly thanked " God and Holy Cross ", commences so jolly a massacre that the author cannot refrain from giving vent to his high spirits in one of those songs of May which were coming to be so characteristic a feature of English poetry.

So strange were the elements that went to the making of Merrie England ! There is, however, nothing to be gained by sentimentalizing our ancestors. We must take them for what they were, and remember that their England had learnt her unity in the roughest of schools. Whatever judgment we may be pleased to pass on them now, it is certain that the England of Edward I was robustly self-confident and proud of itself. As Robert of Gloucester sings :

> " England is a right merry land, of all on earth it is best,
> Y-set in the end of the world, as here, all in the West,
> The sea goeth it all about, it stands right as an isle."

or as, a little later, Trevisa puts it : " England full of play ! Free men well worthy to play ! Free men, free tongues, heart free."

The patriotism thus engendered was not of the kind that tolerates or respects other peoples. On the contrary, it took the form of an intensely arrogant collective egotism. How the English regarded their Irish neighbours we have already seen, and they appear to have regarded the Scots with a venomous hatred that we find cropping up again and again, until the days of Butcher Cumberland and Lord Bute. A monkish chronicler cannot even describe the first crusading enthusiasm without mentioning how the Scot forsook his fellowship with vermin, an insinuation that we have met with in the comic press of our own day. The event of Bannockburn did not increase the love of Englishman for Scot, and the patriotic, not to say Jingo muse of Laurence Minot, is decidedly more bitter against the Scots, who are " full of guile ", than against the French.

As for these latter, we have in *Richard Coeur de Lion* what was to be the stock form that abuse of Frenchmen was to take until the French became our allies and above criticism. The French, it seems, are fond enough of boasting over their cups at a tavern, but when it comes to " where men strokes deal ", they begin to turn their heels and draw in their horns. As the struggle between England and France develops, so does the wordy warfare of abuse. One Latin poem contrasts the countrymen of good King Arthur with the French, who are treated with a wealth of adjectives worthy of the yellow

press at its yellowest. There is, moreover, an interchange of Billingsgate between an imaginary Englishman and Frenchman that must have been not unlike the real thing, the point of the Frenchman being that the English are as stupid as their cattle, and the English retaliating with a catalogue of vices best left to the imagination.

Finally we have Laurence Minot, who wrote songs for the jolly archers of Cressy and Poictiers to sing round their camp fires. Had Laurence lived to-day he would have made a fortune by writing patriotic songs for music halls. There is a fine swing and gusto about the song of the Scottish King David at Neville's Cross :

> " The North End of England teached him to dance,"

or this, addressed to the French after Cressy :—

> " With speech ne might thou never spare
> To speak of Englishmen despite,
> Now have they made thy dwelling bare,
> And of thy chattels art thou quite (despoiled).
>
> " English men shall yet this year
> Knock thy head before thou pass,
> And make thee shaven like a frere—
> And yet is England as it was."

We notice that Minot has already acquired the habit of talking as if England were a person, as when David of Scotland says that of all England he has no dread, or when one of the songs ends with the prayer :—

> " Now Jesus save all England,
> And bless it with His holy hand."

This is a notable step forward in the formation of a national self-consciousness.

We must not allow ourselves to be tempted into the partizanship of asserting that any war is an evil absolutely unmitigated. The historian, however scientific he may aspire to be, cannot ignore the pageantry and circumstance of arms, because these sway powerfully the minds of men, and it is the minds of men that make history. Cressy and Poictiers may be episodes of no great military importance in an unrighteous adventure that was not even justified by success, but these considerations probably never crossed the minds of those engaged in them, and popular feeling finds the truest expression in such strains as those of Minot. What an impression was produced by these wonderful victories against odds, by the national heroes, the Black Prince and his father, and above all by our English archers, may be judged by the persistency with which their legend has endured.

So late as 1914 when, in the stress and weariness of our fighting retreat from Mons, men began to see visions, some would have it that the lines of archers appeared, as at Cressy, drawing to the ear their long bows against the advancing masses of field grey.

In how true a sense these archers were a democratic force can be seen by the testimony of Sir John Fortescue, writing during the reign of Edward IV. He is meeting the argument of some typical reactionary who has urged that the Commons of England should be kept poor as a safeguard against rebellion. This, in fact, is just what happens in France, where the Commons are impoverished, while the King dares not ask for a subsidy of his nobles, " for dread that if he charged them so, they would confederate with the Commons and peradventure put him down." Whereas the might of England reposes upon her archers " which be no rich men . . . wherefore the making poor of the Commons, which is the making poor of our archers, shall be the destruction of the greatest might of our realm".

In the latter half of the fourteenth century English legend is enriched by a hero who is not, like Arthur, a feudal king surrounded by his magnates, but a man of the people, an archer and an outlaw. It is in Langland's *Piers Plowman* that we first hear of songs of Robin Hood, which were evidently popular and widely diffused, so that we may conjecture that they first began to be composed about the time of Cressy and Poictiers. The motive of the jolly outlaw was one that started long before, we meet with it in Bevis of Southampton, who fairly trounces King Edgar in order to win back his estates, and still more in Fulk Fitzwarenne, who successfully defies King John, and is connected with Ranulf of Chester, who, in his turn, as a hero of popular song, is coupled in *Piers Plowman* with Robin Hood. But these, after all, were great noblemen, whereas Robin is a commoner, a yeoman, as free as his native greenwood, as also are his three Northern counterparts, Adam Bell, William of Cloudesley, and Clym of the Clough, who, on one occasion, effect a regular " hold up " of the City of Carlisle, killing the Mayor and all the royal officials, and then extracting pardon from a sovereign who is, it seems, at heart, as good a sportsman as themselves :

> Such perilous outlaws as they were
> Walked not by East or West."

Robin Hood exhibits the English ideal of the Middle Ages at its best and sweetest, as the romance of Richard Coeur de Lion exhibits it at its worst and roughest. Robin has that simple and

manly courtesy that we have seen sometimes in representatives of his class in the English countryside of our own day, small, independent men with their own few acres of land, sportsmen to the backbone, gentle to all and servile to none—a class whose numbers are all too scanty! He is equally a Christian and a gentleman; so great is his love for "our dear Lady" that he will never molest any company "that a woman is therein". What he takes from the rich he gives to the poor. His orders are strict against attacking any peasant or yeoman, or indeed any knight that is a good fellow, but only the Bishops, Sheriffs and other rich men who grind the faces of the poor. There is, in these ballads, an appeal to that strain of jolly lawlessness which, paradoxically enough, seems to go along with the English respect for law. The root of this sentiment is the same unconquerable individualism which informs the English Common Law and which makes an Englishman value his rights above everything in the world. The immortal Punch, who hangs the hangman, has his direct prototype in Robin, who disguises himself as a hangman, in order to rescue a widow's three sons, and closes the proceedings by hanging the Sheriff of Nottingham.

"I ne'er was hangman in my life,
Nor yet intends to trade;
But curst be he," said bold Robin,
"That first a hangman was made."

Pervading all is the fresh, keen scent of spring in the greenwood; in these ballads of Robin spring seems to reign all the year round. His very birth

"It wasna in the ha', the ha',
Nor in the painted bower,
But it was in the gude greenwood,
Amang the lily flower."

Such is the spirit of this England of Robin Hood and the archers, of Chaucer and the Black Prince. It is an age that seems to have a natural affinity with youth and the spring-tide, it is, in a pre-eminent degree, merry. In song after song we hear the same happy note, as carefree and unforced as the throstle's, of the world at play, of life awakening to its own sweet realization:—

"Between March and April,
When spray beginneth to spring,
The little fowl hath her will
On her song to sing—
I live in love-longing!"

or

"Groweth seed
And bloweth mead
And springeth the wood new,"

or, as the greatest singer of all has it :—

"When that Aprilé, with his showrés sote
The drought of March hath percéd to the rote."

Money Begins to Talk

While the aristocracy was evolving a culture and chivalry of its own, an even more striking progress had been made in the towns, where the beginnings of a middle class were already apparent before the opening of the fourteenth century. The towns, it may be remembered, had suffered less from the Norman conquest than the country districts, and though they were grievously hampered by the almost inevitable castle, and its attendant burdens, they had benefited not a little from King's Peace and national unity. It is exactly forty years after the Conquest that we hear of the first of the Trade Clubs, or Gilds Merchant, that by the thirteenth century were to become the most prominent feature of urban life.

The habit of forming clubs or gilds was one of the most powerful factors in the growth of Western civilization. It was the fiction by which the practical Nordic mind relieved itself of bondage to the blood tie of family and clan. By a mixture of religious sentiment and commonsense a means was discovered of forming a sort of artificial family for any required object, temporal or spiritual or, more often, both combined. The gildsmen were not associates or partners, but brethren, in the same sense as an Indian servant to-day will often describe anyone whatever of his own creed and calling as "my brother". A gild might take the form of a university, or a friendly society, or a trades' union, or an association for honouring some saint, though practically every gild had some element of godly devotion, on the one hand, and human conviviality on the other.

The various economic discussions on the history and functions of the gild merchant are inevitably more or less misleading, because there was no "the" gild merchant at all, but a number of different solutions of the same problem according to the lights and circumstances of each town. Given the conditions and mentality of the

time something of the sort was bound to eventuate. How the towns originated is a question to which a number of different experts have given an equal number of plausible answers, and these answers are probably all of them borne out by some facts, and none of them sufficient by itself to cover all the facts. But we may take it that in these urban origins the motive of trade was only one, and often a subordinate one of several that have to be taken into account, that the town was often little more than a defensible village, and the townsman more likely to be concerned with farming his land than marketing his goods. But the gradual recovery of European civilization combined with the good peace kept by a series of masterful kings to stimulate the marketing of superfluous products, and this was most conveniently done wherever large numbers of people were congregated together. And when trade became an important part of the town's activities, the trade club would naturally assume a corresponding importance in its social organization.

The trade that these towns carried on was of a very primitive order. The principal export was that of raw wool, and the bulk even of this was shipped in foreign bottoms. The foreign merchants, with their superior resources and organization, had their English rivals at a disadvantage even in the local markets, and bade fair to secure not only the external but most of the internal trade of the country.

It is no wonder, then, that the first object of the merchant gilds was to secure at least the local market for the local man. The foreigner—and under this term were included not only aliens, but Englishmen from other towns—was to be excluded from retail trade and brought under supervision of the gild officials. This naturally brought the townsmen into conflict with the great landowners, who were perfectly indifferent as to whom they dealt with provided they could sell their wool as dearly and buy their luxuries as cheaply as possible, and therefore encouraged free trade with the alien. This tendency was still further strengthened by the desire of the King and the local lords to derive a revenue from the alien by taking toll of him. One of the most persistent conflicts of the Middle Ages was that between the protectionist policy of the gilds and the free trade policy of the landowners and sometimes—though by no means always—of the Crown. For the King had not only his customs and estates to think of, but also his position as head of the nation and the fact that prosperous towns meant, in the long run, a fat revenue. It was only when hard pressed for money that

Edward I departed from his usual nationalist policy, and made a treaty with the foreigners by which, in return for cash down, the Crown undertook to free them from the protective privileges of the English towns. The fact was that foreigners were less expert at evading taxation than our worthy burgesses, and the temptation to war-needy Kings, such as the first and third Edwards, to tilt the balance in the foreigner's favour was almost irresistible.

The artificial families known as merchant gilds were frankly aiming at monopoly, and were therefore seldom free from controversy. Their first struggle was to secure their right to exist and their independence of the local lord. But when that was accomplished the gild was only too apt to degenerate into a ruling oligarchy. At first the merchant gilds had been quite distinct from the governing bodies of towns, because trade had been only one, and that not necessarily the most important, of the town's activities, but as time went on and municipal life became more and more commercialized, the distinction between gild and municipality would tend to become obliterated.

The gilds merchant, once they had won their freedom from feudal superiors and the right to protect themselves against outside competition, now had to deal with pressure not from above, but from below. Signs were apparent of a new phase of industrial development. Englishmen were no longer content to dispose of their raw materials to be worked up by the foreigner. The craftsman was beginning to take his place by the side of the merchant. As early as the twelfth century weavers' gilds had been formed in several of the towns, and as industry developed, craft gilds, as they were called, multiplied. The comparatively well-to-do traders of the old merchant gilds were by no means minded to share their privileges with these upstart workers. Not only in England but throughout Western Europe there was a struggle of more or less intensity between the mercantile oligarchy and industrial proletariat of the towns. In England the violence of this struggle was mitigated by the power of the central government, which prevented anything in the nature either of municipal independence or civil war. One partial exception was when Bristol, during the chaotic time of Edward II's struggle with the magnates, fell into the hands of the democratic party, who displaced the old oligarchic municipality, and took the town into their own hands, throwing up a wall to cut it off from the castle and actually letting fly a few arrows at the castle garrison. This state of things lasted for some years, during which democratic

Bristol successfully bade defiance to a royal army, but eventually the rebels were brought to heel by the magnates and their leaders expelled.

The old merchant gild was rapidly becoming an anachronism; the industrial organization of the towns had become too complex to be comprehended within the bounds of one artificial family. In England the transition from the one gild to the many was effected comparatively peacefully, and if the thirteenth century may be called that of the merchant gilds, the fourteenth is that of the craft gilds. But the supersession of the old trading oligarchy was by no means equivalent to the triumph of democracy. The old struggle between merchant and craftsman, between business man and worker, merely shifted its ground. What really happened was that one merchant gild split into several, grocers, for instance, or men who dealt on a gross or big scale, mercers, merchant tailors, and so forth, as distinct from the brotherhoods of genuine craftsmen, each of whom was, in fact, employer, worker, and shop-keeper rolled into one. There was a still further distinction, gradually becoming apparent, between the full-fledged master craftsman and the journeyman, or day worker, who, having served his apprenticeship, could not afford to set up for himself or pay the often expensive fees that the gild charged for admission.

The idyllic picture that is drawn of gild life by romantic medievalists needs considerable modification in the light of facts. The artificial families no doubt fostered a spirit of loyalty and mutual help among their members; they took a pride in sound craftsmanship, and did not permit the standard to be lowered for the sake of cheapness. But they tended to become more and more exclusive, and to the world without their pale their attitude was one of calculating and pugnacious egotism. As competing monopolies, they were at constant variance among themselves, and though the law was strong enough to prevent regular hostilities, there was irregular strife in the form of clubbing and knifing. A spirit of national and even municipal patriotism was not fostered by such means, and the gilds tended in the course of time to become petty oligarchies, incapable of adapting themselves to the changing conditions of industry.

It is fortunate that Crown and Parliament between them were capable of making a national policy prevail over the sectional interests of different groups and localities. This policy may not have been wholly disinterested or always wise, but men like the first

and third Edwards were at least capable of taking a far-sighted and statesmanlike view and—where their immediate necessities were not too pressing—of minding the permanent economic interests of their country by seeking to foster native industry, especially in the working up of our raw wool by English instead of Flemish spindles and looms. But an English cloth manufacture was a plant of slow growth, and before the time of Edward III we had neither the skill nor the resources to enter into effective competition with what has sometimes been described as the medieval Lancashire. The effort of Simon de Montfort to keep our wool at home, and make Englishmen wear English clothes, was little more than a patriotic gesture. Of more effect, probably, were the efforts of our Kings—notably Henry I and Edward III—to induce Flemings to settle in England and act as our technical instructors. It was in 1347 that Edward III gave a strong stimulus to the English cloth manufacture by an export tax on raw wool. Our cloth export, nearly killed by the plague, advanced with giant strides after 1356, and though the troubles in which the reign closed had the effect of depressing it, it was fairly booming by the end of the century.[1] But while this rapidly increasing proportion of our weaving was done for us by Englishmen, most of our carrying trade was still left to Germany.

It was not only in the intellectual and spiritual spheres that signs were apparent of the coming of a new order of things strangely different from that of feudal Catholicism. Money, which had played a comparatively unimportant part in the economy of the manor and the relations of lord and vassal, was now assuming an ever increasing importance. Chivalrous Kings like Edward III were finding it more difficult to finance campaigns than to win victories, and a king's life beneath all the show of chivalry and conquest was one unending struggle to make both ends meet. These perpetual budgetary difficulties led to some undignified shifts, such as the pawning of the crown jewels and, on one occasion, to all intents and purposes, of the Queen herself, whom Edward III had to leave behind him in Flanders as security for his debts. But they also sharpened the royal or ministerial wits to some interesting financial expedients.

The kings had been accustomed to raise money by the extraordinary expedient of licensing the Jews throughout the country to bleed the people by lending money at staggering rates of interest, and then of themselves bleeding the Jews of all that extortion or

[1] See H. L. Gray, in *the English Historical Review* of January, 1924.

cruelty could make them yield of the proceeds. It was not least of Edward I's claims to be ranked as a national monarch that he ended this scandal by banishing the unfortunate Jews, or at least the greater part of them, though not until they had become a very diminishing asset. But he was not able to banish his need for some financial help beyond that which his own administration was capable of rendering. The international financier was already coming to the fore. The great crusading order of Knights Templars were at first the leading bankers and financiers of Europe, and Edward I had been glad to borrow money off them, but during the reign of his son the order was hurled from prosperity to ruin by a strange impulse of fury in which the desire for fabulous plunder was mingled with a fear—how well grounded we know not—of the corrupting influence of the East, coupled with perhaps some vague intuition of the new power of wealth that was undermining the old civilization. Edward II's share of the loot was what enabled him to go to Bannockburn.

Both Edward I and his son had had resource to the financial assistance of Italian bankers, and it was two great Florentine Houses, the Bardi and the Peruzzi, who played a similar part in financing Edward III's earlier campaigns to that of the Rothschilds during our Napoleonic war.

But now men were arising from among the merchant oligarchs of the towns, with sufficient capital to take a hand in the highly speculative business of advancing a lump sum on the revenue, and then farming it for themselves for what they could get. In 1345 the Italian houses went down in a financial crash, and a ring of English plutocrats undertook the financing of the Cressy and Calais and subsequent campaigns. The business was anything but a clean-handed one, and the financiers, of whom the chief was one Walter de Cheriton, used their privileged position to practice every kind of fraud and extortion. The shock of the Black Death put too great a strain on their credit, and Cheriton and his accomplices found it their turn to default, after which the King, for a time, took the administration of the revenue into his own hands.

But the capitalist had come to stay. With the growth of English industry, under the fostering care of Edward III, there were ever increasing opportunities for making and investing money. It is true that the Church set her face against usury, but her prohibition did not count for very much in practice, as it was easily evaded by pious fictions, and she was not even in theory intolerant of joint stock

investment in which there was a real element of risk. A more reputable form of business than that of the Cheriton ring was that of the rich pepperers', subsequently the grocers' gild, which borrowed money at interest in order to trade with it.[1] And the exclusiveness of the feudal aristocracy was already being pierced by the rise of such families as that of the De la Poles, merchants of Hull, who from being the none too clean-handed financiers became the kinsmen of royalty, and at last so near to the Crown that a King of England was moved to destroy them for rivals.

8

Parliament and its Masters

The wars of Edward III, and the perpetual drain of money which precluded the King from the least hope of living on his own resources, furnished Parliament with the opportunity of increasing and consolidating its power. The Commons were beginning to find out the advantage of petitioning collectively instead of dissipating their strength in individual requests. Experience was teaching them how, when their monarch was desperate for money, the threat of withholding supplies would enable them to levy constitutional blackmail upon him to an almost unlimited extent. Indeed, during Edward's first ruinous campaigns in North-Eastern France, they went so far as to advance a claim to control the executive by having ministerial appointments made in Parliament, and Edward III was fain formally to concede it. However, once he had secured the cash, the chivalrous King did not hesitate to repudiate an undertaking made under such *duresse*.

Three and a half centuries had yet to elapse before the country was ripe for a ministry responsible to Parliament. But the concessions that successive Parliaments managed to extort from Edward III's perpetual need of money were striking enough. They compelled the King to renounce formally most of the unparliamentary means by which his predecessors had been wont to supplement their incomes, and to establish the general principle that His Majesty must either live of his own, or take what Parliament chose to give him, upon Parliament's terms. The Commons, now a separate House, also managed to assert, if not definitely to establish the

[1] See Miss Alice Law on "English nouveaux riches in the Fourteenth Century", in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, New Series, Vol. ix.

principle that supplies, once granted, should be allocated to definite purposes, and that, as a necessary consequence, the King should submit his accounts to an audit. And if Parliament failed to control the appointment of ministers, it was at least able to secure their removal by the method of impeachment; in other words, the Commons, acting in the collective capacity of prosecutor, could bring any minister to trial before the Lords, sitting as a tribunal.

All this represents an undeniable advance towards what we now know as constitutional government, but it is easy to exaggerate its significance. No doubt the Commons, as the tax-granting body, were able to force concessions from Royalty, but they were as yet hardly capable of exercising independently the powers that they themselves had secured. This humble and silent body of men, only vocal through their Speaker, were naturally overawed by the splendid magnates from whom the King asked not only assent but advice. And powerful as the Commons might be in theory, it was only too easy for them to be packed or dominated either by some baronial faction or by Royalty itself.

Pliable as wax in the hands of these great ones, the Commons were hard as adamant in face of the common people. Parliament was national in the sense of having avoided the division into separate estates that proved so fatal to constitutional development overseas, but even its Lower House was composed on the one hand of substantial landowners, and on the other, of nominees of those richer burgesses who were engrossing power in the municipalities. This was doubtless as much as could be expected in that aristocratic and feudalized society, but it was impossible that an assembly so constituted could be sympathetic with the claims of the workers on the soil or at the craftsman's bench.

This prejudice of Parliament was shown when it had to deal with what amounted to little short of an economic revolution. The good order maintained by the administration and our immunity from overseas invasion had put the feudal organization of society based on personal services completely out of date. The use of money was coming more and more to supersede the exchange of services, and just as the King found it more convenient to have money to pay mercenaries than knights on a forty days' contract, so landowners were beginning to discover the advantages of a rent in cash down over so many days a week of grudging service on the demesne land. The problem might, perhaps, have solved itself, and the transition from a personal to a money bond have been effected gradually and

by dint of mutual advantage, had it not been for the frightful catastrophe of the Black Death in the middle of the century.

We need not speculate on the precise percentage of the population swept away, though it must have been appallingly high. There are no complete statistics, but many sidelights available, the annihilation, for instance, of a whole monastery — that of Croxton — with the exception of the abbot and the prior; the fact of churches like that of St. Alphege, Canterbury, having had five successive rectors in one year; or most eloquent of all, the deserted church of Dode, all that is left of what must have once been a smiling village on the side of the North Downs, but which was silently wiped out—under what circumstances of horror we can only imagine—and never peopled again. To get a fair idea of the state of things in one typical district, we may take the lists of incumbents of the 14 Kentish parishes dealt with by the Rev. C. H. Fielding in his *Memories of Malling*. Of these I reject 3 as obviously incomplete. Of the remaining 11 we have 4 presumably plague deaths in 1 parish, 2 apiece in 3, 1 in 1, and in 6 no recorded change, an average of one priest one parish.[1]

The Black Death, like the Reformation and the Great War, gave a violent impetus to forces already in operation. Its effects, if we may judge by Miss Levett's statistics of the Winchester manors,[2] were by no means everywhere revolutionary, but it must have strained, almost to breaking point, the resources of the landlords, who had to farm the same land with a moiety of hands. For anything that feudal custom could do to help them, the corn might rot in the fields. With ruin staring them in the face, there was nothing for it but to hire labour on whatever terms it could be got. Here was the poor man's opportunity. With the demand for his services so far outrunning the supply, he would have been more than human if he had failed to exact a rate of wages far in excess of anything hitherto dreamed of, and the lord, in his turn, could hardly have acquiesced quietly in this operation of economic forces that was turning his world of custom and stability upside down. To make matters worse, such serfs as the plague had left above the soil to which they were bound, could not fail to be struck by the disparity between their own immemorial standard of life and that of the free labourers who went about from manor to manor exacting whatever wages they

[1] The deaths are all in the year 1349, except one apiece in 1348 and 1350. The chances of natural death are at least balanced by those of incompleteness in the record.

[2] In vol. v of *Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History*.

chose. They therefore took every opportunity of throwing up their holdings and decamping, a punishable offence, but one which, with the imperfect police arrangements of those days, was more likely than not to go unpunished. And so the lord of the manor found the serfs on whose services he and his forefathers had depended, first halved by the plague, and afterwards thinned by desertion, and going to swell the ranks of free and fluid labour.

It is easy to understand the feelings of the unfortunate landlords. They had grown up under an order of things that they had believed to be just and permanent, and for which a by no means unfair case could have been made. The serf or villein was, in effect, a small tenant holding his land by a perpetual contract of service. He could not be evicted, and the manor court at which the law was declared by the suitors, if it prevented him, as a soldier is prevented to-day, from deserting or agitating for better terms of service, likewise prevented the landlord from grinding his face. The system was thoroughly in accord with the orthodox philosophy of the time, which assigned every man his due place in the social hierarchy, and made spiritual rather than worldly advancement the supreme object of human effort. Could one of these old landlords have come back to his old haunts during the Napoleonic wars or the hungry forties, could he even visit us to-day, it is more than doubtful whether he would see reason for exalting the advantages of a money economy and free competition over the custom of his fathers.

Regret it or not, no power on earth could have adapted the old organization to the swiftly changing circumstances of that time. Many of the landlords had the practical sense to make the best of a bad business, and lease their demesne land to farmers; some took advantage of the Flemish demand for wool by turning arable to grass, an expedient fraught with grave results in driving labour off the land; others again purchased labour at monopoly rates. But English landlords are not of a class that lends itself readily to new ideas, and they can hardly be blamed for their unwillingness to realize that the old system had got to be scrapped.

The crisis was a national one, and the King's High Court of Parliament, as representing the nation, was the obvious body to deal with it. But Parliament was dominated by that very landowning class that had been hardest hit by the new conditions. In the newly formed Lower House the most powerful and active element consisted of the knights of the shire, who were drawn from just those very farming landlords who were feeling the pinch, probably even more

acutely than the great lay and ecclesiastical magnates with their broad acres of grazing land. This class of country gentlemen had been fortified by an institution peculiar to England, which was to throw not only the local government but also the administration of all but the gravest matters of criminal justice into its hands. The old shire courts had been for a long time falling into decay, and it was only after a series of tentative expedients, dating back to the reign of Richard I, that the most important of their functions were transferred to justices of the peace, gentlemen of the county nominated by the Crown. The reign of Edward III saw the consolidation of this system which, while it prevented the local government falling into the hands of the King's officials, could not fail, in the long run, to eventuate in a rural despotism, which might or might not be benevolent, of the class from which the justices were drawn.

Parliament dealt with the situation with perfect fairness according to its lights, such fairness as every average body of well-meaning individuals displays when it is fortunate enough to be judge in its own case. They were thoroughly convinced of the righteousness of the old system and of the cupidity of the men who coined money out of their employers' necessity in so unchristian a spirit. They therefore sought to stabilize the old and presumably fair price of labour by legislation, and to make it a criminal offence for anybody either to demand or accept wages in excess of pre-plague rates. As it became apparent that laws of this kind were—through the connivance of the landlords themselves who preferred dear labour to no labour—in danger of becoming a dead letter, they proceeded not only to strengthen, but to weight them with savage penalties. This severity, while it had scarcely any effect in retarding the process of economic change, was productive of continual irritation and class bitterness, culminating, finally, in class warfare.

It was in 1376, the penultimate year of Edward III's long reign, that Parliament had its great opportunity of establishing its position as the representative assembly of the English nation. The country was in a state of profound depression as a result of the disastrous French war, of crushing taxation, and of the corrupt gang that surrounded the King. Parliament had not been called for three years and much was now expected from it. The reforming party had redoubtable leaders in the dying Black Prince, who according to his lights was a patriot and a gentleman, and in Sir Peter De la Mare, the Speaker, who is the first Englishman of whom it is possible to speak as a great Commoner. On the other

side was the Black Prince's younger brother, John of Gaunt, whose palace of the Savoy served as the medieval and aristocratic equivalent of Tammany Hall.

The Commons presented through their Speaker, who himself spoke out fearlessly against corruption and waste in high places, no less than 140 collective petitions. In some of these the bias of the landlord against the labourer and of the merchant oligarch against the craftsman is only too apparent. But the nation was not disposed to be critical of an assembly which feared not to stand up against the moneyed leeches who were bleeding its resources. One of the King's ministers, Lord Latimer, who was proved to be not only a swindler but a traitor into the bargain, and the King's financial agent, Richard Lyons, a profiteer guilty of colossal frauds on the revenue, were impeached before the Lords, and even John of Gaunt dared not stand out against their being sentenced, through his mouth, to imprisonment and fine. Sentence was passed on a number of other offenders including Alice Perrers, the King's mistress, and Lord Neville, his steward. Even the death of the Black Prince did not check the activities of the Commons, who finished up a session of unprecedented length by forcing on the King a council of selected magnates to control the administration.

Such was the Parliament which has ever since been styled "the good". The sequel was soon to show how much significance was to be attached even to the most brilliant of Parliamentary triumphs. "What do these base and ignoble knights attempt?" had been John of Gaunt's comment on the Commons' proceedings, and no sooner were they dissolved than he was in the saddle again. He coolly proclaimed that the last Parliament was no parliament at all, sent the new council packing, and restored the impeached peculators to their former dignities, while the courageous Speaker was sent to prison and was in danger of being sent to the scaffold for his pains. John of Gaunt next proceeded to rig the elections of another Parliament which was, not without reason, known as the "bad", and being packed with his supporters and skilfully manoeuvred, not only undid the work of its predecessor, but also imposed a poll tax of a groat a head upon the people. It was now evident that whatever powers the Commons might claim and exercise they were not their own masters, but liable to be the tool of any person or clique that happened to be in the ascendant. The time was ripe for the people to take their salvation into their own hands.

CHAPTER VII

THE TWILIGHT OF THE MIDDLE AGES

1

Christianity on the Wane

Medieval Christianity is the product of two main streams of purpose that are not always easy to separate in practice. There is the great, organized power of the Church, centred in Rome and striving to maintain and increase that power in a spirit not very different from that of old Rome. There is, on the other hand, a series of efforts on the part of earnest and ardent devotees, to get back from the Law of official Christianity to the spirit of Christ Himself. The vitality of Papal Rome may be gauged at any time by her ability to control and avail herself of these recurrent uprushes of spiritual energy. At the beginning of the thirteenth century she had taken a fresh lease of life from the inspiration of Saint Francis and Saint Dominic. It was her version of Christianity that expressed itself in the Gothic cathedrals and scholastic philosophy of the age of Saint Louis.

But the struggle with the Hohenstaufen had left Rome on the verge of spiritual bankruptcy, and the removal of the Papal court to Avignon was the outward and visible sign that the glory had departed from the throne of Peter. But the spiritual Empire of Rome was still intact, the vast centralized organization remained in being, as a tree, hollow and rotten within, may sprout leaves in their season and retain all the outward signs of health.

In England there were many signs that all was not well with the Church. Edward I had stood up to her pretensions in a way that would have infallibly brought down an interdict upon the Kingdom from an Innocent III, when he had promptly outlawed the whole of the clergy for refusing to pay taxes, and the Church had allowed her bluff to be called and paid up duly. In Edward III's reign the English King and Parliament showed plainly that they would stand no nonsense from a Pontiff who was suspected, not without reason,

of being a pawn in the hands of our chief national enemy. The claws of Rome were cut by the two great statutes of Provisors which, if they had been consistently enforced, would have stopped the Pope from exercising rights of patronage in England, and of Praemunire, which barred the right of Churchmen to take cases out of the King's Courts to Rome. When, in 1365, Pope Urban V presented his bill for the tribute conceded by John, with arrears up to date, the demand was referred to Parliament and turned down unanimously, with a denial that John had had any right to make such a submission to a foreign prince on behalf of his kingdom. It is said that a few years later, when the Archbishop of Canterbury tried to revive this claim, he was informed by the Black Prince that he was an ass. In 1371 Parliament petitioned for, and obtained, a ministry of laymen. It is an interesting sidelight on the English attitude to papal claims, that when the Pope, acting in the cause of France, placed Flanders under an interdict, which the Flemish priests piously respected, a sufficient number of willing blacklegs was at once imported from England to break this clerical strike.

The Church, whose influence and prestige were already considerably on the wane, was terribly hard hit by the plague.[1] The duty of any parish priest worth his salt must have taken him, day in, day out, into noisome hovels swarming with the deadly fleas. The monasteries, too, with their inmates herded together in dormitories, almost certainly rat-infested, must have been ideal breeding grounds for the bacilli. And the effect of suddenly having to flood the ranks of the Church's staff, secular and regular, with any unsuitable or uneducated recruits who could be drafted hugger mugger into the service, cannot fail to have been disastrous, or to have lowered the standard of clercial life, even if we do not assume it to have been specially high before.

The diminished prestige of the Church was all the more reason for men to whom any doubt of Christianity was unthinkable trying to work out their salvation, not through the medium of the priesthood, but in spirit and in truth, by " onehead ", as they expressed it, with God. The fourteenth century is, in fact, the golden age of English mysticism. This word, with its suggestion of haziness and abracadabra, is perhaps an unfortunate one for describing what is often the direct opposite to superstition, in that it tends to substitute for external magic a state of the soul. The essence of all mysticism, Christian and non-Christian alike, is contained in the words " the

[1] See above, p. 251.

Kingdom of God is within you". To a rich ecclesiastical body, depending for its prosperity largely on the magical powers claimed on behalf of its priests, such a belief is obviously not acceptable without drastic qualification, and may become a deadly menace, even when those who hold it sincerely believe themselves to be loyal churchmen.

Mysticism was flourishing all over Western Europe in the fourteenth century, which is the age of Ruysbroeck, Tauler, and Thomas a Kempis. It is not too much, however, to say that as notable, though less known, work was produced in England as in any European country. In the year of the plague died Richard Rolle, an Oxford student, who turned anchorite, and insisted that though men ought to do good works and though certain works are in their own nature commendable to God, yet there is no merit in them unless pure love of God is their motive. Love is, to Rolle, the life and impelling force of Christianity; it is the heart that counts. "Force thyself," he pleads, "in all that thou mayest, that thou mayest be no worse than thou seemest." His work is carried on by Walter Hylton, who maps out the path in more systematic detail in his *Scale of Perfection*, and to whom some critics have even tried to assign the authorship of the *De imitatione Christi*. Then there is the group of anonymous treatises centring round that little masterpiece called *The Cloud of Unknowing*, of which the author was probably a Carthusian monk. Last of all comes that sweet and childlike anchoress, Lady Julian of Norwich, to whom God vouchsafed the vision of the whole universe, "a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying on the palm of my hand," and, she thought, "it lasts and ever shall, for God loves it."

English mysticism has its distinctive charm which, though it may be hard to analyze, is unmistakable to the sympathetic reader. We should say that its chief element is a certain naive sincerity, a homeliness, that is not more marked in the Robin Hood ballads than in such a candid conclusion as that of Hylton's exquisite little treatise, the *Song of the Angels*. "Lo," he exclaims, "I have told thee in this matter a little, as me thinketh; not affirming that this sufficeth, nor that this is the soothfastness in this matter. But if thou think it otherwise or else any other man savour by grace the contrary thereto, I leave this saying, and give stead to him; it sufficeth for me to live in truth principally and not in feeling." The English quest for God is somewhat less formally systematic than that of the great Continental seekers, it is also, as befits the national

character, intensely practical. With the pure contemplative, the Simeon Stylites or exponent of the Hathi Yoga, the English temperament has no affinity. "Love cannot be lazy," characteristically says Rolle, and Hylton coins the term, "a busy rest," as a description of the peace of God.

All this is perfectly in accordance with the spirit of Gothic architecture. The earnest uprush of stone is here reflected in the soul; it is the burning will to attain that "wonderful onehead" which, Hylton tells us, "may not be fulfilled perfectly, continually, and wholly in this life... but only in the bliss of heaven." This medieval mysticism also resembles Gothic in being, almost exclusively, concerned with the will. "By love," says the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, "he may be gotten and holden, by thought never." "It is," and here he is speaking the highest religious thought of his age, "necessary for thee to bury in a cloud of forgetting all creatures that ever God made." That is the strength and weakness of Gothic and the religion that Gothic expressed, on the one hand energy, aspiration, singleness of purpose, on the other, a lack of scope and content that called aloud for the Renaissance. Even the holy Julian was, in her own phrase, "a simple creature that could no letter."

It is from such individual and spiritual Christianity, more than from the rich and centralized Church, that democracy is born. Not entirely, however, for even in the Middle Ages the Church was not above coquetting with democratic theory, as she had her own reasons for setting limits to the power of Kings. It is, however, roughly true to say that the more the overgrowth of ecclesiastical dogma is cleared away, and the nearer men get to the pure spirit of Christ, the greater the bias is likely to be towards the claims of those poor whom most of all Christ took to His heart. As long as Christianity is openly acknowledged, it is impossible, even though Caiaphas himself be its interpreter, wholly to suppress it. It is impossible to prevent some one, among all the millions, thinking for himself, and seeing the central figure of the Gospels not through a distorted glass, but in all His divine humanity, loving the disreputable and outcast, and warring to the death against Mammon, respectability, and formal orthodoxy, wherever He finds them.

St. Francis, though an obedient son of the Church, gave a notable impulse to this movement back to the original Christianity, and it was from among the Franciscans that the great Oxonians were recruited who undermined the foundations of the scholastic dogma.

These were succeeded by a more open intellectual revolutionary in the shape of John Wycliffe, who was an Oxford don and finally a country rector, though of his personality we have hardly any knowledge at all except from his works. Qualify it as he would, Wycliffe's teaching undermined the whole foundations on which the power of the Church was based. He is for breaking down every barrier to the direct intercourse of the Christian with his Maker; he is a foe to the monopolies and magical claims of the priesthood, and he flatly denies their power to perform the daily miracle of transmuting bread and wine into the Saviour's body and blood. On much the same principle as temporal revolutionaries arm the people for the preservation of their liberties, so Wycliffe placed in their hands a spiritual sword in the shape of an English Bible, that every man might henceforth see and judge of Christ's teaching for himself.

Wycliffe was the inspirer of a religious revival that spread like wildfire over England and threatened, for a time, to bring about such a break away from the Roman spiritual domination as actually occurred a century and a half later. The Lollards, a name that most probably means singers, were enthusiasts trying to get back to the faith and practice of primitive Christianity. They included, at one time, not only multitudes of the poor and simple, but many of the landowning class and even some of the nobility.

In their passionate cult of poverty and the simple life they were only following in the steps of Saint Francis, but this time the Church was unable to add the virtue of obedience to that poverty. The Lollards, in their revolt from worldliness, were shocked most of all by the riches and pretensions of Churchmen. They had the audacity to demand, even from the proudest dignitaries, a standard of life in no way superior to that of a Galilean fisherman or Nazarene carpenter. They went further in denying the magical claims on which so much of priestly power was built. Even the crowning miracle of the Mass was fraudulent in their eyes, and such lucrative assets of the Church as relics and pilgrimages they denounced as idolatrous. Strangest of all, they held war to be murder and contrary to the New Testament.

The Church, when she failed to absorb or convert the Lollards, had no choice but to discard spiritual weapons and fall back upon repression with the aid of the temporal power. And so commenced a long and unedifying struggle in which the fires of religious persecution were lit almost for the first time in England. The best for which the Church could hope was to drive heresy below the surface,

and postpone the hour of reckoning for herself. It would have been better for her could she have absorbed Lollardy instead of crushing it. For now she was deprived of that spiritual quickening of which she was most in need, while Lollardy, though damped down, was not quenched, but smouldered on until the Reformation, for which it had prepared the way. As Bishop Tunstall wrote, when the fires of heresy were beginning to revive in 1523, it was no question of pernicious novelty, but only that new arms were being added to the great band of Wycliffite heretics.[1]

2

Christian Democracy Shoots its Bolt

Medieval democracy is a hard thing to understand when judged by modern standards. It is, speaking generally, more personal and less systematic than anything to which we are accustomed. To the modern reformer, poverty is both an evil to be removed and a stigma to be ashamed of; in the Middle Ages the poor man and his poverty were actually sacred in themselves. This attitude we can best understand from a perusal of one who was the most striking democrat of them all, William Langland, author of the alliterative poem called *Piers Plowman*, or at least of the original version of it. He writes as a poor man to poor men, and his ploughman, by a beautiful transfiguration, becomes Christ Himself at the end of the poem. And yet Langland is what we should call nowadays a Tory of the most uncompromising persuasion, and, indeed, takes the labourers to task in a way that no modern Tory would dare to do openly. He roundly denounces the waster who despises the wholesome counsel of Cato to the effect that poverty's burden should be borne patiently, who will eat nothing but fresh flesh or fish:

> "But he has high wages or else he will chide
> And bewail the day he e'er became workman,
> Who curses the King and all his counsel,
> Who made laws to keep the labourer down."

Langland's love and championship of the poor ploughman is none the less genuine from the fact that he is no advocate of Piers trying to "better himself", as we should say. The social hierarchy is ordained of God, and it is every man's duty to play his part in it loyally. The sluggard employer who is behindhand with the wages

[1] Quoted *Encyclopædia Britannica*, article *Lollards*.

on pay day, the knight who is unable to do his duty of protecting the poor, are equally to blame. There never was a more unsparing critic of iniquity and corruption in high places than Langland. But over rich and poor alike is the moral law of God and Mother Church. What matters most about them is not their earthly lot, but that all are equally sinners striving, though sore let and hindered, after a place in the heavenly kingdom.

Therefore, though this man may be a nobleman and that man a ploughman, the importance of this social difference is as nothing to that of their human and religious equality before God. Twenty may be ten times two, but both are equal in their relation to infinity. Chaucer's pilgrims are not only a mixed party travelling to a shrine, they are pilgrims of eternity, and are brothers in a sense of which our age of class consciousness and class warfare can hardly conceive. We catch the note of it in such rough strains as

> "Rise up, rise up, brother Dives,
> And go with us to see
> A dismal place, prepared in Hell,
> To sit on a serpent's knee."

The medieval equivalent of the millionaire may be consigned to Hell with the heartiest goodwill, but even on the serpent's knee, along with the inevitable King and Pope of pictured Dooms, he is Brother Dives; his modern successor may spend half his sustenance on deserving charities, but even on this earth between him and Lazarus there is a great gulf fixed.

Medieval democracy may have had a different standpoint from our own, but its theories lack nothing in boldness or variety. So long as the Church and State were opposing each other's claims, doctrines of ecclesiastical or lay absolutism were not likely to pass muster unchallenged, and the will of the people might be a convenient card to play against the other party. Thus when the Emperor, Louis of Bavaria, was at loggerheads with the Pope, a group of political theorists which included the great English nominalist schoolman, William of Occam, boldly proclaimed that as all power was derived from the people and vested by them in the Emperor, the Emperor therefore could control not only the State, but the Church, and confiscate, or rather resume at will, the Church property whose ownership she derived from him as the people's representative. Another school of theorists, somewhat later in the fourteenth century, introduced the democratic principle into the Church itself, in order to set a general representative Council above the Pope.

Medieval democracy did not always stop short at politics, but challenged the whole social system and even the institution of property. The communal life of the monasteries, the cult of poverty inculcated by Saint Francis and his friars, the example of primitive Christianity and the reading of Plato's *Republic*, could not fail to provoke speculation of a communistic tendency. The great schoolmen, with their habit of inquiring into first causes, made no exception of property, and St. Thomas Aquinas, closely followed by Duns Scotus, does indeed justify the institution, not, like the French Revolutionists, as a natural right, but rather as a human convenience. Less orthodoxly inclined thinkers, proceeding on the same lines, might easily write down the ownership of property as a natural wrong. Of such was Wycliffe.

He was no less of a revolutionary in political than in religious doctrine. Not only did he denounce the anomaly of a wealthy priesthood, but he arraigned the whole institution of property as inconsistent with the preaching and practice of Him who had not where to lay His head, and whose followers brought their goods to a common stock. Wycliffe, however, was no Tolstoi, to follow such principles to their logical conclusion, and the practical consequences of his theory evidently frightened the Master of Balliol and Rector of Lutterworth. So, like the practical Englishman he was at heart, he got out of the difficulty by a subterfuge which, though it has been employed by all trimmers since the world began, has never, except by Wycliffe, been frankly formulated. "God," he says, "must serve the Devil," much as Wycliffe himself served that arch-intriguer John of Gaunt, even to the extent of apologizing for his patron's murder of a man in a church where he had taken sanctuary. It is not necessary to follow Wycliffe further through the windings from which he manages to escape from communistic idealism to a comfortable acceptance of things as they are.

But the average mind has no liking for compromises, and Wycliffe's qualifications of Wycliffism have little except a personal interest. There were others who had not the Oxford don's gifts of caution and subtlety. Irresponsible friars, as we gather from a passage in *Piers Plowman*, went about preaching propaganda of a more or less Bolshevistic tendency, culminating in the frankly levelling doctrines proclaimed for some twenty years by the revolutionary leader John Ball, an itinerant Kentish priest. This man's utterances, though we have to rely on so hostile a witness as Sir John Froissart, have too authentic a ring, and put the case too forcibly against the

existing order, not to be substantially genuine. He was of a type which, though it has figured more than once in English social controversies, has never succeeded in establishing a permanent hold on the English mind. He was a logical and abstract theorist.

"My good friends," he is reported to have said, "matters cannot go on well in England until all things shall be in common; when there shall be neither vassals nor lords; when the lords shall be no more masters than ourselves . . . Are we not all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve?" And the whole of his teaching was crystallized in the famous couplet:

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?"

Who indeed? When Christ Himself is depicted on the walls of certain country churches of this period as the workman He was, bleeding from wounds, but crowned with a halo of tools.[1]

During the fourteenth century a mysterious impulse of social unrest was stirring the Western nations. It is the time of the Arteveldes in Flanders, of the tribune Rienzi at Rome, of the Ciompi revolt in Florence, of the Jacquerie, or peasant rebellion in France. In Germany the revolt of the poor was to hang fire until the Reformation. The root feeling of all the trouble seems to have been a feeling that the existing order of things failed to give Christ's poor the goods and privileges that they ought to enjoy in any Christian community, and perhaps an intuition that the Christian dispensation was itself giving way to one harsher and less human, which proceeded not from Christ but Mammon. It was the forlorn hope of the democracy, always implicit in medieval Christianity, to make itself effective—and it everywhere failed.

It is characteristic of England that her own peasants' revolt had comparatively little inspiration from abstract or even religious theory. There was more of Robin Hood than of Wycliffe in it, and it arose, as nearly all English—as distinct from Celtic—labour troubles arise nowadays, from a very concrete sense that the poor man was getting less than his due, that the bosses were not playing the game. Edward III died in the same year that John of Gaunt rigged the House of Commons, and proved that the real mastery of Parliament lay with the magnates. For the next four years things went from bad to worse. The new King, the Black Prince's son Richard, was a child, and though his Uncle John was at least

[1] See *English Medieval Painting*, by T. Borenius and E. W. Tristram, pp. 29–85.

enough of a gentleman not to oppose his succession, the outlook was dismal. The war dragged on its expensive and disastrous course, and as England could neither hope to conquer nor resign herself to losing France, the difficulty of financing it became ever more acute. In 1380 a Parliament was induced to grant a fresh poll tax deliberately designed to shift as much as possible of the burden on to the labourers and workmen who, it was asserted, had got all the wealth of England. This tax, whose incidence was so arranged as to fall with disproportionate weight on the poorer districts, was regarded in much the same light as an income tax with no exemption limit would be to-day.

It was the last straw. Goaded beyond endurance by grievances that had been accumulating ever since the Black Death, the peasantry of the Southern and Eastern counties burst into revolt. The rebels at first carried all before them. Their wrath was especially directed against two classes, the lawyers, who were suspected of defrauding the poor by their subtleties, and the monks, not for any religious reason but because the great monasteries were the hardest landlords. The Prior of Bury was hunted down and killed; the monks of St. Albans were forced solemnly to renounce the chartered monopolies that had enabled them to tyrannize over townsmen and villagers. Meanwhile a Kentish army, formidable from the presence of a good many disbanded soldiers, marched on London and, co-operating with another force from the Eastern counties, succeeded in effecting an entry, not without the connivance of some leading citizens from within. They burnt John of Gaunt's magnificent palace of the Savoy, they sacked the headquarters of the lawyers at the Temple; only the Tower, in which the King and his ministers shut themselves up, held out against them. Even while a settlement was being arranged by the King and his councillors at Mile End, the extremist section of the rebels had been getting out of hand. The Tower was rushed, the mob hunted out and murdered the Archbishop of Canterbury and another minister responsible for the collection of the poll tax, and a senseless pogrom of Flemings began. Terror reigned in London. A certain section of the men was determined not to disperse for any concession, and this section included the most formidable fighting leaders. They had this to be said for them, that they were dealing with liars, and that once they ceased to exercise pressure on the government, their cause was lost. But rightly or wrongly, extremists are seldom popular in England.

At last the citizens of London, who had so far regarded the

whole dispute with comparative indifference, took alarm, and threw in their decisive weight on the side of order. There was another meeting between the boy King and the still formidable remnant of the insurgents; precisely what happened is not very clear, but it seems that the extremist leader, Wat Tyler, was bent on forcing a quarrel, that he got killed in a scuffle with some of the King's followers, and that the fourteen-year-old King succeeded in quieting the mob by a supreme act of bluff, until overwhelming forces could be summoned. Those of the men who had gone home, putting their trust in princes, were rudely undeceived when their charters of manumission were all annulled, and the law was allowed to take its course of stern, though not indiscriminate punishment. The economic influences that made for the abolition of villeinage were doubtless not sensibly affected, but medieval democracy in England had made its great effort, and had been decisively crushed. Henceforth the tendency in Church and State is towards reaction.

Unity of Language

It is now time to notice what is, though the least obtrusive, probably the most important development of all in the shaping of a united and civilized nation. It was during the reign of Edward III that the English language, after long eclipse, may be said to have taken its place definitely as the national tongue, the speech not only of boors but of literature. It is during this reign that English became the language of legal pleadings, and that Chaucer began to write poetry which is as fresh and almost as intelligible to-day as when he set pen to parchment; it was in the early years of the ensuing reign that Wycliffe performed his great work of translating the English Bible. French, which had for long been the language of the ruling class, became a sadly debased jargon after the political connection with France was severed; we hear of the French of East Norfolk and Stratford-atte-Bowe, which would have probably drawn from a genuine Frenchman some such reply as " Me no speak Ingliss ".

The importance of this change can only be appreciated when it is understood that the English spoken by Chaucer was no mere revived dialect, but a new kind of language, with certain definite points of superiority over even the great classical tongues. This is the more astonishing when we reflect that not only was English just

emerging from a long period of obscurity and illiteracy, but that it was just the contempt and base usage into which it had fallen that was the cause of its great advance.

An analogy from nature will best serve to show in what this advance consisted. Consider the difference between the highest insect communities, and those of men. In the hive or ants' nest, the body of each member is to some extent adapted to the functions he has to perform. With men, there are no adaptations of body, except in so far as certain muscles may be developed by use; what distinguishes the soldier from the gardener is that one uses a rifle and the other a spade; in short, men do not adapt their bodies but select their tools. It is much the same with words. Greek and Latin were the highest examples of inflectional languages, themselves a notable advance upon the more common agglutinative languages, in which whole words are stuck together to create new meanings, at the price of infinite complication. In inflectional languages it is the rule to express differences of tense, case, gender and mood by changes in the form of the word itself. Schoolboys know well to what an extreme of complicated ingenuity it was possible for a Greek or Roman to adapt his words to express the minutest shades of meaning. The tendency of English is to leave the word, as far as possible, alone, and to use what are known as auxiliaries, and even differences in position and emphasis, to express, in a handier and simpler way, differences of meaning equally subtle. "Do please come—I was just on the point of coming—I should have liked to come—why couldn't you have come?" and so on. The facts, of course, are not so simple as might appear from this summary statement; English has its inflections and Greek its auxiliaries, neither could do without them, but whereas we may say of Greek that its whole tendency is inflectional, we may say of English that, to an unprecedented extent, it is an auxiliary or tool-using language.

This was not always so. The first Anglo-Saxon invaders had brought with them an inflected language not unlike modern German. It was not altogether uniform; there were marked differences between its four main dialects, corresponding to the four chief tribal stocks of Northumbrian, Mercian, West Saxon and Kentish. Had Englishmen been left to work out their own destinies in peace, it is probable that a common language would have been evolved not dissimilar from the German group. But any chance of normal development was shattered by the repeated shock of foreign invasions. The Danes, when they swept back the West Saxon power behind the Thames

and Watling Street, brought their own language with them, one of the same stock as the English dialects, but sufficiently far removed to be practically a foreign tongue. A process of compromise took place, the conquering minority generally accommodating themselves to the native speech, but in the same sort of way as a Chinaman accommodates himself to English. The root sounds were picked up readily enough, but the honest Viking had small care for the inflectional niceties cherished by Bede and Cynewulf. The result was not only that a considerable number of Danish words crept into the language, but that the English words got considerably knocked about in the process of assimilation, and began to lose all but the simplest of their inflections.

Meanwhile in that part of England which had successfully repulsed the first Danish invasions, all hopes for the English language seemed to be centred. King Alfred, both by his influence and writings, helped to keep its purity from contamination, and the West Saxon became the literary dialect of England, with an elaborate system of inflections, and such products to show as the *Battle of Maldon* and the Old English Chronicle. Then occurred what must have seemed the final linguistic catastrophe, in the shape of the Norman Conquest. The castles were owned by French-speaking barons, the monasteries, which were the seats of learning, had their higher posts filled with French-speaking monks. The grand old English of Alfred had now become the patois of boors; the upper and educated classes spoke French. The stream of native literature diminished to a trickle, and the purity of the Wessex tongue was gravely impaired, owing to the slovenly habit of merging the sound of most inflectional vowels in that of short e.

But Norman became Englishman, and the French language lost ground rapidly with the separation from France. The native tongue came into its own again, but only after an enormous assimilation of French words, and a process of mutilation that one might reasonably have expected would have rendered it as inferior to the old West Saxon and Northumbrian English as modern Hindustani is inferior to the old Sanskrit. What had actually happened was that from being an inflectional, it had become, to a greater degree than any other, a language of the type which we have described as auxiliary or tool-using. This King's English of ours is not the direct descendant of the West Saxon which had been the literary language before the Conquest. This was passed by, on account of the very excellence of the culture it expressed, which made it more proudly conservative

and less susceptible to change than the already mutilated dialects of the Danelaw. The choice lay between Mercian and Northumbrian, and the remoteness of Northumbria from the centre as well as the merciless ravaging of the Conqueror put her out of the running, or rather relegated her to the post of language-giver to the Northern kingdom.

So it was the Midland tongue that won the post of honour, and this, apart from the advantage it possessed in being the speech of the Londoners, on account of the apparent illiteracy that rendered it malleable and capable of being adapted to the new and simpler kind of language that the unconscious genius of the nation was evolving. It was a conspicuous instance of the foolish things of this world confounding the wise, and when we are half inclined to smile at some broad provincialism of ploughman or shepherd, we little think that we are listening to the last sounds of the speech hallowed by the lips of Alfred. But that is, after all, the way of evolution. Could an intelligent observer have been imported from Mars some time towards the close of the Mesozoic age, he would hardly have guessed that not from the enormous Saurians were the lords of the earth to be descended, but from insignificant little creatures that scuttled and hopped about almost unnoticed.

By the opening of the fifteenth century England had acquired a national tongue. The last writer of any note in the Wessex dialect was Trevisa, a contemporary of Chaucer. The obstacle to national unity that was created by the existence of three or four competing dialects, so different that books had to be translated out of one into another, was now eliminated. There were still changes to be made, final e's to be dropped, one or two letters to be discarded with the introduction of printing presses, obsolescent forms to be dispensed with, but the dialect of East Mercia, much transformed, was now definitely English, and at a most happy moment a " well of English undefiled " had sprung to the surface in the writings of Chaucer. It was a language of which any nation might be proud, simple and practical, as befitted the English character, and yet with unlimited possibilities of rich and poetic expression. There was no carrying the new simplicity to its logical extreme ; if it was more convenient to talk of oxen than of oxes, then by all means retain the old form of plural and let the devil take consistency. A great and unique advance was the scrapping of the senseless analogy by which the names of things were expected to range themselves under the male and female genders. The French schoolboy has at least this advantage

over his English fellow, that he has not to rack his brains to remember whether an English cabbage is a lady or a gentleman. Simplicity and commonsense are eminently characteristic of English, though an unfriendly critic might accuse it of certain slovenly and illogical tendencies which, he might say, are also born in the national temperament.

4

A Century of Weak Government

"Villeins ye are, villeins ye shall remain," are said to have been the words of the boy Richard II to the poor men who, when reaction had triumphed, asked him for the fulfilment of his kingly pledges. Be that as it may, the sequel of the revolt parted him forever from that pathetic loyalty that many of them appear to have entertained for his person. Henceforth he was left to deal, as best he might, with the wealthy magnates who overshadowed the throne and, with their troops of armed retainers, were fast coming to overshadow law and Parliament.

Edward I's wars of expansion, followed by his grandson's wars of conquest, had put too great a strain upon the splendid administrative machine by which the reign of law had been maintained in England as in no other medieval nation. For the first time since Stephen's reign the central government had become too feeble to cope with the disruptive tendencies of feudalism. The ruinous expense of the war, and the way in which the royal estates had been encroached upon, had left the Crown dependent on what it could induce Parliament to concede, and Parliament, as John of Gaunt had already shown, could be the tool of anyone powerful enough to pack it.

The history of the reign is that of a struggle between a high-spirited young monarch, who was determined to govern as well as reign, and a few great men who were too selfish to have any consistent policy, except that of strengthening their own hands by weakening those of their sovereign. Richard's first attempt to govern with the aid of ministers of his own choosing was ruined by a combination of noblemen headed by John of Gaunt's younger brother, the Duke of Gloucester. After an actual resort to arms the magnates triumphed; the young King was publicly threatened with the fate of Edward II, and the inevitable packed Parliament murdered every prominent loyalist who did not succeed in escaping, besides voting a huge sum of public money to the bosses of the victorious

faction. These Lords Appellant, as they were called, had no loyalty even to each other, and the King, skilfully profiting by their divisions, managed to get the reins of government back into his own hands, and for a few years maintained his position with conspicuous tact and moderation.

It was only a truce. Gloucester and his friends were biding their time for a second coup. Richard determined to strike first. He was completely successful; blood paid the price of blood, and Parliament was duly packed—this time in the King's interest. Richard was determined to end the farce into which Parliamentary government had degenerated, and solve his own and the nation's troubles by the establishment of an unfettered monarchy on the French model. It would have taken a very wise and far-seeing statesman to have realized how, in essaying this plausible scheme, he was running counter to the whole trend of national development. Richard, who had patched up something like an *entente cordiale* with France and had taken an infant French Princess to wife, had none of the English instinct of compromise. He pushed his theory to its logical conclusion and, what was almost worse, talked about it in language more befitting a Caesar than a King of England. He banished the two most powerful of the surviving magnates by an act of sheer arbitrary tyranny, and he actually got Parliament to delegate its powers to a packed committee of his supporters. When, after two years of royalist triumph, John of Gaunt's son, Henry, one of the two banished noblemen, took advantage of Richard's absence in Ireland to make a snatch at the crown, the whole edifice of Caesarism collapsed like a house of cards. Richard gave in with hardly a struggle, was deposed, and, of course, murdered.

His supplanter, who mounted the throne as Henry IV, had succeeded to an almost impossible task. By hereditary succession, he had no claim to the throne even after getting rid of Richard. His title was, in fact, Parliamentary; he lacked the small amount of divinity that ordinarily hedged a medieval King, and those who had put him on the throne need feel no particular scruples about turning him off again. The first years of his reign were enlivened by chronic rebellions; the whole of Wales flamed into a war of independence under Owen Glendower; the quarrel with France smouldered on and an invasion of England was, at one time, seriously threatened. Even with the addition of Henry's Lancaster estates, the resources of the crown were hopelessly inadequate to its needs, and Parliament treated the King as if he were a fraudulent bankrupt

pleading before a meeting of creditors. They doled him out funds, but under the most humiliating conditions, supervising and cheese-paring intimate details of his private expenditure. They took care that he should not get a penny till he had formally acceded to their demands, in other words, till redress preceded supply.

There is no doubt that, in spite of the theories of the lawyers who still treated Parliament as if it were the King's feudal court, Henry IV was, in practice, a limited and constitutional monarch in the fullest sense of the words. Parliament was so much the master of the King as to render his position farcical. But it was by no means so certain that Parliament was its own master, or that the Lower House, which held the power of the purse, represented anything but a few powerful persons and interests. It is at least to the credit of the Commons that they did make a stand against the packing of elections by the sheriffs and the abuses of livery and maintenance by the magnates. But the central government was weaker than ever, and its weakness was the opportunity of the great feudatories, with whose power an assembly, representative only of the landed and mercantile interests, was as yet powerless to cope.

Henry IV was supported on his rickety throne not only by temporal but by spiritual props. He had therefore to pay political blackmail to the Church, which was now far upon the downward path which led to the Reformation. The Lollard revival had failed to quicken spiritual life within her fold, but had got enough hold on the people to alarm the worldly-wise politicians who guided her destinies. Not the least of Richard II's crimes had been his unwillingness to persecute. No such scruples troubled Henry, who cheerfully assented to a statute which authorized the Church of Christ to hand over those whom she chose to designate as heretics for the secular power to torture to death by fire. This inaugurated such an era of persecution as England had not previously experienced, though the King, being a thorough-going worldling, was an exceedingly slack persecutor. His eldest son was more actively pious, and gradually the alliance of Church and State succeeded in breaking the back of Lollardism. But the Church had merely succeeded in alienating and driving below the surface the spiritual enthusiasm of which she was herself so sorely in need.

Harassed and unloved, Henry IV closed his troubled life, bequeathing his difficulties to his son and namesake. The new King, a hard and intensely efficient young man, had no mind to continue his father's course of concession and compromise with his subjects.

The time was ripe to stake the fortunes of his dynasty on the magnificent gamble of a foreign war. The long debate with France was still undecided, and it happened that France, with her King mad, was torn asunder by the disputes of two aristocratic factions. Flanders, which was still the great market for our wool—though not the only market, since we had started a flourishing cloth manufacture of our own, and had, besides, taken to supplying the looms of Florence—had now come under the lordship of the Duke of Burgundy, who led one of the contending factions, and whose vast possessions might easily provide the nucleus of a new, middle kingdom between France and Germany. Henry V was quick to perceive that by attacking a France divided against itself he would be enjoying an advantage such as Edward III had never dreamed of. He therefore, in the true spirit of *Realpolitik*, repeated that monarch's claim to the French crown, regardless of the fact that he himself had, by the principle of heredity to which he appealed, no right even to that of England.

It is only fair to add that something of the crusading ardour fired Henry's mind. The menace to Christendom from the power of the Ottoman Turk was palpable, and Henry's father had entertained somewhat vague aspirations after going on a crusade and dying at Jerusalem. In a long exhortation to the young Henry as Prince of Wales, the poet Hoccleve had expressed a hope that Christian nations would lay aside their differences and combine against the infidel. Henry's way was not that of persuasion but of the sword. He would unite England and France under his leadership for the rescue of Christendom. He was in earnest, as Edward III never was, about making the conquest of France a reality. No mere plundering raids would serve his purpose; if he was to win he must reduce the French strongholds, and he had now an artillery, primitive still, but capable of breaching the stone walls of a medieval fortress.

The grand purpose of his strategy was to master the lower Seine valley with a view to attacking Paris. His first step was therefore to provide himself with a base at Harfleur, at the mouth of the river. Having accomplished this feat, he proceeded, with a mere remnant of his original army, to wander off along the coast to Calais, and was brought to battle at Agincourt, in much the same way as Edward III had been at Cressy, by a French army of the Armagnac, or anti-Burgundian faction, outnumbering his by at least five, and according to some estimates, as much as ten to one. The French

feudatories had forgotten every lesson of the previous war, and their dismounted knights, crowded together, crushed beneath the weight of their armour and floundering on boggy ground, were incapable of defending themselves. Henry V gained, with trifling loss, perhaps the most sensational victory in military history, a victory which he disgraced by a massacre of prisoners, and which, strategically, decided nothing except that he should get away safely to Calais. The moral effect was naturally immense. A King of England had at last a united nation behind him, and even Parliament voted supplies with comparative generosity.

In the subsequent campaigns Henry, though he conducted his operations with methodical efficiency, was dependent less on his own prowess than on the dissensions of his opponents. The French faction fight became more irreconcilable than ever, and he was able to go methodically about his task of reducing Normandy by a series of sieges. Only when the threat to Paris became really imminent did the Duke of Burgundy consider the expediency of joining forces with his sovereign to prevent an English conquest of France. But at a conference with the French King's son, the Dauphin Charles, on the bridge at Montereau, he was stabbed to death, and this not unnaturally threw the new Duke into active alliance with Henry. A treaty was signed at Troyes by virtue of which Henry was to marry the mad King's daughter, to govern France in his name during his lifetime, and then to succeed him. Paris, which was under Burgundian influence, then threw open her gates to the allies.

The situation was, of course, an impossible one. Even if Henry had succeeded in carrying his arms from the Channel to the Mediterranean and forcing the Dauphin and all his forces to capitulate, he could not have maintained his position as ruler of a France that would never have reconciled herself to an English King supported by an English army, and with an inevitably hostile Burgundy on his flank. But even with the help of Burgundy, his resources were wholly insufficient for the task in hand. The home country soon tired of the expensive luxury even of the most glorious war. "Woe is me," groans a chronicler of the time, "mighty men and the treasure of the realm will be foredone about this business!" Parliament ceased to vote adequate supplies, and Henry was so hard up for recruits that he tried, unsuccessfully, to levy forces abroad. The Dauphin was no doubt a fool and a coward matched against a consummate soldier, but nothing could prevent the spirit of French patriotism, which had been merely dormant, from rekindling sooner or later into a blaze.

Henry V, whose troops had already suffered one sharp reverse, was still painfully enlarging the area of his conquests when he died and left a baby son to succeed him. His brother, the Duke of Bedford, who acted as regent, was a thoroughly competent commander, but he had neither the men nor the money to do much more than hold his own, especially since the Franco-Scottish entente came into play, and the French armies were stiffened by an invaluable Scottish contingent. For seven years the English on the whole had the upper hand, though without much prospect of obtaining a decision. Their push southwards was just strong enough to reach the line of the Loire, which they hoped to force by capturing the fortified town of Orleans. An English force accordingly sat down before the town, but its numbers were so inadequate that it was not even possible to surround or blockade it. The English push was in fact exhausted; a counter-attack, well pushed home, could hardly fail of success.

It was at this crisis that an inspired peasant girl, called Jeanne Darc, succeeded in firing her countrymen with something of her own mystic and patriotic ardour. The little army of besiegers was quickly overwhelmed; success after success rewarded the French arms, and it was evident that the English expulsion from France was now only a question of time, though as a matter of fact it took nearly a generation of fighting to accomplish the inevitable. It availed nothing that Jeanne fell into the hands of the Burgundians, was sold to the English, tried by a French ecclesiastical court, and burnt as a witch in the market place at Rouen. The spirit of French patriotism was not to be extinguished by quenching the brand that had fired it. In 1435 the Duke of Burgundy at last changed sides, and the next year he and the French King entered Paris together. The French were now excellently led and had found in the cannon a weapon even more powerful than the long bow. But the English clung on to Normandy and Guienne till the middle of the century, when the collapse came with startling suddenness, and by 1453 Calais and the Channel Islands were the only remains of our dominions in France.

It would have been well for us if Agincourt had been a French victory, or if Jeanne had been able to clear France of the English in one sweep of enthusiasm. Unfortunately the war kept on demoralizing England and draining her resources for not far short of forty years. The great gamble of Henry V for the establishment of his House had—though he did not live to see it—turned out a ruinous failure, and to crown it all, his French bride transmitted to

their son her father's strain of madness. Henry VI has left an imperishable name as a patron of education, he was one of the foremost musical composers of his time, in the Church he has taken his place beside Joan of Arc as a canonized saint, but his gentle piety was unequal to grappling with a task that might have baffled the strongest of rulers.

It might have seemed as if the bad old days of Stephen, with their "devils and wicked men", were about to return. The magnates, now a small and wealthy class, rich with the profits of wool-growing, were completely beyond the control of a defeated and bankrupt government. The weakness of the law brought back the evils of feudalism in a new form, that of livery and maintenance. The small man, even when he was a fairly substantial landowner, found himself driven to obtain from some great one the protection that the law could not give, and the price of protection was service. The result was that a great nobleman might be able to take the field with an army of hired retainers capable of bidding defiance to the King himself, and that a monarch with no standing army of his own was always at the mercy of a baronial combination.

The famous collection of letters of the Paston family in Norfolk reveals a state of things that is at once anarchial in practice and law-abiding in theory. The two are blended in the oddest way. Everybody of any means seems to have been busily involved in litigation, and yet to have had no hesitation in conducting regular sieges, or raids of armed retainers, by way of helping the suit along. The fact of the letter of the law being respected did not prevent judges from being bribed, juries intimidated, and elections rigged, nor the influence of a great man from being enough to avert the consequences of the most high-handed tyranny.

It is the same story with regard to Parliament. In form and theory it was actually a time of constitutional progress. The important advance was made of framing petitions for new legislation in the form of bills, which dictated the exact form of the proposed change, instead of leaving it to the King and his advisers to make it in their own way. But in reality Parliament had almost ceased to assert itself except as the tool of whatever aristocratic faction happened to be uppermost. In 1430 a statute was passed drastically cutting down the franchise in the counties to forty shilling freeholders, a very high qualification considering the dearness of money in the fifteenth century. In 1445 it was enacted that only gentlemen capable of becoming knights should be returned as members, yeomen

being specially excluded. Any leanings to democracy that Parliament might have derived from the now decaying shire courts were thus legislated out of existence. The dominating element in the Commons, the Knights of the Shire, consisted of gentlemen representing other gentlemen, and usually serving lords. These same gentlemen, or others like them, as justices of the peace, controlled the whole machinery of local government.

As the French war dragged to a close the inefficiency of the central government reached its lowest depth. The army in France was starved, the navy scrapped—we could no longer provide for the safety of our own coasts. The King looked helplessly on while Beauforts, De la Poles, Nevilles, Plantagenets, intrigued for power. In 1450 a rebellion, curiously similar in its course, if not in its cause, to that of Wat Tyler, put London into the brief possession of the Kentish mob led by Jack Cade, a war veteran. This time there was no question of abolishing villeinage, which had by this time nearly abolished itself. The peasants and old soldiers were furious that the work of Harry the Fifth should be undone by ministers who were actually suspected of having sold provinces to the enemy. This rebellion was easily got under, but it was the ominous prelude to civil strife waged from less clean and patriotic motives.

The best service that the magnates could now render their country was to unite in committing hara-kiri by means of a faction fight *à outrance* among themselves. This was precisely what they did during the third quarter of the century. An elder branch of the royal family, represented by the Duke of York, challenged first the right of the King's, or rather the Queen's, clique of aristocratic favourites to misgovern the land, and afterwards the Lancastrian title to the throne. In the confused and intermittent struggle known as the Wars of the Roses, the country, as apart from the magnates and their retainers, stood aside as far as practicable. On the whole the towns and the civilized lowlands of the South and East favoured the Yorkists, whom they believed to stand for strong government and the encouragement of trade. But the quarrel was generally recognized as one for the two teams of magnates to fight out among themselves and in their own way.

Once only was popular feeling seriously aroused. This was in 1460, when the King had fallen into the hands of the Yorkists, and been induced to consent to an arrangement whereby the Duke should succeed him to the exclusion of the Prince of Wales. The strong-minded French Queen Margaret lost no time in summoning to her

banner the magnates of the still hardly civilized North with their retainers, and marching southwards with a considerable army, not only surprised and killed York himself, but got as far South as St. Albans, where she defeated an army which the Neville Earl of Warwick had got together for the defence of London. This march had two important effects. By massacring her prisoners of gentle blood the Queen had set a precedent that was faithfully followed by both sides for the remainder of the war, and, as one side or the other had the upper hand, a pretty clean sweep was made of the heads of the great houses. Moreover, the North countrymen, who had passed their lives in an atmosphere of Border strife and foray, did not recognize the rules of the game, and plundered freely from the towns and villages on their way. The wrecked and reconstructed churches of Stamford bear silent witness to the terror that swept up the road from the North. This for the first and only time during the war produced something like a genuine explosion of popular feeling. Even that iron woman, the Queen, hesitated to push on to an unfriendly London, and while she waited, the slain Duke's son, who now claimed the throne as Edward IV, arrived by forced marches from Wales amid the joy of the citizens, and gathering up willing followers all along the line of march, followed up the Northern army into Yorkshire, where, after a hammer and tongs fight in a blizzard, he completely overthrew it.

This was by no means the end. It was a matter of three years before the Lancastrian North could be reduced, but even with Henry in the Tower and all his prominent supporters slaughtered or banished, the position of a Yorkist King was scarcely more enviable than that of his predecessor, overshadowed as he was by the power of the mighty Warwick. England was not large enough to hold the first of her strong Renaissance kings and the last of her barons capable of matching his resources against those of the Crown. In 1469 began a series of kaleidoscopic changes more reminiscent of a Punch and Judy show than of a struggle where principles are at stake. First King Edward, who has married into the formerly Lancastrian family of Woodville, tries to shake himself free from Warwick's control; Warwick strikes unexpectedly, makes his sovereign a prisoner, and puts him back on the throne in the trust that he will now have learnt his lesson of obedience to the power behind it; the King next surprises Warwick, turns him out of the realm, and abandons himself to enjoy from henceforth the sweets of real power; Warwick returns, having patched up an alliance with Queen Margaret

and the exiled Lancastrians, turns Edward out of the country and puts back Henry VI on the throne; lastly Edward, having begged assistance from the Burgundian court, lands in Yorkshire with a few followers, slips through unopposed to London, recruits an army, defeats and kills Warwick, wipes out Margaret's army in the West, and having got rid of Henry's only son on the battlefield, concludes the business by making the saintly Henry himself share the usual fate of deposed majesty.

That a Yorkist monarch was now firmly established on the throne was of trivial importance compared with the fact that the weakness of the central government was changed to strength. This was by no means due to any special ability on the part of the new King, who was as slack at the council board as he was vigorous in the field, but simply to the fact that the King was now at last able, with normal good management, to live of his own. For when a magnate was convicted of treason, which was the same thing as being on the losing side, he forfeited not only his head but his estates, and the proceeds of a succession of victories had proved a veritable windfall to the Crown. Moreover Edward IV, relieved of the incubus of French possessions, actually discovered the secret of making an invasion of France pay, by getting her King to buy him off with a substantial annuity. Between this year, 1475, and the last of his reign, 1483, he only summoned one Parliament, not for the purpose of obtaining money, but in order that they might obediently register his determination of putting a troublesome younger brother, George, Duke of Clarence, to death. So long as the King could keep the peace, Parliament, on the rare occasions he might choose to summon it, had no power to coerce him. Redress of grievances might hang fire indefinitely so long as there was no need for supply.

The purging of the upper ranks of society was not yet complete. Big, sensual Edward IV had no sooner indulged himself into the grave, leaving a boy heir, than first the Protectorate and then the Throne were seized by his only surviving brother, Richard. This remarkable young man was a true child of the Renaissance, not unlike that equally maligned product of the age, Caesar Borgia. With businesslike dispatch he made away with every magnate who stood, or might stand, in his way, but even the hardened conscience of fifteenth-century England was pricked when it became more than suspected that he had disembarrassed himself of the rightful King and his brother. Richard, who showed promise of being an excellent ruler, had no basis of loyalty on which to establish his throne. After

one abortive rebellion, a candidate of the House of Lancaster was put up in the person of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, a Welsh nobleman with the slenderest hereditary claim, but of outstanding ability. Richard, who was betrayed by his nobles, was cut down, shouting treason, on Bosworth Field, and the victorious claimant ascended the throne with the title of Henry VII. The path was at last cleared for firm government under a competent sovereign.

Gloom and Jeremiads

It was, with the brief interlude of Henry V's victorious career, a century of gloom and humiliation that ended with the Wars of the Roses. The joyous exuberance of the springtide and greenwood songs gives way to a note of ever-increasing pessimism. Even before the death of Edward III there is a sense that all is not well with England. This finds voice in a pamphlet by a monk called John of Bridlington, in which the misfortunes of the nation are attributed to its sins, and which is couched in the form of a prophecy—the wish being evidently father to the thought—of a great national revival culminating in the conquest of France by the Black Prince.

The reign of Richard II is a time of almost unrelieved depression. The picture in *Piers Plowman*, in which Meed, or corruption, reigns unchecked, confirms that of Chaucer, who in the one guarded poem in which he deals with public affairs, laments that all is lost for lack of steadfastness.

The excellent John Gower, who makes up in length for what he lacks in inspiration, takes up the tale towards the end of the reign, with an uncompromising denunciation, in Latin, of the whole social hierarchy from the King downwards. The one thing on which all writers of this time appear to be agreed is that the once merry England is going to the dogs. "Alas," groans another Latinizing Jeremiah, "how great a desolation is there of England!"—loss of sea power, peril of invasion, dishonesty of merchants, worse than dishonesty of clergy, pestilence, depleted manhood, Christ hardly known! And a poem of considerable merit, written in alternate Latin and English, laments how England was once called the gem of nations and flower of manhood, whereas now,

> "Gone is that honour,
> *Traduntur talia somnis.*"

It is significant of the weariness engendered by the French wars that there is even a tendency to apply Christian principles to our dealings with other nations. "I know not," writes Gower

> "how charity may stand
> When deadly wars are taken in hand,"

while Hoccleve, a civil servant who atoned for a great deal of dull verse by one or two inspired stanzas, thus addresses England and France :—

> "If but of you might be read or sung
> That you were one in heart, there is no tongue
> That might express how profitable and good
> Unto all people it were of Christian blood."

As the glory of conquest and the merriment of national youth departed from England, the fire of genius died out of her literature. Chaucer and Langland found no successors; the stream of verse, if it does not actually dry up, becomes turbid and sluggish. No amount of pious resurrection will ever succeed in extracting much of living interest from Gower, or even Lydgate, despite of undeniable beauties scattered amid his verse, while as for Hoccleve, he only shows himself worthy of his master Chaucer for the moment when he is lamenting him. Not until the age of Walpole was English verse to sink so far beneath the level of ordinary prose.

The brief sunshine of Henry V's glory in France produced a certain lifting of the gloom—we have the noble song of Agincourt, which moves to the time of a triumphal march :

> "Our King went forth to Normandy
> With grace and might of chivalry,"

but even before the King's death the glamour was growing dim, and the long agony of Henry VI's reign plunged the country into a deeper gloom than before. To the horror of foreign war is now added an even greater horror of civil war, which was to sink into the consciousness of the nation and determine its policy down to the time of the Armada :

> "Oh, it is greatly against kind and nature
> An English man to corrumpe his own nation!"

is the cry of one Yorkist partisan, who likens England to a garden overgrown with weeds that need mowing down before the flowers can appear, a piece of advice that the Yorkists knew well how to translate into action.

How deeply the horror of war had entered into the nation's soul is best seen in the last and most splendid version of the Arthur

saga, that of Malory. No one with an ear for the music can mistake the utter gloom that Malory contrives to spread, like the pall of night inwoven with stars, over his account of the hero King's last and direst battle against his own subjects—"never was there seen a more dolefuller battle in no Christian land!"—and the cry of Arthur is that of Malory's England: "Alas this unhappy day!" He even pauses, contrary to his custom, from the narrative, to upbraid his countrymen for the fickleness and disloyalty that have wrought them such deadly woe.

It is easy to scoff at Jeremiads and their authors, but where the most sensitive and enlightened spirits of a country are obsessed by a sense of its decadence, we may be sure that they are referring to some real and serious evil, even though they may be wrong in thinking it mortal. No doubt the Lancastrian and Yorkist age in England was one that might have seemed to justify the gloomiest apprehensions. In both Church and State the promise of medieval civilization appeared to be falsified. Since the failure of the Lollard revival, the spirit of worldliness had become dominant in the Church, and as for the State, the Parliamentary experiment of the fourteenth century seemed fated to succumb either to feudal anarchy or monarchic despotism, whichever happened to prevail.

Nevertheless, an observer might have discerned certain signs of promise even in the darkest days of national humiliation and civil war. Fifteenth century England was very much alive, and if it is a time of dullness and pessimism in letters, in architecture there is a different tale to tell, while in music we may fairly be said to have given a lead to Europe. The Renaissance, triumphant in Italy, was astir in England, and beneath the ruin of medieval summer the forces were at work that were to generate another spring-tide of creative genius.

6

Weavers, Adventurers and Business Men

The fifteenth century, except for the deceptive glamour of Henry V's French conquests, is one of the least glorious in our history, judged by the usual standards. Nevertheless it is marked by victories, of more substantial value than any achieved by lance and long bow. Up to the middle of the fourteenth century, England, though her great war with France had been essentially a trade war, was commercially a dependent nation. The bulk of her export trade

was in raw wool, which she shipped to Flanders to be worked up into cloth by the skilled Flemish craftsmen. This was much encouraged by the Crown, which found in it a fruitful source of revenue and had, since the reign of Edward II, appointed staple towns through which the whole of the exported wool was compelled to pass by law, the merchants who had the monopoly of the trade being incorporated into a company, the first of those great regulated companies of independent traders that were to play so prominent a part in our commercial development. So important was the export of wool considered, that the Chancellor of England was made to sit on a woolsack, as a sort of permanent reminder.

During the fourteenth century the growth of the towns and craft gilds was providing a home market for English wool, and the heavy export duties on the raw material acted as a powerful protection for the nascent cloth manufacture. Between the year 1354 and the accession of Henry VIII, according to Professor Ashley, the export of English cloth multiplied itself sixteenfold. As the home demand for our fleeces grew, the prosperity of the Staplers, as the exporters of wool were called, steadily declined, and a deadly blow was struck at the cloth-weaving Flemish towns, which were dependent upon English fleeces and felt the stress of English competition. All through the fifteenth century the "Lancashire of the Middle Ages", starved of its wool, was losing its former wealth and prosperity; its cities could no longer maintain their population. This state of things was thoroughly appreciated in England, and there is one rhymed pamphlet of Edward IV's reign, the author of which urges his countrymen to take a Shylock's advantage of our monopoly by selling abroad only the inferior kinds of wool, for which the foreigners will have to pay just as much as they would for the best, which we should keep for our own looms.

While England was slowly strangling the Flemish cloth manufacture, she was waging a struggle no less momentous to break down the shipping monopoly of the formidable Hanse League, which included most of the German and Dutch ports, and during the fourteenth century treated the Baltic and the North Sea as virtually its own preserves. In spite of her insular position and one or two naval victories, England had been content to let the bulk of her commerce be carried in foreign bottoms, and even so great a King as Edward III had so far yielded to an intrigue among wool merchants as, for a short time, to fix the staple in England, so that our English wool had to be consigned at the ports to foreign ships. The fact is

that the needy English Kings had two very good reasons for favouring foreign shipping at the expense of English. The first was that they were often dependent on the foreigners for loans, the second that these foreigners were ready to pay handsomely and on the nail for their privileges, whereas the English merchants were experts in circumventing the revenue officials.

The final establishment of the staple at Calais at least allowed English wool to be carried in English ships across the Channel without exciting German jealousy. But to carry cloth to Flanders was like taking coals to Newcastle, and it was obviously impracticable to force this new trade through the bottle-neck of Calais. The English merchant who shipped a cargo of cloth might look for his market as far North as Iceland or as far East as Danzig. But the Icelandic trade was a Danish monopoly, and to sail Eastward was to encounter the full force of Hanse opposition, which might take the form of piracy by sea or expulsion from the market on land.

In 1406, the shippers of cloth were incorporated by Henry IV under the appropriate name of Merchant Adventurers, a development of the Mercers' Gild. Unlike the steady-going staplers, they were veritable thrusters of commerce, forcing their way to customers without much help from the home authorities and usually in the teeth of foreign opposition. The Danish King might put diplomatic pressure on Henry VI to veto the Iceland trade, except *via* his own staple and custom-house at Bergen, but the trade went merrily on in the teeth of prohibition. Indeed, scant delicacy of scruple appears to have troubled our master mariners of the fifteenth century. Open piracy was all too frequently practiced, and such harbours as Fowey in Cornwall provided secure bases for the operations of these early gentlemen adventurers.

The great struggle was with the Hanse for a right to share in the Baltic and North Sea trade. In this our merchants received little aid from the Lancastrian Kings, except for a few years when the strong hand and powerful navy of Henry V were available for their protection and complaints of German piracy ceased. It was just such a fight as was to be waged by the Elizabethan sea-dogs to break the Spanish monopoly in the West, and with little or no support from their own Kings, the English merchants, matched against the powerful organization of the League, were at a terrible disadvantage. A company specially incorporated for trade with the Baltic was unable to survive, but the Adventurers held on, and in spite of all odds, the volume and scope of English trade steadily increased. They at first

made the false move of fixing their staple at Bruges, but this did not suit the rich cloth-weaving burghers of that town, who thought it in the nature of things that the wool should come to them straight from the sheep's back. The Adventurers, therefore, shifted their headquarters to the neighbouring town of Antwerp, which aspired to be not a producing but a trading city, a mart for the whole civilized world, and thence they catered for a wide market, extending into Southern Germany. There were many vicissitudes and a good deal of sheer piracy on both sides, and it was only towards the end of the century, when the Hanse was beginning to go to pieces and a strong business monarch sat on the English throne, that the tide could be said to have turned definitely in our favour.

Meanwhile our enterprising merchants were pushing our trade along the ancient route from the Mediterranean. Our friendly connection with Portugal, that was to be a cornerstone of our policy for centuries to come, was established before the end of the fourteenth century, and during the fifteenth Lisbon swarmed with English traders. With the Spanish Kingdoms we were almost equally successful in pushing our trade. It was in 1458 that a Bristol merchant, named Sturmys, made the first English bid for a share in the Levantine trade that had hitherto been monopolized by Italians. The Genoese promptly proceeded to capture and plunder this presumptuous interloper's ship, but the government at home managed to exact reparation by seizing and holding to ransom all the Genoese they could lay hands on. Sturmys was but the pioneer of what was to grow into a flourishing trade with the Near East.

Thus in the fourteenth century, if England was suffering from a spiritual decline, she was wide awake to the main chance, and busily laying the foundations of her industrial and commercial prosperity. Just as the thirteenth century is distinguished by an ardent, if imperfect spiritual energy and aspiration, so the fifteenth is characterized by the hustling materialism of a middle class just beginning to feel its feet and to realize that money may talk as loudly as birth. In the great cloth-working district of East Anglia, with its enormous perpendicular churches, so strangely out of proportion to the needs of the present-day population, we may catch something of the spirit of this time, and it lives again for us in the correspondence, happily preserved for us, of some of these new-rich families, Pastons, Stonors, Celys—for the knowledge of the three R's was no longer a clerical nor even a masculine monopoly, and success in complicated business operations is not compatible with illiteracy.

The business man was coming into his own. The organization of the craft gilds, on which our industry was based, was steadily becoming less democratic, and the master-craftsman, working up his own materials in his own shop, was being gradually replaced by the capitalist employer, on the one hand, and the hired worker on the other. The richer trading gilds were establishing a supremacy over the associations of handicraft workers in the same material, and gilds were tending to become highly exclusive clubs of comparatively rich men, controlled by ever-narrowing oligarchies. No longer was it possible for the apprentice without connections to count on setting up for himself as an independent master-craftsman. There was a tendency for certain of these groups—the drapers for instance and the saddlers—to get control over others that worked in the same material, and, in fact, to become associations of employers to which these humbler workers stood in the light of labourers. The class of journeymen, or hired workers, became more numerous as time went on, and they developed enough class-consciousness to form unions of their own, often under the convenient fiction of honouring some saint.

It is in Bristol that we can get most closely into touch with the go-ahead, commercial spirit that inspired the Adventurers of the fifteenth century. There is a sufficiency of still existing material for the imagination to form some idea of what it must have been like in these palmy days of its merchant princes. There was first and foremost the great Canynge, whose austere, hawk-like features are chiselled on his tomb in Saint Mary Redclyffe, which he rebuilt, and part of whose great house is now a furniture shop hard by. This man owned upwards of sixty ships; he at one time practically monopolized our trade with Iceland, and Edward IV was his guest at the house in Redclyffe Street. There was Sturmys, already mentioned as the pioneer of our Levantine trade, Shipward, who bequeathed to posterity the sumptuous church of Saint Stephen, with its slender, unbuttressed tower, an architectural *tour de force*, Frampton, whose beautiful effigy lies in the Church of St. John above the gate, to name only one or two of the most prominent.

Fifteenth-century Bristol must evidently, even to a modern eye, have been rolling in money, and its oligarchy of rich business men were not lacking in the old Greek virtue of magnificence. If they played the skin game with its utmost rigour—and nobody can doubt this who is acquainted with fifteenth-century correspondence, or has gazed on the alabaster features of Canynge—they knew also

how to spend nobly, and for the honour of their native town. But of spiritual aspiration there is none. Saint Mary Redclyffe is nothing more nor less than opulence translated into architecture, the spacious magnificence of the Kings of Commerce. The contrast is more striking if we look at the stone figures, piled up in a corner, that served for corbels in the Early English Church which Canynge's structure replaced. These present a spectacle, intolerably poignant, of the human race crushed to the earth beneath a load of sin. The impression one gets from the new Saint Mary's is that the only sin worth bothering about is poverty.

The impression is strengthened if we go out of Bristol on a tour through East Somerset, whose spacious churches, distinguished by their magnificent towers, bear witness to the wealth and munificence of its clothiers and wool farmers, and also to the tendency of the cloth manufacture to expand from the gild-ridden towns to country cottages. We shall get a false impression of fifteenth century England if we visualize it merely as the cockpit of aristocratic factions, or as a defeated and humiliated nation. Whither the new spirit that had replaced the Gothic Christianity was tending was a matter hidden from contemporary eyes, but that the England so frankly zealous in the service of Mammon was, economically at any rate, a rising power, there could be no doubt whatever.

The Perpendicular Compromise

This essentially compromising and English spirit is revealed in the so-called perpendicular style of architecture, which reigned supreme during the fifteenth century, but was already worked out in all its essentials by the middle of the fourteenth The South transept of Gloucester is the birthplace and the cathedral itself the nursery of what constitutes one of the most significant and unique developments of English creative genius.

Poor Edward II, who had been done to death with hellish tortures in Berkeley Castle, had been offered for burial to the Augustinian canons at Bristol. These unworthy fathers were afraid to give so much as the hospitality of a grave to their murdered sovereign. Abbot Thokey of Gloucester was either a man of more generous spirit, or else had a more accurate sense of the business value of the proposition. For, to the medieval monastery, a practicable saint was worth

more than his weight in gold. Accordingly the poor, feckless, waster-monarch was enshrined beneath a tomb that constitutes the most superb of all examples of decorated tabernacle work, and his gaze, upturned to heaven from between his curling locks, is Christlike in its assurance of perfect peace. The investment proved a profitable one for the monastery, and the stream of contributions to the sainted monarch's shrine, at which the usual miracles were performed, must have caused severe heart-burnings at Bristol.

Thokey's successor, Abbot Wygmore, thus found himself with ample funds for improving upon the massive simplicity of old Abbot Serlo's Norman transepts and choir. Fortunately, he had not only the money, but there were in Gloucester a fraternity of skilled masons with ideas in advance of their time. Some ninety years previously the monks had tried the experiment of reroofing their own nave, and had made a fearfully botched piece of work of it, so that no abbot was likely to employ anybody but professionals in future. The Gloucester craftsmen had therefore full scope. Their genius was essentially decorative. What they did was to standardize decoration, to cover walls and windows with a uniform, rectangular pattern, the effect of which might be exceedingly opulent, but which could in its very nature bear no organic relation to constructional realities. Such work produced the most impressive effect when, as at Gloucester and Winchester, the skeleton of the structure was already bequeathed by predecessors to whom a church was a building, and not a mere framework to be filled with ornament.

It is not by chance that in looking at some of those panelled walls and chessboard windows we should be faintly reminded of the uniform rectangularity of a modern factory building. For it is just this formal standardization, which we here see in its fair infancy, that is the very essence of modern capitalist production. It was no longer a question of monks or citizens and craftsmen gathered together in one place to put up a House of God that should be the expression in stone of one common faith and aspiration. You settled and paid for a building of the required degree of magnificence. The builder would do his part in providing oblongs of a recognized size that might be filled with statuary or other decoration that could be ordered from gilds of craftsmen in distant towns; so too with the windows, the irregular spacings made by the old, flowing tracery, that put so exacting a demand on the skill of the local glassmaker, were got rid of, and the glass could now be supplied, often from abroad, in rectangular sheets that could easily be fitted into their

framework of mullion and transom. Already in religious and secular architecture we can detect the first stirrings of the capitalist spirit.

But the perpendicular style was directed to other and nobler ends than those of standardized decoration. As befitted the Renaissance, the supreme need for which architecture catered was that of light. The dim mysterious radiance that struggled through the coloured glass of windows that were often little more than slits, was no longer enough. Even the flowing tracery of the decorated style was not of sufficient strength to sustain such enormous areas of glass as the East windows of York, Winchester, and Gloucester. Wall space was everywhere reduced to a minimum, and in old parish churches, even where the rest of the fabric was left alone, it was seldom that the lancets or round arches of the East wall were not scrapped to make room for as big a window as the fabric would stand. The Lady Chapel at Gloucester, which was built more than a hundred years after the transformation of the Norman choir, is little more than a skeleton fabric to accommodate a blazing expanse of glass.

Spaciousness as well as light was needed in this new birth of the human intellect. Like the Parthenon, a religious building aimed less at expressing solemn aspiration than clear and serene thought. But the Englishman, with his instinct of compromise, was not prepared to abandon himself unreservedly to the classical proportions and horizontal lines of the Italian cathedrals. In certain aspects, indeed, the tendency is towards strength and constructional simplicity. The decorated windows are saved from the meaningless extravagance of the French flamboyant style by being caught up, as it were, and held fast in a rectangular framework. And by gradual stages the ground plan of the church itself approximates to the rectangular form. The distinction between nave and side aisle is emphasized as little as possible, and the tendency is for the aisles to be pushed out on either side of the choir, sensibly detracting from the unique importance of the altar and Mass sacrifice, and significantly minimizing the distinction between priesthood and laity symbolized in the division of choir and nave. Finally, in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, we attain to the simplicity of one, vast aisleless hall, vaulted over with sumptuous fan tracery, another innovation of Gloucester masoncraft. If, as befits the place, one is moved less to spiritual aspiration than to solemn and spacious thought, something of the Gothic uprush survives in those ribbed bouquets of stone. The style is, in fact, a compromise, but a lovely

and harmonious compromise, between the new intellectuality and the old faith.

Gorgeous beyond our imagining these buildings must have seemed when every niche contained its saint and every window its proper glass, when walls and effigies glowed with colours long since faded away. Where money was not lacking—and in the fifteenth century it was being made with unprecedented rapidity—the independent crafts were able to fill the rectangular framework with the most lavish ornamentation. Chantry chapels, opulent of detail and colouring, were available for those whose means might run to some remission of a sentence in purgatory, or for devout gildsmen. The monumental masons were kept fully employed, and for those who could not afford solid tombs, enriched with weepers and heraldic devices, there was available the skill of the worker in brasses. The art of figure sculpture, life-sized and diminutive, in alabaster was one developed to a high pitch of excellence by gilds or firms of " alabaster-men ", whose works were in demand all over the country. The wood carvers displayed their mastery in such glorious rood screens as those of Shoreham in Kent and Cullompton in Devonshire, which successfully applied the principles of fan tracery in stone to their own very different material ; the carved misericordes of elaborately canopied stalls show that the Gothic exuberance of fancy is by no means dead ; the stone vaulting is no more successful in its kind than the elaborately carpentered roofs adorned with angels and other carvings, that span countless perpendicular naves ; finally the towers and spires are, by general admission, unsurpassed in any period of our architecture.

And yet all the time, surely though unperceived, the faith and democracy that were the very life of Gothic were ebbing away.

Exuberance in detail is accompanied by a gradually loosening grasp upon essentials. The early English church was at once a creed and a hymn, a song in stone sent up to heaven almost spontaneously by the whole body of the people. With the utmost licence to the individual craftsman it could not go wrong because, as the doctors of that time would have put it, each small world, though complete it itself, is complete only as a member of a great world. The microcosmi of craftsmanship fitted inevitably, by faith and love, into the macrocosmus of the building. In the fourteenth century the bands of faith were weakening, in the fifteenth they had palpably ceased to bind. The mere straight-waistcoating of the whole building—walls, windows, buttresses, and all—into an endless

series of upright rectangles is, in itself, a confession of failure. The stone lines could no longer be trusted to soar into anthems of faith—the decorated window had already proved as much—and to confine them within a framework of panelling was better than to let them run wild into the meaningless self-advertisement of the flamboyant.[1] But for all that, a rectangular framework is a lifeless and even a mortifying expedient.

Gothic had been the art of a people, the perpendicular is coming, to an ever-increasing extent, to be that of specialists. No longer is the spontaneous expression that comes to the lips on beholding some elaborately traceried roof or carved screen, "praise God!" but rather, "what a magnificent *tour de force*!" And along with this we often see a lack of conscience in workmanship, a tendency to put all the best goods into the shop window, that too plainly heralds a commercial age. Here we quote Mr. Ditchfield's admirable little handbook on Gothic Architecture: "We have noticed the earnest striving after the highest developments of artistic sculpture and decoration which characterized the early masons. No skill, no pains, no labour were too great to bestow upon the edification of God's House. Now, when faith was declining, the carvers seem only to have thought about saving themselves trouble, and their carving was all shallow and often coarse and hard."

The universal standardization was producing its inevitable effect of annihilating both personal and local individuality. In Wells, for instance, the man with the toothache and the early English statues on the West front are as racy of the West Country as a local farmer's pronunciation of Zummerzet, but the elaborate fifteenth century chantries of Bishop Bubwith and Treasurer Sugar might equally well have enriched any sacred edifice from Berwick to the Lizard. Moreover, the imager in stone has lost the faculty of expressing deep or spiritual feeling—a grosser contrast can hardly be imagined than that between the kings and saints of the Wells façade and the grotesque company of swollen-headed apostles that a later age superimposed to complete the scheme.

Under the influence of the new humanism art was becoming both secular and commercial. The perpendicular style is really an heroic and surprisingly successful attempt to express the things

[1] That it was choice and not incapacity that determined the rejection of the flamboyant style by English architects is suggested by a window in the choir of Peterborough Cathedral, a perfect specimen of flamboyant tracery, as early as the fourteenth century.

of God in terms of Mammon. But the combination was too unnatural to last, and even before the catastrophe of the Reformation religious architecture was giving place to secular. The glory of the Tudor age was the house not of God but of man, and most of all of the rich man.

The comparatively peaceful conditions that resulted from the reign of law and freedom from invasion were signalized by the rise of the house, as distinct from the fortress, the spacious and well-timbered residences and manor houses a few of which are still standing inhabited, and which add so picturesque a feature to the country landscape. The freedom and growing prosperity of the towns is reflected in such beautiful old streets as the ravages of fire and modern commerce have spared—conspicuously in the Rows of Chester. A new type of secular building appears, here as abroad, to fulfil the demands of burghal life—Guildhalls, Moot Halls, and the like—though we have nothing of this kind in England on the scale and magnificence of Flemish developments.

Even in the villages, a substantial cottage architecture is beginning to displace the miserable collection of mud and wattled hovels. It is significant of the underlying democracy of Gothic that here, in the dwellings of the poor, the principles of Gothic construction are retained longest, down, in fact, to the very close of the seventeenth century. In the West of England, where stone is plentiful, it is not uncommon to come across the door of a cottage that might quite as appropriately serve for a church. Everywhere the construction, adapted to the nature of the local material and the demands of the climate, is thrust boldly, even defiantly into prominence. The cottage interior speaks roundly, with its naked rafters and massive proportions, of the struggle waged by civilized man against the blind forces of nature, just as the Gothic church speaks to him of the soul's aspiration to rise heavenward against the deadweight of spiritual dullness and sin.

Humanism, that produced so glorious a harvest of painting in Italy, was by no means unfruitful in England, though pious vandalism has swept away all but a few isolated relics. Even of these it is not always easy to say whether they are by English artists. The magnificent portrait of Richard II at Westminster Abbey, and the penetrating character study of Richard III at the National Portrait Gallery, are by unknown artists, and therefore, according to the school of expert criticism that exalts Lely above Riley and everything foreign above everything English, by unknown foreigners. It was,

in fact, customary to assume that an English master fit for comparison with a Mabuse or a Ghirlandajo did not and could not have existed. This comforting faith has been rudely shaken by the uncovering, in Eton College Chapel, of a series of frescoes by an indubitable Englishman, of the homely name of Baker, whose mastery of line and vividness of expression would have done credit to the greatest masters of that Flanders in which he seems to have served his apprenticeship. The recent exhibition of English primitives has gone far to justify the belief that English painting, in the period we are considering, was of far greater merit than it has been customary to admit, and that, in particular, a school of native portraiture had arisen towards the close of the fifteenth century, strongly tinged with the influence of the Flanders that lay almost at our doors and was bound to us by so ancient a commercial tie.

The artistic connection between England and Flanders was strongest of all in the realm of music. Here at least England may claim to have been in the van of European progress. We have the evidence of Erasmus who says that the English challenge supremacy in these three things, "in having the most handsome women, of being the most accomplished in the skill of music, and of keeping the best tables." It is characteristic of our attitude towards any artist who has not the recommendation of being a foreigner that perhaps the most considerable musician of the fifteenth century, John Dunstable, whom Dr. Walker characterizes as the earliest composer of any nationality who can be said to have had an artistic style, was, until very recently, so far forgotten in the land of his birth as to have been actually confused with St. Dunstan. In England, Dunstable's influence died with him, perhaps swept into oblivion by the Wars of the Roses. Not so on the Continent and particularly in the Netherlands, where his fame was recognized and his influence potent in the fixing of those contrapuntal laws which resulted in the "Golden Age" of the sixteenth century. It may thus fairly be claimed that the father of modern music is an Englishman, developed in the school and tradition that had grown naturally since the songs of Fornsete in the thirteenth century. For, till the casting of the Puritan blight, England was, among European nations, pre-eminently the land of song.

BOOK II

PROTESTANT CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER I

THE DAWN OF THE MODERN AGE

1

The New Learning

The Gothic ideal, which had produced such glorious fruit, was in a process of decline long before the coming of the Tudors, but the cause must be admitted to have lain largely in its own limitations. A splendid energy was its keynote, but it lacked the intellectual content which sooner or later the human mind, in its incessant blind groping after perfection, is bound to demand. Even the greatest medieval thinkers, even Roger Bacon, thought in shackles; their search for truth was not disinterested. Truth was to be valued in so far as it might lead to salvation. "What doth it profit," cries St. Thomas a Kempis, "to argue about dark and hidden things, concerning which we shall not even be reproved in the judgment because we know them not?" To the medieval God it was thus a matter of comparative indifference whether the talent of intellect were put to a profit, or wrapped up securely in a white napkin of faith, so long as good works multiplied and the heart was sound.

"Be ye perfect," had been the counsel of Christ, but the perfection at which the Church aimed was a perfection of the heart and will. Such a limited perfection is inconceivable, and it has been the salvation of mankind that to some part of it, at least, any permanent limitation of its ideal has been intolerable. The dialectic idealism of Plato, the eightfold doctrine of the Buddha, the divine contemplation that is at the heart of Dante's mystic rose, all these serve not as abiding places but as bridges. The cry is always for light, and the light is always before us.

Before the exuberance of the medieval springtide had passed away from England, signs of another spirit, at once less spiritual and more charged with thought, might have been perceived. For

over Italy, where the spirit of Gothic Christianity had never been perfectly assimilated, a new light had dawned, or, shall we say, an old sun had risen again. The bitter cry of the apostate Caesar, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!" had been true only for a time. The old gods were not dead, but sleeping; the cult of a harmonious and intellectual beauty, of a life ordered according to reason, never quite died out, even in the Middle Ages. The law, the language, the Imperial dignity of Rome had not ceased—dimly understood and imperfectly rendered, some at least of the classical authors were known and honoured; to Aquinas, Aristotle in Latin was *the* philosopher, to Dante, Virgil was embodied reason. And the spectacle of Rome, though in ruins, her vast amphitheatre, her Pantheon, Constantine's basilica of St. Peter in which the great Charles had been half surprised into accepting the crown of the West, still remained to fire the imagination. It was for the tribune Rienzi, that strange blend of genius and charlatan, to revive, in the absence of the Pontiff, the forms and splendour of the Roman Republic and publicly to hold the festival of a united Italy. He failed, but his friend and admirer, Petrarch, carried on the revival of the Roman spirit in the realm of thought and letters. At the same time the "eloquent and famed" Boccaccio was not only laying the foundations of European prose fiction, but was the first of the great Italians to be versed in the Greek language.

It was with the coming of Greek that the full glory of the Renaissance burst upon Italy in the fifteenth century. It used to be supposed that Greek came to Italy as a result of the fall of Constantinople, but though this catastrophe undoubtedly had the effect of sending Greek scholars westward, for more than fifty years previously the revival had been going on. Boccaccio had learnt it from a Calabrian called Pilatus, and in 1395 a Byzantine scholar of noble family, Manuel Chrysoloras, had been persuaded to reside and teach at Florence. He gave to the West translations of Homer and Plato, and it was the cult of Plato which, more than anything else, gave its tone and enthusiasm to the new humanism. Under the auspices of the great Lorenzo an academy, one of several in Italy, discussed first and last things on the banks of the Arno, and a lamp, on the anniversary of the philosopher's death, was burned before his flower-crowned bust.

This fifteenth century was essentially an epoch of collection, of critical scholarship, of conscious imitation, in Italian thought and letters. For an epoch of such astonishing intellectual activity,

there are surprisingly few literary works of the first order, between the time of Boccaccio and that of Ariosto and Tasso. Amid an age of enlightenment and a succession of brilliant personalities we look in vain for the achievement of a Rabelais, a Shakespeare, a Cervantes. It was rather the work of Valla and Politian, of Nicholas V and the Medici, by giving back the Athenian " beauty without extravagance and contemplation without unmanliness ", to create the atmosphere in which alone such achievement was possible. It was the golden age of libraries ; the acquisition of a Greek manuscript was as much a triumph as a successful battle, and the priceless Vatican library grew under the auspices of that liberal-minded Pope, Nicholas V.

It is in the plastic arts that fifteenth century Italy will live, not only by what she made possible but by what she brought to finished perfection. The very glory of the recovered classics put the native literature, which had already found expression in the Divine Comedy and the Decameron, somewhat into the shade. The " vulgar eloquence " for which Dante had pleaded seemed a poor and barbarous thing beside the sonorous periods of Cicero and the limpid ease of the Platonic dialogues. Men might express themselves with as much accuracy and finish as the Bishop of St. Praxed's aspired after in his marble epitaph, but it is the curse of Babel that a transplanted language never thrives. In painting, however, there was little enough classical tradition to follow, and the language of sculpture is universal. The thirteenth century had gone down upon the advent of Giotto, that master whose technique so strangely anticipates, in certain respects, that of our advanced moderns. Another century was to pass before the new spirit of inquiry and scientific realism found unmistakable expression in the too short career of Masaccio.

Florence was alike the intellectual and artistic centre, Florence, whose genius was as precise, as clearly defined and rational, as that of Venice was sensuous and passionate. Some of her masters play with perspective like children with a new toy. A cold, inquiring light, like that of the dawn upon the pictured Venus rising from the sea, is turned upon all objects, even the most sacred. The simple faith, which had blindly accepted anything that could claim the sanction of authority, had no place in the new scheme of things. The father of Higher Critics, Lorenzo Valla, might pour scorn on the forged Donation of Constantine, that strange buttress by which the medieval Popes had supported the power of their Church, and when things began to look ominous for him, the Pope himself

found him a safe billet as an official of the Curia. The very priests, as they performed the awful miracle of creating the body and blood of Christ, would sometimes remark, in an undertone, "Bread thou art, bread thou wilt remain! Wine thou art, wine thou wilt remain!"

Above all, life itself was breaking free from the shackles of medievalism, from all shackles. From a vision of a peace beyond the grave, made perfect in God's will, the men of the Renaissance turned to the beauty of this world, a joy by no means passing understanding. It is difficult for us, in our more harassed time, to conceive the urgent intensity of life in the Florence of the Medici, the mightiness of work in the creation of beauty and of delight in its enjoyment. The humble and holy man of heart, who deliberately turned away from the world in order to follow after spiritual joys, became less rejected than inconceivable. Even Christ must be a beautiful and urbane figure, clad in soft raiment, a man of joy, or else a rude hero shattering the very universe with his gesture. No scruples will stand in the way of this new hunger for life; torture and poisoning become fine arts. And yet the forms of medieval Christianity remain after the Renaissance has boxed the compass upon their spirit—a fact of ominous import.

It is characteristic of our national modesty, or perhaps of our incapacity to understand our own distinctive bent, that we should talk of the scholarship and humanism of the Renaissance as things slowly and imperfectly acquired from the more enlightened Latins. It is, of course, true that we had not the opportunity of importing Greek teachers and of acquiring ancient manuscripts that fell to the lot of the Italians, nor had we the nimbleness of mind and the delight in intellectual culture for its own sake that lent such charm and brilliance to the city of the Medici; our genius is more deliberate, less disinterested, but marked by a certain earnestness of concentration, a determination to grapple with all the facts, that makes less for brilliance than durability.

England's debt to Italy and subsequently to France, during the Renaissance, was immense and freely acknowledged. But at no time was she content to be merely a pupil. What she acquired she made her own and used in her own way. The very suppleness of the Italian made him inclined to throw his own civilization overboard in order to become a perfect Platonist or Ciceronian. But the oak of British civilization was too tightly rooted to the shores of its native Thames to be dug up and planted by the Ilyssus. Englishmen have ever been too canny, or too suspicious, to give themselves with

enthusiasm to the full current of any new idea, whether this take the form of humanism or Bolshevism.

Besides which, Englishmen had been doing solid, if not showy work on their own account towards the release of thought and the recovery of the ancient heritage. We have already followed the work of Oxford scholars, of Duns, of Bacon and of Occam, in loosening the intellectual bondage of medievalism. We have seen the Protestant Reformation implicit in the teaching of Wycliffe. Nor had Italy by any means the monopoly of the classical revival. Long before Chrysoloras came to teach at Florence, Roger Bacon had insisted upon the importance of an accurate study of languages, and particularly of Greek and Hebrew. He even went so far as to write a Greek grammar. Some knowledge of Greek, though necessarily very imperfect and fragmentary, was kept alive, especially by members of Bacon's order, the Franciscans.

According to their opportunities, Englishmen were also zealous collectors of books and manuscripts. Bishop Grosseteste, the friend of Simon de Montfort, was himself an importer and translator of Greek manuscripts. The tutor of Edward III, Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, though perhaps not a scholar of the first rank, was an ardent and delightful book-lover. Wherever he went his floor was soon covered with piles of books, so that his friends often found some difficulty in approaching him. He met Petrarch, who describes him as "a man of burning ingenuity". Books were to him living friends, the objects of his tenderest, his most lavish affection. "O fitting and appropriate place for a library!" he exclaims beautifully of the ark, which held the tables of the law, and "O gracious love of books!" is the cry that wells spontaneously from his heart. He was an indefatigable collector, and it was characteristic of him and of his England, that though he loved the ancients, literature to him was a living and not a dead thing; his enthusiasm was generous enough to embrace his own contemporaries. "Minerva," he says, "has already visited the Indians, the Babylonians, the Egyptians and Greeks, the Arabs and Romans. Now she has passed by Paris and now as happily come to Britain, the most noble of islands, nay, rather a microcosm in itself, that she may show herself a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians."

This Bishop of Durham not only collected books, but did invaluable work in examining and often preserving from destruction the treasures of other libraries that he visited. Early in the fifteenth century a monk of Bury, of whom we know nothing but his name,

John Boston, was travelling from library to library throughout the whole of England, compiling a thorough and invaluable catalogue of their contents with the opening lines and the date of each author's birth and death. We need only mention the work accomplished during the fourteenth century in the study of Hebrew, a most important factor in the growth of a culture one of whose chief glories is its Bible. Of Nicholas de Lyra who died in 1340, the present Provost of Eton says that he was the greatest exponent of the literal sense of Scripture that the medieval world can show, and his critic and brother Franciscan, Henry of Costessy, is cited by the same high authority as displaying an insistence on the literal sense and constant reference to the original Hebrew that would have rejoiced Bacon's heart. Truly, if the scholar was abroad in Italy, he was up and doing in England as early.

Scholarship, like most other good things, did indeed suffer a decline in the dark days that closed the Hundred Years' War, and then saw the country divided against itself. It was only towards the end of the fifteenth century that England's greatest intellects began, with one accord, to go to school in Italy, and brought back the best of Italy and Athens to England. The first of a brilliant group was the prior of Christ Church, Canterbury, William of Selling, who, on his second visit, on an embassy to Italy, in 1486, took with him the young Linacre. He brought back to his priory a valuable library of Latin and Greek manuscripts, most of which was destroyed by a fire caused by the drunken retinue of Henry VIII's visitors. A yet more notable figure was William Grocyn, who also made the pilgrimage to Italy, and despite the fact that he appears to have been generally considered the most learned man of his time—Erasmus calls him a " mine of knowledge " and " the patron and preceptor of us all "—has left to posterity no more than a letter and one or two stray epigrams. It is as a personality that he is memorable, an academic Dr. Johnson, with a ready jest always at command, ceremonious in religious matters to the point of superstition, a staunch conservative by nature—he preferred Aristotle to Plato and is believed to have written against Wycliffe—and the acknowledged and beloved centre of the most intellectual society of his time. It is very characteristic of his John Bullish independence and matter-of-factness that though, in Italy, he had become acquainted with Valla's criticism of that important religious classic, the false Dionysius, he refused to be convinced and, in fact, was about to give an appreciative course of lectures on the subject, when his own investiga-

tions convinced him that the writings were after all spurious, and he bluntly said so.

All of that circle, with the exception of Thomas More, who was of a younger generation, gravitated to Italy and came back refreshed as from the fountain of light. They could not have been more fortunate in their time of going, for the Italy they visited was that of Politian, of Fielfo, of Pico, of Chalcondyles, in short of the most brilliant band of scholars grouped under the most brilliant patron of letters that post-classical Europe has seen. Florence of that time must have been almost dreamlike in the assurance of her own perfection; it was as if life had become free and joyous forever in a Platonic Utopia governed by phi'osophers, as if its secret had at last been discovered. In a few years the revulsion was to come; the terrible voice of Savonarola was to strike a chill into the hearts even of the most splendid humanists; all this brilliance was to be blasted, by the lightning of his eloquence, into the ashes of vanity and sin; already behind the Alpine barrier were forming the barbarian armies that were to overwhelm Florence and all Italy in a common ruin.

It is no discredit to our English humanists that instead of rushing blindly into the new movement and setting up Athens or Florence in Oxford, they should have put the stamp of their own spirit on the Renaissance and developed it in accordance with English needs. Certainly there was no lack of willingness to learn, nor, having learnt, to impart their knowledge. The opening of the Tudor period is pre-eminently a time not of creative achievement, but of education. Here, as in Italy, the atmosphere had to be created in which great achievement was possible, the seeds had to be sowed for the Elizabethan harvest. And as in the Italy of the fifteenth century, works of permanent literary value are disappointingly few. Dean Colet and his headmaster of St. Paul's, Lily, survive but in their school and in the Eton Latin Grammar, Linacre in the College of Physicians, Grocyn in the impression of his personality. Even the most brilliant and lovable of all, Thomas More, though he did indeed bequeath one English work of genius in his counter-blast to Tyndale, wrote his Utopia not in English but in Latin.

Italy was not the only source from which the light of the Renaissance came through to England. Perhaps the greatest literary influence of all was exercised by one who, though a Netherlander by birth, was, in so far as it can be said of anyone, a man of no nation whatever, a perfect European, who spoke and thought in

Latin, and whose life was one long campaign against stupidity. Holbein has made us familiar with the keen features and long inquiring nose of Erasmus. His scholarship may not perhaps be comparable with that of the great masters of the next century, his character may have lacked the moral earnestness of Luther's and the sweet urbanity of More's; few now care to read the works that sold through so many editions. But, take him for all in all, Erasmus is the representative man of the Renaissance. He was one who hungered and thirsted after knowledge, to whom everything human was of absorbing interest. Dullness, lack of imagination, was the obstacle he everywhere found in the way of mankind, and his *Praise of Folly* was a burning satire against spiritual darkness in high places, in the schools, the law courts, the monasteries, the aristocracy—nothing escapes, not even the throne and the Papal chair.

That this man should, for awhile, have made England his home, that he should have been honoured, appreciated, allowed to exercise his influence to the full, was an event whose importance it would be hard to underestimate. Erasmus imparted distinction to the English Renaissance, he gave its appetite for knowledge a keener edge. He pays the following memorable tribute to the England he saw:

"The men are sensible and intelligent. Many of them are even learned and not superficially either. They know their classics, and so accurately that I have lost little in not going to Italy. When Colet speaks, I might be listening to Plato. Linacre is as deep and acute a thinker as I have ever met with. Grocyn is a mine of knowledge, and nature never formed a sunnier and happier disposition than that of Thomas More. The number of young men who are studying ancient literature here is astonishing."

The New Men

The recovery of the classics was the outstanding feature of the Renaissance, and hence it is in the realm of scholarship that we have first studied its manifestations. But the effects of the new outlook on life may be traced in every department of national activity. There is no sudden or violent transition, no point at which we can say definitely, "Here Gothic ends, here the Renaissance begins." In England the one develops gradually, irregularly, and almost imperceptibly out of the other.

Even Chaucer, in whom the joyousness of the Gothic springtide finds its most perfect, if a somewhat belated expression, was, in his last and greatest period, under Italian influence. He, like his own clerk of Oxenforde, had visited Italy and fallen under the spell of the "laureate poete", Petrarch, and the form of his Canterbury Tales owes much to Boccaccio. During the century following his death we see unmistakable signs of a new outlook on life, of a new type of man to whom we instinctively apply the adjective "modern". Vivid and human as they are, these Canterbury pilgrims belong to a world incredibly more remote from our own than the social pushers and litigious worldlings of the Paston letters. The difference would be hard to define; there was enough ruffianism and intrigue in the palmiest medieval days—what has disappeared is the outlook upon life which we have ventured to describe as Gothic, its democracy, its faith and superstition, its preoccupation with the affairs of another world than this.

Of the new type of man that Italy was producing, the most conspicuous English example is perhaps John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester, whom popular opinion surnamed the Butcher, but whom Caxton exalted as a paragon of moral virtue and science. He, like so many other educated Englishmen, had studied in Italy, and while in Florence had attended the lectures of one of her great Byzantine Greek scholars, Argyropoulos. He turned this instruction to such good account that not only was he a skilful translator of Caesar and Cicero into English, but is reported to have moved the Pope himself to tears by the beauty of his Latin. He was so lavish in his purchases of books that he was said to have stripped the Italian libraries in order to enrich those of England. Unfortunately, books were not the only thing he imported from Italy. He was an artist in cruelty, and when Constable of the Tower, under Edward IV, he outraged the deepest-rooted sentiments of his countrymen by sending some Lancastrian leaders to their death under "the law of Padua"—Roman, not English law. Like that other Yorkist champion, Richard III, he is more than suspected of getting rid of children, those of the Earl of Desmond, and he introduced into England the novel practice of impaling prisoners. So popular was his execution, that it had to be postponed for a day owing to the enormous crowds blocking the way to the scaffold. Nothing could have been more exemplary than his end: "Strike thrice," he bade the headsman, "for the honour of the Trinity!"

Such characters as Tiptoft's will be familiar enough to anyone

who has studied the history of the Renaissance. The reaction from an ideal of life in which the whole duty of man was to be good and let who would be clever, was expressed in a cleverness that left who would to be good. Whether, on the eve of Bosworth, that very typical young man of the new era, Richard III, actually did feel the despair that Shakespeare depicts, is more than doubtful; we should be surprised to discover that he ever "determined to be a villain". Like Benvenuto Cellini or Tiptoft, he intended to do the best possible for himself in this world, and if a nephew or a rival happened to stand in the way, he put him out of it with the most complete innocence of scruple. It is probable that Machiavelli himself, could he come to life, would be astonished at the endless modern attempts to whitewash or to blacken his reputation. "Naturally," he would say, "a Prince has got to know his business, and if a certain amount of falsehood or blood-letting comes his way, it may as well be done properly—*noblesse oblige*! Where, after all, will you find a more charming gentleman or excellent ruler than Caesar Borgia, the prince who might have saved Italy?"

We have seen how, in the days of the Black Prince, worldliness was on the increase, how even the decorative style had marked the weakening of the Gothic ideal. If Plato had never been translated and if Italy had been as remote as Australia, it is probable that England would have arrived, in her own way, at a state of society closely resembling that which actually obtained at the end of the fifteenth century. And indeed she was by no means disposed to push the new humanism to the extreme lengths of the more logical Latins. Such characters as Tiptoft and Richard III were pretty generally regarded as monsters, and after the little episode of Deighton and Forrest came to be suspected, his kingdom became too hot to hold one of the finest soldiers and most brilliant statesmen that ever sat upon an English throne. The group of scholars who called Erasmus friend were, without exception, sober and godfearing men, occupied most of all with religious and moral problems. To reform the abuses of the Church, to get to the true sense of Scripture, was the object of them all. There was no idea, as there was in Florence, of resurrecting paganism.

Whatever its moral standards, English life, in this Renaissance noonday, was joyous and exuberant in the highest degree. For this we have the witness of what little of its colour time and holy zeal have spared. The light and diaphanous tints of an age of faith, with their other worldly suggestion, had become meaningless. Deep

crimson, gorgeous blue, and mellow gold were the colours with which Renaissance man loved to clothe his person in life, and his effigy or memorial chapel after death. He spread them over vast surfaces of glass, with them he added a new richness to the carving of his rood screens, among them, if he could afford it, he loved to live. It was an age of flowers, and most of all of the English and symbolic rose. The most pleasing part of the War of the Roses is its name, derived, so it is said, from the Inner Temple Gardens. And if we may trust the learned Erasmus, the most charming of all features of English life, from a guest's point of view, was that it seems to have been passed under one perpetual mistletoe.

8

The New Outlook

It is only natural that humanism, the main interest of which was focussed upon this world, should have led to its more thorough exploration. It is curious that the very faith that brands man with the stigma of original sin and enjoins humility and obedience as cardinal virtues should compensate for it by placing man in the centre of the universe, by making the whole universe the setting for the drama of his redemption or damnation. In the beginning God made heaven and earth, the sun, moon, and stars were arranged round the earth on the fourth day, and the culmination of the whole process was man.

"Glory to man in the highest," sings Swinburne, "for man is the master of things," but the process of his mastery has been that of the discovery of his own infinite insignificance, and this in an even deeper sense than the physical and obvious one. For man had placed himself at the centre not only of a physical but of a mental universe. He made his own mental preconceptions the mould into which the facts of the universe must fit. This had been so even with the Greeks; both Plato and Aristotle outlined the framework of their universe from their own sense of the fitness of things, and it had been the essence of St. Thomas Aquinas's philosophy to derive all knowledge logically from the premises of revealed religion. The effect of the Renaissance was to degrade man from his physical position in the centre of the universe and from his mental position as its arbiter, to strip him of his human pride and send him to experience for instruction.

Before the great voyages of discovery, the Western European had lived in a very small universe. His world consisted in a nucleus of Christian communities centring round Rome and Constantinople with an outer fringe of Paynims, a sort of dualism of men made in God's image and men made in the devil's. He had more or less vague notions of wild and monstrous tribes, Hyperboreans perhaps, or men with two heads, dotted about the outer fringe of the world, but these hardly counted. The idea of exploring the unknown was one that did not commend itself to pious minds in the Middle Ages. Ulysses, in Dante's vision, had gone out west into the Atlantic, had sighted land in the shape of the Mount of Purgatory, and very promptly been dispatched to Hell for his pains. When the Portuguese did, at last, start groping along the African coast, under the auspices of Prince Henry the Navigator, who was not a navigator at all but more like a company promoter, the motive was nothing more inspiring than a hunt after gold and slaves. Portugal and Spain, during the next century, are like nothing so much as a pair of competing business houses trying to push their connections. The papal award that secured the West to Spain sent Portugal thrusting round the Cape for India and the Spice Islands, and when the two clashed at the other side of the world, it was only narrowly that war was averted.

This was the first great awakening from the comfortably centralized notions of medievalism. It was to be followed by one still more startling. Magellan may have proved beyond a doubt that the world was round, but at least he left it, where Ptolemy had put it and Dante found it, comfortably in the centre of the universe. But Copernicus, followed by Galileo, reduced it to the level of an ordinary planet, circling, as subsequent astronomers were to establish, with a number of others round a not specially remarkable sun. The Catholic Church was quite right, from her own point of view, in combating this heresy with all her forces. Without centralization Rome would cease to be.

We will glance ahead at some of the landmarks of this humanism that proceeds by the dehumanization of the universe. The so-called "*Éclaircissement*" of the eighteenth century struck impartially at every sort of authority and in particular at the key of the position, the mind of man, which Condillac reduced to a mere mass of sensations, and of which de Tracy wrote, "to think is to feel." Almost simultaneously in the nineteenth century appeared the works of Comte and Darwin, the former consigning metaphysics, along with

theology and fetishism, to the limbo of necessary fallacies of the mind on its upward progress, the latter putting the lord of creation into his place among the great brotherhood of living things.

Mathematicians had meanwhile been outraging man's innermost preconceptions by coolly dealing with qualities and notions that his mind told him were absolutely inconceivable, quantities that may be nothing from one standpoint and infinity from another, square roots of minus quantities, systems of four or more dimensions—things that would have horrified the mind of the Greek, with his passion for clearness. In our own days has come Einstein, to reduce the rocks of space and time, on which at least we imagined ourselves secure, to the shifting sands of relativity. How much further the process can go, it would be hard to say, but if those who profess to have set up communication between the living and the dead were to establish their claim, they would but be carrying on the work of Columbus and Copernicus a stage further by demonstrating that as the universe itself is but one among many, so what we know as existence may be an infinitesimal portion of reality. That matter, like all others, must be decided by the facts themselves, but the example may serve to show, with somewhat greater clearness, what we mean by the dehumanization or decentralization of the universe.

We have used the word dehumanization advisedly, because we have wished to point to a danger which, though the humanists of the Renaissance and our own time may not have perceived it, was latent in this new trend of thought. The danger was lest the dehumanization of the universe should carry, as an actual though perhaps not necessary or logical consequence, the dehumanization of man. The medieval assumption that the whole universe centred in the drama of man's salvation had at least the consequence of enhancing human dignity. That supreme importance of the soul is the very spirit of Gothic ; it is the secret of that essential democracy which we have seen underlying the medieval social system. But a time might come when man, no longer a being with a soul, would become a pawn in a political game or a cog in a mechanism. A Barbarossa or a Hildebrand may have been as arbitrary or as unenlightened as you will, but they were more human figures than Machiavelli's Prince, and the medieval craftsman, for all the chances of violence, famine, or disease, may have been a happier and more dignified being than the well-paid, sensibly housed artisan, repeating, week in, week out, some standardized movement in some standardized moiety of a standardized process of turning out a standardized

automobile. The age-long problem, though unformulated, has been how to strip man of all his illusions, and yet at the same time to preserve intact his dignity, his soul.

At the time of which we are speaking, this problem was only in embryo, so far as England was concerned. Certain signs might have been visible to an acute enough observer. England had little part in the first business of discovery, though the Genoese Cabot had set out from Bristol, with the hearty backing of its inhabitants, who had that old Irish tale of Saint Brendan to fire their imaginations. But English imagination is slow to adapt itself to a new idea, and it is only gradually that we obtain evidence of the profound influence that this extending of the frontiers of knowledge was beginning to exercise. In a play written as early as 1515, entitled *The Four Elements*, the wonders and vastness of the new lands are described, with a lament that it should have been left to foreigners to have accomplished so noble an enterprise as their discovery.

None the less, the mere fact of these new lands springing, as it were, into existence, had wrought a profound change which only gradually came to be appreciated. For, by a singular reversal of the general tendency of the time, it was as if England, from being a remote island on the edge of the world, had been removed and planted in its very centre. With her wealth of harbours, she lay in a position equally convenient for the Atlantic passage or the voyage round the Cape to India, besides her nearness to the Low Countries and her ready access to the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea. It was, in fact, a position of unique geographical advantage, and just as Rome had constituted the imperial centre of the lands bordering the Mediterranean, so, it might have been predicted, if a vaster Empire were destined to arise, connected by waterways and extending over the whole world, no more probable nucleus for it could be imagined than England.

The discovery of the new world was matched in importance by another extension of man's power over nature in the invention, or more strictly speaking, the development of printing. Three factors combined to produce this result; the general adoption of paper in the fourteenth century for manuscripts and documents, the invention in Germany, or possibly in Holland, of printing machinery, and the demand created by the Renaissance for books and information of all kinds. To any cultured thinker of that time, the diffusion and cheapening of knowledge must have seemed an unalloyed blessing, and so, as far as that time was concerned, it

undoubtedly proved. The dangers of a cheap press, of the blighting of thought and the manipulation of opinion, were as yet far off in time. The first printers were scholars and essentially conservative. Aldus Manutius, the great printer and publisher of Venice, was the founder of its "New Academy". The first printed books were as much works of art and individual care as the old monkish manuscripts. Our own Caxton, who had learnt the craft while acting as Governor to the Merchant Adventurers in the Low Countries, originally introduced it into England for his own translation of a French romance.

It is impossible to read the prefaces, in beautiful prose, that this man wrote to his books, without realizing that if to us the turning out of a book from the press is the most ordinary of commercial transactions, to Caxton it was a high and holy service to his country and to mankind. He fully appreciated the power of his new art to promote national unity. A common language had been gradually evolving ever since the Conquest, but even in Caxton's time much still remained to be done. "We Englishmen," he says, "be under the domination of the moon, which is never steadfast, but ever wavering, waxing in one season and waneth and decreaseth another season. And that common English that is spoken in one shire varyeth from another insomuch that in my days happened that certain merchants were in a ship in Thames for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they turned at the Foreland and went to land for to refresh them. And one of them, named Sheffield, a mercer, came into a house and asked for meat, and especially he asked after eggs; and the good wife answered that she could speak no French, and the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, and would have had eggs, but she understood him not. And then at last another said that he would have 'eyren'; then the good wife said that she understood him well. Lo, what should a man in these days now write, eggs or eyren?" The printing press was to supply the answer.

It was not enough to Caxton that there should be one English, it must also be good English, worthy of the land that Caxton loved so wisely and so well. "We ought," he says, "to give a singular laud unto that noble and great philosopher, Geoffrey Chaucer . . . for to-fare that he by labour embellished, ornated and made fair our English." To give Englishmen one tongue, and that as noble and expressive as any in history, was the task that this unpretentious craftsman set before himself and the press. He was a veritable

high priest of enlightenment. The books that he gave to his countrymen were selected with the deliberate purpose of promoting "the good prosperity and policy of the commonwealth". He regrets that the one of the world's nine worthies, Arthur, who was a Briton, is celebrated more worthily abroad than at home, and with the aid of Sir Thomas Malory's beautiful prose he sets himself to remedy the lack. "Oh," he cries, in his preface to Cato, "when I remember the noble Romans, that for the common weal of the city of Rome they spent not only their movable goods but they put their bodies and lives in jeopardy and to the death . . . in my judgment it is the best book for to be taught to young children in school, and also of people of every age."

The silent revolution accomplished by printing was soon to make itself felt in the stimulus that it gave to th quick diffusion of ideas and the formation of public opinion. Men began to think more for themselves, to be less inclined to have their opinions dictated to them by authority. The desire, ministered to at first by Wycliffe, to read and judge God's word for themselves in their own tongue, was now greatly strengthened and contributed in no small degree to the growth of Protestantism.

4

The Passing of Custom

The passing of the medieval world was accompanied by a change of less obviousness but not less importance than any we have yet described. Despite the abounding life and energy of the Gothic period, it had been, in the material sphere, compared with what was to follow, a time of stability. Steady development there had been, but no revolutionary change. Stability and not progress was the aim that medieval thinkers and statesmen set before themselves. When the affairs of this life were in all seriousness believed to be of lesser importance than the prospects of a life to come, the pursuit of welfare could hardly be identified with that of wealth. In his small and centralized world, man, being in God's image, still remained in the centre of the picture. He might be, and often was, unscrupulous and whole-hearted in the pursuit of gain, but this was recognized by common consent as a sin, the deadly sin of avarice. It was to prefer the means of life to its end, to make the meat more than the life and the raiment than the body. St. Thomas Aquinas, in treating of economic questions, did not trouble about

increasing the general dividend or even about the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but he asked first of all how far the pursuit of worldly wealth was consistent with that of eternal salvation.

Here, as elsewhere, man purchased his control over nature at some sacrifice of his own dignity—a medieval doctor would have called it his soul. Unconsciously he tends to substitute material for spiritual standards, to judge of a business transaction upon business principles. This, in the long-winded terminology of our own day, is known as the secularization of economic life. Its ultimate tendency is to replace God's image by the economic man or Robot. Whether such a process has been for the good may be open to discussion, but that some such change was, humanly speaking, inevitable, is beyond doubt. For medieval Christianity envisaged a state of society that was, in its main outlines, fixed and unchanging. In that society every man had his niche—military history has never known a more independent specimen of humanity than one of the Black Prince's yeomen archers, and yet the archer would no more have dreamed of carrying a marshal's staff in his quiver than he would have of being lashed to the triangle and flogged in the good old Peninsular style. The manor was a self-contained unit, carrying on from generation to generation on a customary and not a business footing; the craft gild was another such unit, of a limited number of craftsmen doing a limited amount of work by prescribed methods and for a fair price. With such a people as the Chinese this state of things might have become one of stable equilibrium, the different classes and social units might have continued a contented but unexciting existence to this day. But it is not in the nature of Western peoples to stand still; the energy of Amiens Cathedral and the Crusades could no more be confined within such limits than a hundredweight of lighted gunpowder can be kept in a barrel.

When we talk of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as being times of economic stability we are, therefore, only using the word in a purely relative sense. For any other people than those of Western Europe they would have seemed centuries of bewildering change. Even without the discovery of America and the Renaissance, the medieval system must have broken down; it was, indeed, showing signs of breaking down as early as the Black Death. If such a poem as *Piers Plowman* is evidence of its author's love of a well-graded social hierarchy, it is evidence also of his fear that this desirable state of things is in peril from the wickedness of men. "All is lost," as Chaucer put it, "from lack of steadfastness."

And yet the fifteenth century in England must be regarded as a time of incubation rather than as one of striking or revolutionary change. The manor remained the unit of country life, the gild that of town life, without any alteration in either sufficiently marked to strike the imagination of contemporaries. The villeinage, which had been the burning grievance of Wat Tyler and his followers, almost died out of its own accord. The last remnants of feudal control were being extinguished in the towns. These no doubt beneficent changes had been accompanied by another of graver import. The bonds of spiritual union that had held both manor and gild together had been imperceptibly loosened; soon they would cease to bind. These bonds were custom and religion.

To take the manor first, it was, in its origin, as much a military as an economic unit. If the serf laboured so many days a week on his lord's demesne, the lord was at least supposed to give him leadership and protection against whatever enemies might threaten his peace, whether these took the form of Vikings, or marauding Scots, or the lords of other estates. That the lord did not become an arbitrary tyrant, rackrenting and evicting at will, was due to the extraordinary force of custom, the custom which was declared in the manor court by the general voice of the little community. There was, at first, comparatively little business done with money, though what there was was accurately settled according to custom down to the uttermost farthing. Gradually, however, the lords of manors made exactly the same discovery as the King with regard to payment by service—that it was thoroughly bad business. Just as the King had accepted "scutage" money instead of knight service, so the lords began to accept money rents in lieu of labour rents. Tentatively, no doubt, at first, Gurth would pay his penny or halfpenny when he was not wanted, on the distinct understanding that he should turn out on the demesne when he was wanted. Gradually, however, it would become the custom for Gurth to pay his few pence, year after year, until those pence and not his labour became the price of his strip in the common field. This sort of tenure was known as customary, because it was held by the custom of the manor, and it came gradually to supersede villeinage.

A powerful factor in sustaining the authority of custom was the comparative stability of the medium of exchange. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the tendency was slightly in the direction of a fall of prices. Silver, which formed the standard of value, was on the decrease in Western Europe, because its mining resources

were not sufficient to replace the drain to the East for luxuries. Hence the lord would find the value of his rents, if anything, increasing, and there would be proportionately less incentive for him to alter the status quo. The first notable disturbance of economic stability came in the visitation of the bubonic plague which, by sweeping away so large a proportion of the labourers, raised the value of labour, and, despite the efforts of the government to maintain the status quo, greatly increased its fluidity, for the villein who ran away from his lord's estate could confidently reckon on finding some other lord who would take on his services on much better terms, and who would not be inclined to give away the transaction to his fellow employer. So far the balance of advantage was on the side of the labourer, whose condition certainly tended to improve as villeinage died out.

Other forces were at work of a more questionable tendency. Foreign commerce may, as had often been pointed out, have absorbed a very small part of the nation's activities, but this part was important quite out of proportion to its magnitude. Not content with her long-standing wool export, England was beginning to work up her own cloth and push it in the markets of Europe. Between the year 1354 and the accession of Henry VIII, according to Professor Ashley, the export of English cloth multiplied itself sixteenfold.

All this created an ever-increasing home demand for English fleeces, which became particularly keen as the country began to revive, under a strong, commercial government, after the Wars of the Roses. A landlord, who wanted to run his estate on business principles, would find it profitable, by hook or by crook, to convert into pasture some of the land laid down for tillage. Not only would he be able to get a good price for his wool, but he would save heavily on his already inflated labour bill, since the land that had provided employment for a whole village could be looked after with advantage by two or three shepherds. And on business principles the estates were coming more and more to be run. The Paston letters are sufficient evidence of the spirit of sordid land and money grabbing that was rife in the most prosperous country districts. It was a sad look out for the small man if it were to become the obvious economic interest of the big one to bear hardly upon him.

The re-establishment of a strong central power still further weakened the landlord's motives for keeping the old system intact. The value of an estate no longer consisted in the number of fighting men who would follow their lord's banner. Mr. Tawney has

significantly pointed out that in Northumberland, where the necessity for fighting was still urgent, the process of enclosure was longest delayed. And not only from above was the break up of the manor hastened, but from below. In his invaluable *Agrarian Problem of the Sixteenth Century* Mr. Tawney has shown by a series of maps how far the process of laying field to field, or rather strip to strip, was being carried on, with a view to enclosure, by the peasants themselves. John, by purchase or bequest, may acquire the strip of William some distance away from his own, and then, probably for a small consideration, manages to get William's strip exchanged for that of James, which is next to his. Gradually John, or his descendants, manage to accumulate four or five adjacent strips in this way, and the block is fenced off and becomes John's Close. On some manors the many strips come to be replaced altogether by a few fields, some of which are laid down for pasture.

Meanwhile the lord has not been idle. He is perhaps tired of the worry and uncertainty of farming his own demesne, and he decides to let the greater part of it out, on lease, for a term of years to a farmer (the word now comes into use), perhaps a "slender, choleric man" like Chaucer's reeve, who has been sharp enough to put by more money than the lord himself. It will be observed that the lord now, for the first time, appears in the rôle of capitalist. He often not only leases the land but the stock to some man who cannot afford to buy it outright. The transaction thus becomes a partnership, with the lord in the rôle of sleeping partner. From his point of view the lease is a safe investment with the prospect of a fixed return, and probably a considerable enhancement of capital value on the lease falling in. If such large farms were turned from arable to pasture, it was obvious that the demand for labour would be lessened, and unemployment increased.

Unfortunately this comparatively innocent arrangement was not the lord's only resource. Flanders and distant Florence were calling out for English wool, Antwerp, and the markets she supplied, for cloth; the motive of avarice which had been the bane of the schoolmen was coming less and less to be regarded as sinful. How if the customary tenants, now called copyholders from holding by copy of the court roll of the manor, could be got rid of? The force of custom, which had in the past put a check on the proudest lord, was losing its strength as religion and custom alike grew pale in the dawn of humanism. These manorial tenures might not be so valid in the light of the common, the super-manorial law, which tended to be

jealous of these inferior and rival jurisdictions. In any case the Common Law was both expensive and hopelessly complicated; a verbal slip in some recondite formula was enough to get a litigant non-suited, and what chance did the poor ignorant cottager stand of maintaining his probably shaky title against the money and skilled counsel of the protector, turned robber? One favourite device was to raise the customary "fine" on the entrance of a new tenant to a prohibitive amount. It is an obscure and sordid story, unrecorded in hundreds of little hamlets and villages, and the agony of it only reaches us faintly, as of something hardly real.

We need not think that these lords were wicked and greedy beyond the common run of men. They, too, were pushed on by forces beyond their understanding. As the sixteenth century wore on, the discovery of the new world led to an enormous increase in the circulating medium. As if this were not enough, Henry VIII and the gang of magnates that succeeded him deliberately debased the coinage. Nothing conduces so much to the breakdown of ancient custom as a violent change in the value of money. Only an active acceptance of Christian or humanitarian principles, such as the world has never yet seen, can keep men from endeavouring to recoup themselves in such circumstances. And never were such principles further from acceptance, in anything but name, than in the first dawn of the Renaissance.

Sir Thomas More, that sweet and penetrating critic, has sketched for us the sort of thing that must have been happening all over England and was to bequeath a heritage of misery from whose effects we still suffer. "That one covetous and insatiable cormorant and very plague of his native country may compass about and enclose many thousand acres of ground within one pale or hedge, the husbandmen be thrust out of their own, or else either by coveyne or by fraud or by violent oppression they be put besides it, or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied, that they be compelled to sell all: by one means therefore or by other, either by hook or crook they needs must depart away, poor, silly, wretched souls, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers, with their young babes, and their whole household small in substance and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household stuff, which is very little worth, though it might well abide the sale, yet being suddenly thrust out they are constrained to sell it as a thing of nought. And when they

have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and then justly pardie be hanged, or else go about a begging. And yet then also they be cast in prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not, whom no man will set a work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto."

Here we catch some glimpse of the origin of these two things, large-scale pauperism and the surplus labour market.

5

Capitalist Origins

We shall do well to keep in view the truth at which we have already arrived, that what we know as humanism does in practice go along with a process of dehumanization, a lowering, necessary or not, of man's dignity and importance in the scheme of things. "Glory to things in the highest," might be its message, "for things are the master of man!" Now the medieval Christianity, which humanism superseded, subordinated everything else to the soul of the individual, God's microcosmus. It is thus that medieval industry is essentially a personal, even a spiritual affair. To produce an immense quantity of goods as cheaply and quickly as possible was not even aimed at. It was enough if the craftsman could maintain himself, without avarice and without sacrificing the eternal to the temporal, by honest work, that should be a joy to him in the making and bear the stamp of his personality afterwards. Such is the spirit of the gilds, at their best, such that of the Gothic cathedrals.

This personal quality in the work becomes less and less compatible with the development of modern industry. Standardization is fatal to personality, and towards standardization progress ever tends. The individual product, a thought in stone or cloth or jewellery, is replaced by the type, the soulless product of machinery. Bold and fearless thinkers like Tolstoy, who are incapable of blinking facts because they lead to unworkable conclusions, have even gone to the length of wishing to scrap the whole of the machinery, visible and invisible, and returning to peasant simplicity. But the instinct for progress is in the very blood of Western Europe, and such counsel would be as likely to succeed as a command to the sun to set in the East.

The first achievement of standardization, and the one on which all the rest depends, is in the medium of exchange—though even

earlier than the medium of economic comes that of mental exchange, a standardized, though an imperfectly standardized, language. The invention of printing was applied to coins centuries before anybody thought of adapting it to books. The first bargains were straightforward and entirely personal affairs; the merchant undid his corded bales of trinkets on the beach, and got in return furs from the hunter or metal from the digger; the lord gave the peasant his holding and the peasant gave the lord his service. It was an important advance when certain pieces of metal came to be acceptable for all transactions alike, when a piece of silver would be taken by the lord as rent and passed on to a man at arms for wages, and so on indefinitely. The act of exchange takes on a less personal and more businesslike tinge. The very virtue of a coin consists in its being exactly the same as all coins with the same name. Money is, in fact, abstract and transferable power over commodities, and therefore over the labour that produces them. Just as the magician can summon genii to do his bidding and supply his wants, so the millionaire can call up multitudes from the uttermost parts of the earth to gratify his whim.

Before the dawn of the Renaissance, the beginning had been made of a system that was to render the transference of power more easy, swift and impersonal than the mere bartering of goods for coin. As early as the twelfth century that already active trading city, Florence, had discovered how, by bills of exchange, a debt in one place could be transferred to another, and incidentally, how what was a direct bargain between two men could be changed into a general and impersonal obligation. The use of bank notes, or obligations on the part of the bank towards anybody who may happen to hold its paper, originates in the Venice of the fifteenth century. Credit is now beginning to supplement coin as a means of exchange.

These changes were slow to take noticeable effect in England. The Jews, whose inherited traditions and cosmopolitan outlook made them everywhere the pioneers of modern business methods, and the rings of Lombard and English financiers who supplied Edward III with money for his butchering expeditions in France and who were ruined by the failure of that somewhat equivocal hero to meet his liabilities, might be classed as usurers in the worst sense of the word, the sense in which the schoolmen used it of lending at extortionate interest for unproductive purposes. In England, at any rate, the time was not yet ripe for a credit economy.

The time was, however, approaching when industry and commerce

alike would demand the rapid and easy transference of wealth into the right hands for purposes genuinely productive, and against this, in principle, even St. Thomas Aquinas had no objection. Industry was beginning to progress beyond the limits of the craftsman working up his customers' material in the shop. Wholesale was beginning to supplement retail trade, a new sort of gild was coming into existence that had no taste of the joys of workmanship, but handled its material in bulk. Such were the grocers, whose very name implies that they dealt "in gross". Out of another of these wholesale companies, the mercers, arose the Merchant Adventurers.

It is obvious that successful business is tending to get beyond the means of the ordinary, independent man left to his own resources. It is in distribution more than production that this is at first manifest. True, we have the goldsmith who requires expensive plant, the farmer who wants to stock his farm, even the fisherman, though his ingenuity may yet possibly be equal to the making of his own boat. But as yet production waits upon invention, and the day of machinery and the factory system is in its dim beginnings. Clocks, indeed, were well known in the fourteenth century and printing came in the fifteenth. But what called most for capitalist enterprise in the fifteenth century was foreign trade, and above all, shipping.

The establishment of an English shipping interest, by the formation of the Merchant Adventurers, is, therefore, an event of far-reaching importance. To make a successful voyage, it was necessary, even thus early, to sink or invest a good deal of wealth.

The merchant who took the ship overseas and traded with the goods was seldom in a position to finance the whole venture. Another party enters into the transaction in the shape of the financier who may never have been to sea in his life, but whose command of power, through the medium of coin or credit, it is necessary to enlist before a ship can be put together or a crew engaged. Various means were adopted by which this could be arranged without the taint of usury; the earliest form of all was for the shipman to constitute himself, in theory, the agent of the financier, another was for the money to be advanced on the security of the ship and its contents, but, to quote Professor Ashley, "of all the ways of investment open to a moneyed man in a trading centre like London, the most attractive and most usual was that of partnership in its various forms," the only condition insisted upon by the Church and public opinion being that the investor should always share in the risk of the adventure.

To the canonist, therefore, a secure gilt-edged investment would have seemed more tainted with usury than a speculative one in industrials.

Of all forms of making money, this one of shipping adventure is the best calculated to evoke the noblest elements of the national character, it is the one most tinged with romance. The very men who capitalized the voyages were often endowed with that virtue which the Greeks knew as " magnificence ". Popular legend is here a surer guide than the actual and probable facts. Even Robin Hood has passed out of common remembrance, but not a Christmastide passes without its pantomime of Dick Whittington and his cat. Now Whittington was a real personage, of much importance in his own day, and not without his importance to the historian in ours. But the legendary Dick embodies the thoughts and aspirations of an England just beginning to take to her surrounding sea. His good fortune comes from an investment. His master, Fitzwarren, is sending a ship to trade with the Moors and, like the good fellow he is, he determines that all his servants shall have something on the venture as well as himself. Poor Dick, the household drudge, has nothing to invest but a cat, and lo, this proves so valuable to the rat-infested King of Morocco that he loads the ship with gold and jewels. The singularly honest Fitzwarren decides that the price of Dick's cat is Dick's fair share of the proceeds, and by this means the lucky boy gains the hand of Fair Alice, and is started on the path that leads to his being thrice Lord Mayor of London.

Rather more than a century after Dick Whittington there was flourishing a no less remarkable hero of romance in the shape of the great clothier John Winchcombe, better known as Jack of Newbury. If Dick was the idealized father of commercial speculation, so factory owners may look to Jack as to the patriarch of their calling. Before the end of the sixteenth century his story had been worked up by Thomas Deloney into a veritable epic of the English cloth manufacture. Jack is, no less than Dick, a historical personage, though like most epic heroes he may have gained something in the process of being written up. He is described as " a man of merry disposition and honest conversation, was wondrous well beloved of rich and poor, specially because in every place where he came, he would spend his money to the best, and was not at any time found a churl of his purse."

This model owner naturally ran a model factory :

"Within one room both large and long
There stood two hundred looms full strong;
Two hundred men, the truth is so,
Wrought at the looms all in a row,
By every one a pretty boy
Sat making quills with mickle joy:
And in another place hard by,
Two hundred women merrily,
Were carding hard with joyful cheer,
Who singing sat with voices clear.
And in a chamber, close beside,
Two hundred maidens did abide,
In petticoats of Stammell red,
With milk-white kerchers on their head."

Jack is reported to have clothed and commanded a strong contingent of his own factory hands in the campaign of Flodden, and when the Queen gave him her "lily-white hand" to kiss at the place of assembly, to have announced, with sturdy middle-class pride, "Gentleman am I none!"

Jack is in advance of his age in his adoption of the factory system on so large a scale; the common practice, until the latter half of the eighteenth century, being for the capitalist to supply the material to independent craftsmen to be worked up for him in their own homes on a piecework basis. But he is typical of a new species of capitalist, who is coming to rival in importance the great traders like Whittington and Canynge. These men are employers and organizers of industry, sprung from the ranks of the more prosperous craft gilds that are now beginning to compete with the mercantile interest for the control of the towns, and thus to revive, in a new form, the old struggle between merchant and craft gilds. But the whole gild system was, during the sixteenth century, going to pieces, and the more important of the gilds, shedding their old religious and democratic associations, were becoming chartered monopolies of associated employers.

But the strong hand of the State was able to restrain the gilds from developing into such formidable obstacles to progress as they became, for instance, in Scotland, where the crafts were long to wage bitter war against the mercantile oligarchy, on the one hand, and the unprivileged workman on the other, and where the gilds used their monopoly as a lever for such shameless corruption and manipulation of prices that our James I felt himself constrained to denounce both merchant and craft gilds in the roundest terms. In England the gilds did certainly become as great a nuisance as any other once living social organism that has been drained of spirit into becoming a vested interest. Their influence was probably

largely responsible for the migration of industry from the towns into the country.

Slowly, advancing and receding like the tide, comes on this new order of capitalist industry, a state of things in which hoarded power, as abstract and impersonal as a mathematical symbol and as fluid as quicksilver, comes to dominate all. Thus do conquered things revenge themselves upon the conqueror Man. As yet the process had only just begun, and it required an observer of extraordinary subtlety to guess at the direction in which things were tending. Such an observer was Sir Thomas More, who clearly perceived that in the pursuit of wealth, *à outrance*, men were in danger of substituting the means for the end of life. Already, in 1516, we find him writing, "when I consider and weigh in my mind all these commonwealths which nowadays anywhere do flourish, so God help me, I can perceive nothing but a conspiracy of certain rich men, procuring their own commodities under the name and title of the commonwealth," and "what justice is this that a rich goldsmith or an usurer, or to be short any of them, which either do nothing at all, or else that which they do is such that it is not very necessary to the commonwealth, should have a pleasant and wealthy living, either by idleness or by unnecessary business: while in the mean time poor labourers, carters, ironsmiths, carpenters and ploughmen, by so great and continual toil as drawing and bearing beasts be scant able to sustain, and again so necessary toil that without it no commonwealth were able to continue and endure one year, should get so hard and poor a living and lead so wretched and miserable a life, that the state and condition of the labouring beasts may seem much better and wealthier?" Or, to sum up the matter: "as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all other things, I cannot think that a nation can be governed either justly or happily; not justly, because the best things will fall to the share of the worse men; not happily, because all things will be divided among a few (and even these are not in all respects happy), the rest being left to be absolutely miserable." Here is a statement of the social problem to which not even a Marx or a Lenin could add much. And this was written in the dim dawn of capitalist industry, by a devout Catholic, a future chancellor of Henry VIII, and, strangest of all, a persecutor.

Kingcraft .

The break up of the medieval order of society and the loosening of all the old traditional bonds created an urgent need of reconstruction not only in the forms but in the spirit of government. The Christian unity of Europe, under Rome, had degenerated into such unreality that when the Turk, from his base at Constantinople, was on the Danube within striking distance of Vienna, the Most Christian monarch of France was in active alliance with him against the temporal head of Christendom. The spirit of the crusades was quite cold ; the Vicar of Christ on earth was but one, and that by no means the most reputable, of several Italian potentates, all bent on overreaching each other.

The ideal of Hildebrand and Innocent III, a union of Christendom centred in Rome, was, in fact, an anachronism. The struggles of the thirteenth century had drained Rome of spirituality, and the Renaissance had loosened for the time even the bonds of superstition. The unit of government and the nucleus of common sentiment was now either the city or the nation. It was therefore imperative to find some principle of national unity that should take the place of the Catholic religion, on the one hand, and feudal or local loyalties on the other. This was the task that confronted the Yorkist brothers, and their successors of the House of Tudor.

As for the Church, her claims to a rival sovereignty had been so weakened that they were more of a nuisance than a danger. Her turn would come when the temporal power had the leisure and security to deal with her. But the problem presented by a decaying feudalism was of immediate and vital urgency, though the magnates had obligingly paved the way to its solution by butchering one another almost out of existence. Of them at least, and of war in all its forms, the nation was thoroughly sickened. Never had a contest of such ferocity aroused so little interest among the general body of the people as the Wars of the Roses. The rich nation was exhausted, the proud people humiliated.

"Where be our ships, where be our swords become?" The Lancastrian experiment or rather necessity of constitutional government had proved a notorious failure at home and abroad. Parliament had been proved incompetent to cope with the magnates and had only served to weaken the King's hands against these titled pests.

All over what had once been the Western Empire the same problem was presenting itself. Across the Channel Louis XI was hammering France into nationhood by the force and fraud of a central power supported by a standing army; in Spain the sequel of formal unity was much confused fighting in the second decade of the sixteenth century, culminating in a sovereignty practically if not formally absolute; in Scotland, on the other hand, the central power was choking in the grip of feudalism; while in Italy the multiplicity of petty states and the lack of any unity at all laid that brilliant and light-bearing people at the feet of barbarian conquerors.

It was in Italy, and in Italy's intellectual centre, Florence, that the time gave birth to the man whose writings were to exercise so profound an influence over European statesmanship for centuries after his death. Nearly all of us know the name and reputation of Niccolo Machiavelli, quite all of us have heard of old Nick, who was originally not the Lord of the Lower Regions but merely Secretary to the Ten in the Republic of Florence, neither an unmitigated scoundrel nor a friend of tyranny, but a very human and not by any means consistent being, whose chief passion was a burning patriotism, and who, in his country's blackest hour and faced with a situation well-nigh desperate, fell into the error of that equal zealot, Ignatius Loyala, and was ready to justify any means that might further the cause he had at heart, the high and holy cause of Italy's freedom. Equally absurd is it to slur over the really Machiavellian parts of his writings by such foggy catch phrases as that he merely separated ethics from politics, as if one who wrote a guide for a young man starting in life, with hints on how to cheat at cards and raise the wind by blackmail, was merely divorcing ethics from pedagogy, or rather as if the fact of a man doing this made him any the less of a blackguard. The plain fact of the matter is that old Nick so loved his Italy that he would have sold his very soul for her deliverance.

Those who judge him not merely by that bitter little handbook, *The Prince*, written for the representative of that house in which Machiavelli fondly hoped and Michelangelo despaired to find the saviour of his country, wrong him much. His other writings, and particularly his Discourses on Livy, show him to have been capable of noble sentiment and of appreciating it in others. The man who can inculcate that a patriot ought to sink every private aim in his country's service is not divorcing ethics from politics, and he who points out that to found a Commonwealth is a nobler act than to found

a tyranny, is not a very consistent friend of tyrants. And those who take the popular view of Machiavelli would be surprised, we should imagine, to read the noble and profound passage in which all the misfortunes of his dear Italy are traced to the wickedness of the Popes in forsaking the religion of Christ, and following low and temporal ambitions.

But in truth, what Machiavelli actually was matters less than the impression he left upon his own and subsequent times. The mob, even if it be a regal and academic mob, ignores fine distinctions and fastens upon the obvious and striking. The Machiavelli who got across the footlights of history, was the man who wrote that naively thorough-going chapter on the art of falsehood. The Machiavellian doctrine of which Frederick the Great, who had only read *The Prince*, was at once the best-known opponent and the most notorious practitioner, was, in fact, founded on a generalization that Machiavelli not unplausibly made about the Italians of his own day. It is this—that men are very bad and at the same time very malleable, and that the one way to get them organized decently and successfully is by subjecting them to the will of a sovereign strong enough to make himself obeyed, and such a master of the art of government as to advance the interests and power of the State by any means, fair or foul. Just as in a later age Ricardo and his school were to create the ignoble fiction of an economic man, so Machiavellianism may be said to have created a political man, a being without a soul and actuated by no other motive than calculating and farsighted selfishness.

This was, indeed, the logical outcome of the Renaissance, which had poured the acid of its doubt over all existing beliefs, and given nothing to put in their place but the cast off garments of paganism. The conception of the nation as a moral entity, playing its dutiful part as a member of Christendom or of humanity, one perfectly familiar to the schoolmen, was a thing of the past; the men of the new age envisaged an anarchy of nations without faith and without principle, each striving ceaselessly, remorselessly, for its own aggrandisement. Where the prime need was for a sovereign capable of playing his subjects like pawns in a game, it was not likely that the claims of democracy would be much regarded. A sovereign who can instantly command all the resources of his nation is likely to have a winning advantage over one who has to wait upon the doubtful assent of people or Parliament. On the other hand a new art, the art of kingcraft, comes to be studied with as painstaking

a minuteness as that of picking pockets in the establishment of Mr. Fagin.

Such an ideal did not triumph unchallenged. The bitterest satire of Erasmus and More was launched against its godlessness and essential stupidity. But it was to dominate European politics for centuries. Cavour himself was but accomplishing successfully the high mission that Machiavelli had destined for the young Lorenzo de Medici. Never was the game of Machiavellianism played with a more shameless lack of scruple than in the Europe of the early twentieth century. Its end may not inconceivably be the suicide of civilization.

The Yorkist Kings and Henry VII were thoroughgoing products of the new school. Never were monarchs more utterly lacking in sentiment. Even the dreams of glory that had somewhat relieved the sordidness of medieval ambitions left them cold. Edward IV and Henry VII were both thoroughly conscious of the fact that their power varied in inverse proportion to the calls for money they had to make upon their Parliaments. In consequence they were among the most pacific of sovereigns. "War," writes Edmund Dudley, Henry VII's extortionate minister, "is a marvellous great consumer of treasures and riches. . . . Besides that," he adds naively, "it is very dangerous for the soul and the body."

Edward IV, once his energy and military talents had placed him in the saddle, was too lazy to do more than secure his own power and pleasures, and avoid going, more than once, upon his travels, and his brother Richard had compromised his own character too deeply in getting the throne, to have a fair chance for displaying his statesmanship while on it. The first Tudor was a man more fortunately constituted and circumstanced. He was perhaps the least fitted of all our monarchs for the part of a stage King, but it is doubtful whether any one of them can claim to have surpassed his achievement as a real one. The narrow, intent, yet humorous eyes, the tight lips, the hands that even in repose seem to be instinctively clutching, bewray the business King of a country sick to death of chivalry and chiefly anxious for quiet times under a firm government.

Henry VII was as consummate an exponent of scientific kingcraft as Machiavelli's Prince, and a far more human character. He was, in his way, a devout churchman and—contrary to the usual notion of him as a crowned skinflint—he displayed an unostentatious generosity in the relations of his daily life. Apart from one political

murder, he was merciful to an extent quite unique in that hard age. Bloodshed had no attractions for him, least of all when it took the wholesale and expensive form of war. Characteristically enough, when he got involved in a quarrel with France he did, as his biographer, Lord Bacon, tells us, "but traffic in that war to make his return in money."

If he husbanded his own resources he did the same for those of the nation. He was determined to build her prosperity not on the quicksands of military glory, but on the sure foundation of trade backed by national production. Native industry was fostered by a carefully thought out series of protective enactments which at last thoroughly realized the spirit of that episcopal pamphlet, *The Libel of English Policy*. Above all, the *liaison* with Flanders was a prime object of Henry's foreign policy, and a commercial treaty was concluded between the two countries that was known as "The Great Intercourse". Henry did, indeed, try to go one better when the Archduke Philip of the Netherlands happened to be wrecked upon his shores, and like Harold of England, on a somewhat similar occasion, was induced to subscribe to an arrangement dictated by his host, which the indignant Flemings knew as the Bad Intercourse. However, in an age when lying was one of the ordinary accomplishments of a Prince, it was considerably easier for Philip than it had been for Harold to rescind the whole arrangement once he was out of that instinctive clutch of his host's hands.

England, with her abounding vitality and her rapidly developing cloth and shipping industries, only needed such a period of peace and scientific government to enable her to make a complete recovery from the exhaustion of foreign and civil wars, and under Henry's fosterage she became fully capable of resuming her place in the first rank of European states. His work was not unlike that of the younger Pitt in the years between the loss of the American Colonies and the war with revolutionary France. He accomplished by masterly diplomacy more than the greatest of his predecessors by force of arms. By keeping the peace with France he actually made possible a defensive alliance with France's ally, Scotland, and sealed this, after the fashion of the time, by a marriage which ultimately secured the union of the two crowns. It was a risky step, for it might and in fact did mean the eventual putting of a Scottish King on the English throne, but "the greater will draw the less", as Henry remarked with profound and prophetic insight. His grasp of essentials was equally manifest in his quick recognition of the rising power of Spain, and

his endeavours to link the interests of the two countries by the ill-starred marriage of first his eldest and then his second son with the Princess Katherine of Aragon.

Firm Government and the Common Law

How urgent was the need for a firm sovereignty we know from the Paston letters. An even more striking series of records is that concerning the estates of Mellor in Derbyshire, for the possession of which a vigorous private war, interspersed with litigation, was carried on through the reigns of Edward IV, Richard III and Henry VII. We read how, at one stage of the dispute, a Sir John Savage took prisoner his rival, Robert Pylkington, put him in fetters, and swore that he would never let him go until these lands were given up. On Robert proving recalcitrant one of Sir John's henchmen "brought a mess of green pottage on a Friday at noon to the dinner of the said Robert, and before he was aware, he had eaten a great part of that mess with poison put in, and at midnight the said Robert was swollen so great that he was girt about his body in four places with girdles and towels for breasting. Then the said Sir John Savage repented and said he knew no deceit done to the said Robert and said that the said Robert should have all manner of things that might do him good or pleasure and then put a cunning physician to the said Robert and he did great cures to him." From this state of things the Common Law provided but a dubious redress; juries were indeed summoned, but such was their bias that on one occasion the judges were obliged to order their weapons to be taken away to prevent a free fight in the box.

Such were the conditions with which the ablest of all our royal houses was called upon to deal. The problem was the same as that which confronted rulers all over Europe during the sixteenth century, even to the remote Muscovy which Ivan the Terrible was to crush into unity under the weight of Tsardom. The solution arrived at, except where the forces of anarchy precluded any solution at all, was generally contained in the one word sovereignty, sovereignty as interpreted by Machiavelli's *Prince*. In France, in Spain, in most of the petty states of Italy and Germany, the fight was a straight one between despotism and anarchy, and constitutional forms gradually tended to become mere formal survivals.

It is perhaps the most notable fact in English constitutional history that despite all apparent probabilities, such a transition to despotism did not take place. Modern historians no longer use the old catch-phrase about Tudor despotism. Strong sovereigns as they were, and had to be, no Tudor, not even Henry VIII, made the least serious attempt to break the back of Parliamentary government. Parliament was indeed overshadowed by the power and prestige of the Crown, and this for a most excellent reason, that the Crown was generally able to raise enough money to carry on its own business without supplementing its resources by taxation; but Parliament not only retained, but even increased its privileges, and the Tudors were ostentatiously careful to work hand in glove with it.

The situation was appreciated with admirable lucidity before the coming of the Tudors by Sir John Fortescue, who was not only a wise and patriotic observer, but had the advantage of having been Chief Justice of the King's Bench under Henry VI, and then thanks to his devotion to a fallen House, of studying the opposite of the English system in France. It was the contrast thus presented that led Sir John to draw the same fundamental distinction between an absolute and a constitutional monarchy that Machiavelli himself was to trace in his Discourses on Livy. That these two almost contemporary thinkers could have come so close together as regards essentials, and yet that one should be the reputed champion of despotism and the other of constitutional principles, is due to the fact that in England the foundations of the constitution had been well and truly laid during the Middle Ages, and above all, as the English Chief Justice thoroughly appreciated, in England's heritage of the Common Law.

It was, indeed, a heritage that it required an Englishman and one brought up in the law to appreciate. To the logical Latin intelligence the English law must have seemed a thing fit for barbarians or madmen. "It is infinite," are the words put into the mouth of Reginald Pole, "without order or end. There is no stable ground therein nor sure stay, but everyone that can colour reason maketh a stop to the best law that is before time devised. The subtlety of one sergeant shall . . . destroy all the judgments of many wise men before time received. There is no stable ground in our common law to lean unto. The judgments of years be infinite and full of much controversy and besides that of small authority. The judges are not bounden, as I understand, to follow them . . . this

maketh judgments and process of our law to be without end and infinite, this causeth suits to be long in decision." That this was no exaggerated indictment the history of the time bears witness; the Common Law was pedantic, illogical, expensive and tedious to the last degree. And yet so penetrating a thinker as Fortescue could be eloquent in its praise, could entitle his most considerable work *The Praise of the Laws of England.*

For indeed the rapid efficiency of Roman law was fraught with more danger to a free state than all the injustice and confusion of the English system. Fortescue goes right to the heart of the matter when he singles out the Roman maxim, " what pleases the prince has the force of law," as the foundation of that " royal dominion " or absolute government to which he is opposed. Such a maxim, he points out, has no place in English jurisprudence. England is a government of the better type, a " Royal and politic dominion ", one in which the sovereign governs by laws to which his people have assented, and may, in consequence, put no imposition upon them without their consent. The spirit of the English law is contained in the maxim of St. Thomas Aquinas, in whose works Sir John is well grounded, that the King exists for the sake of the kingdom and not the kingdom for the sake of the King. The politic King looks upon the exercise of his power as a duty, and actually glories in its limitations.

Such are the principles that Sir John inculcates upon the exiled Lancastrians, in the event of their restoration, and afterwards, when all hope of that is gone, upon the reigning house. He urges them not only as the dictates of righteousness, but of ordinary commonsense. A constitutional monarchy means a happy and loyal people. He is robustly proud of the results of the English system in contrast with the absolute monarchy of France. The French, he holds, are reduced to such a state of chicken-heartedness that they have not even the pluck to pursue the good old English calling of highway robbery. Above all, the English King does not have to support his power by a mercenary and partially alien standing army. The might of England is in the stout hearts and long bows of her archers, Robin Hood's fellows, the yeomen freeholders of her countryside.

We have spoken of Fortescue's ideal government as constitutional, perhaps it would be better still to call it legal. He is not what has been called a great Parliament man, for he wants to rule out the conditions that call for a frequent summons of Parliament. The King, he maintains, ought to live of his own, and to have the means

provided for him so to do, for the labourer is worthy of his hire. His subjects, therefore, must provide him with enough permanent resources to meet all ordinary and most extraordinary charges. Only if anything too unusual to be thus provided for should arise, ought he to ask for a special levy. Sir John had seen enough of aristocratic anarchy to realize the importance of having the Crown strong, strong enough to overbear the mightiest Beaufort or Neville among his subjects. If the estates of the Crown had been given or filched away, they should be resumed. The administration ought not to be in the hands of a clique of magnates, but of a Privy Council composed equally of clerics and laymen, and presided over by the King himself, who, however, must not remove any member without the consent of the majority.

Save for this last clause, the policy advocated by Sir John was substantially that put into practice by Henry VII. He did, in fact, restore the strong administration that the Normans and Plantagenets had bequeathed and that a century of weak government had allowed to lapse. This administration was centred in the Privy Council, which was, in effect, a committee of the larger Council of privileged magnates that had overshadowed the Lancastrian Kings. But Henry, like the rest of his House, took good care that his Privy Council should be thoroughly under his control by staffing it with men of ready talents and low birth, creatures dependent on himself and therefore loyal. He thoroughly grasped the principle that a King, to be independent, must live of his own, and proceeded, largely it must be said by methods of which Fortescue had expressed his disapproval, to accumulate a hoard which was the envy of less thrifty Kings. It was not for nothing that Bacon, that master of kingcraft, took Henry VII for his ideal monarch. Henry was, indeed, a consumate exponent of the kingly art on the most approved Renaissance lines, a hard man with little sentiment and a thorough grasp of essentials.

He was by no means the disinterested enthusiast for constitutional government that Fortescue had been. Indeed there is no reason to doubt the testimony of the Spaniard Ayala that he would have liked to govern in the French way, but could not do it. Ayala might have added that Henry was too wise to try. It was the peculiar virtue of the Tudors that they had an intuitive appreciation of just what could and what could not be done. And whomsoever or whatsoever else they might remove from their path, none of them ever ventured seriously to attack the English Common Law or the English

Parliament, those twin props of our liberties—liberties at least in the concrete English and medieval sense.

What was it that imported its tremendous strength and—to use Maitland's word—*toughness* to the Common Law? Partly, we think, the fact that it stood for the best as well as the worst elements in the national character. It was disorderly and illogical, it eschewed generalization, but for all that, it started not from the abstract privilege of the sovereign but from the concrete liberties of the individual. That medieval use of the word liberty is no linguistic accident; liberty to the Englishman is not a goddess, who turns the same regard to all men alike, it is his private and individual liberty, his right, perhaps, to try the cases of his villeins, or to turn out three sheep on the common, or to keep the foreign merchant from competing with him and his gild-fellows in the retail market of his town.

Not only was the English Law thoroughly English, but by this, its most critical period, it had become a great vested interest. "What is distinctive of medieval England," says Maitland, "is not parliament, for we may everywhere see assemblies of Estates, nor trial by jury, for this was but slowly suppressed in France. But the Inns of Court and the Year Books that were read therein, we shall hardly find their like elsewhere." The first law reports date from the reign of Edward I, and from his son's time to that of Henry VIII there was a continuous series of Year Books, forming a vast mass of accumulating precedent. The most enduring of the medieval gilds was that which still survives in the Inns of Court; the long training and the semi-monastic life led by their inmates tended to create an atmosphere and solidarity that have contributed in no small measure to our having become the most lawyer-ridden nation in Europe. "The law in England," writes Erasmus, "is the high road to fame and fortune, and many peerages have risen out of that profession."

There was, however, no doubt that the Common Law stood in some danger of being tried itself and found wanting in the light of the new humanism with its bias towards the classics. Roman law had already captured France and was to make a conquest of Germany during the sixteenth century. English Common Law was shortly to be submerged in Scotland. If the country was to get itself decently governed, something was required in addition to a law that nobody, with the doubtful exception of the lawyers, understood, and whose cumbrousness and expense were a crushing handicap to poor suitors.

The Tudors, however, and particularly Henry VII, found a way of supplementing the Common Law while leaving it unimpaired as the law of England.

Englishmen have ever been distinguished for their capacity for improvising expedients, usually of the most illogical, for tiding over any seemingly impossible situation. Unfriendly critics have called it muddling through. At the close of the fifteenth century the Common Law had already accumulated such a weight of authority that it baffled the wit of man to adapt it to the requirements of the time. The obvious course would have been to scrap it and substitute some adaptation of the great code that bore the name of Justinian. To have done this would have been to engineer, with scientific thoroughness, the destruction of all in our national polity that is most characteristic, to have brought England into line with the despotic states of the Continent. The Common Law was, in fact, evaded. For a long time there had been developing by its side the equity jurisdiction of the Chancery, the idea being that it was part of the King's prerogative to find a summary remedy where the process of the Common Law proved too cumbrous to secure justice. The principle was similar to that of the Roman Law of Nature, that above all human and national laws there are certain principles of justice and fair play common to mankind. There was also the medieval and Christian idea of the King being the protector of the poor and oppressed. The original Chancery jurisdiction was really conducted in this spirit, cases of the most trivial sort being often settled before it, but even thus early Parliament was suspicious of such arbitrary extension of the prerogative. Gradually Chancery became a court with a narrowly defined sphere of action and a law of its own which, far from being simple and summary, became proverbial for its delays and unintelligibility. But in the time of Henry VII it still retained its functions as a supplement and corrective to the Common Law, and the days of Lord Eldon and Bleak House were as yet far off.

The Tudor age was also notable for the extent to which Common Law was supplemented by Prerogative Jurisdiction. The name of the Star Chamber has come to be associated with nothing but arbitrary tyranny, but in truth this Court, with its humbler sister, the Court of Requests, was the poor man's only protection against a tyranny from which the Common Law offered scant redress. Consisting, as it did, of the King's ministers, the Star Chamber was too strong for justice to be denied and too rapid in its procedure for it to be delayed.

It had this further advantage, that it gave an opportunity for the principles of scientific Roman jurisprudence to find a lodgment without subverting the Common Law, for the principle of Prerogative Jurisdiction is Roman and not English, and procedure, especially during the Renaissance, tended to adapt itself accordingly.

Just as the Tudor genius found a means of evading the Common Law without destroying it, so did it contrive to establish a firm sovereignty without impairing any of the privileges of Parliament, and even while maintaining and confirming them. If we can imagine Henry VII expounding, perhaps to his heir, the principles of kingly success, we might put some such words as these into his mouth: "The King thrives best who has money in his purse. Let therefore your expenses be as small as possible, and above all, keep out of war, since that involves great expense for very poor returns. You will then be under no necessity of asking for taxes. You will find many means of raising money by fleecing the rich, who have no friends except each other, and it is your business to keep on finding out such sources of income. Mother Church happens to be notoriously rich . . . . . It is when you come to subsidies that your troubles will begin. Cherish and humour Parliaments, they are your natural allies against over-mighty subjects, and it is ever an easier matter to get the grant of a subsidy than to get that subsidy collected from the taxpayers. But remember that Parliament becomes dangerous when, and only when, your income ceases to balance your expenses."

Henry VII had, in fact, comparatively little difference with his Parliaments because he so perfectly understood these principles, and preferred to raise money by the various more or less crooked expedients so well understood by his ministers, Empson and Dudley, rather than demand frequent taxation. Even he received a sharp reminder that Parliamentary power was not dead but sleeping when he asked for the admittedly customary aid on his daughter's marriage, and put in a claim, characteristically enough, for a considerably larger sum than he had the least intention of giving her. It was then that Thomas More, a beardless youth, talked round his fellow members into reducing the grant to a more reasonable amount, an act which was not forgotten by his Majesty, who shortly afterwards found excuse for clapping More's father into the Tower, and charging him a hundred pounds for his release.

But such incidents were as exceptional as More himself. The King's real difficulty was to collect the tax which Parliament had

granted, and an attempt to do so was usually the signal for a rebellion somewhere or another. The manuscripts at Newburgh Priory shed a good deal of light on the state of things that existed. In 1496 we read of "great trouble in the land", for "straightness of divers gelds", and how "the Commons of Devonshire and Cornwall rose in great hosts against the King". In the next year "the aids and gelds were gedured that were laid afore that time for the King's great need in his wars." In 1489, an attempt to collect a tax had led to a rebellion of rustics in Northumberland under one John a Chambre, which had to be put down by the Earl of Surrey. Even when a tax was collected somehow, it was wont to produce the merest moiety of the sum granted by Parliament. The contest was, in fact, not so much whether King or Parliament should be sovereign, as whether the King, with the aid of Parliament, could succeed in making any sort of sovereignty effective over the whole nation.

8

A Spirited Policy

The first Tudor ended his reign, a worn-out old man of fifty-three, with the sovereignty of his house fairly established, his Kingdom on the flood-tide of prosperity and his magnates thinned or fined into submission. He bequeathed what was then a more than kingly fortune to his son and successor, Henry VIII. This new King seemed destined to realize, in England, the full glory of the Renaissance. So at least it appeared to the intelligentsia of the time, and particularly to Erasmus, who looked for the dawn of a new golden age under his auspices. He was all the more brilliant in contrast to his thrifty and utilitarian father. Handsome in his person and genial in his manner, a scholar and a linguist, a sportsman, a poet, a theologian worthy to be styled the defender of the faith, a lover and composer of music, and, as it subsequently proved, an incomparable man of business and affairs, he might well have seemed destined to play the same part in England as Lorenzo de Medici in Florence.

"The world," writes Erasmus, "is waking out of a long, deep sleep. The old ignorance is still defended with tooth and claw, but we have kings and nobles on our side. . . . Where in school or monastery will you find so many distinguished and accomplished men as at your English court? Shame on us all! The tables of

priests and divines run with wine and echo with drunken noise and scurrilous jest, while in princes' halls is heard only grave and modest conversation on points of morals or knowledge. Your King leads the rest by his example. In ordinary accomplishments he is above most and inferior to none. Where will you find a man so acute, so copious, so soundly judging or so dignified in word and manner. . . . Who will say now that learning makes Kings effeminate? Where is a finer soldier than your Henry VIII, where a sounder legislator? Who is keener in council, who a stricter administrator, who more careful in choosing his ministers or more anxious for the peace of the world? That King of yours may bring back the golden age!" [1]

There was at least some plausibility in Erasmus's words to Henry himself, words which, according to no less an authority than Froude, will be the final verdict of history: "The intelligence of your country will preserve the memory of your virtues, and scholars will tell how a King once reigned there who revived in his own person the virtues of the ancient heroes." [2]

Seldom, indeed, has the character of its sovereign been of more decisive effect on the destinies of his people than that of Henry VIII. To the end of time it will probably remain a subject of dispute, and estimates will vary, according to the temperament of the critic, between the extremes of the crowned Bluebeard and the patriot hero and liberator of his country. Such crude verdicts of passion are not likely to do justice to a character so many-sided and of such subtle contrasts. Holbein has given the best of his genius to Henry's face, and it is not the face of a wicked man, like Crookback, nor of a human icicle, like Henry's own father; there is a pathetic earnestness, that seems to crave for sympathy, in its regard. There is also—always an ominous sign—a complete absence of humour (an utterly different thing from mere heartiness). He was a solemn and conscientious egotist, a state of character which, when it is allied to great ability, produces either splendid or terrible results. From his earliest boyhood, Henry had been encouraged to take himself with deadly seriousness; he occupied many of the greatest offices in the Kingdom before he was out of his cradle, and at the age of nine we catch a delightful glimpse of him entertaining Erasmus at Eltham, and quite disconcerting that paragon of learning by challenging him gravely to a trial of poetic skill.

[1] Froude, *Life and Letters of Erasmus*, p. 244.
[2] Ib., p. 246.

As a young man he was of a singularly frank and charming disposition and was loved by most of those with whom he came in contact. But, if we understand him aright, his early experiences as a monarch tended to sour and embitter his already self-centred nature. He was launched upon the full tide of Machiavellian kingcraft, pitted against men of the subtlest cunning and absolute faithlessness. He appears to have been of a naturally open and trusting nature, and not without a tinge of idealism. He was the one sovereign in Europe to take the Pope seriously as the father of Christendom; a Holy League had in his eyes something of real holiness, something in the nature of a crusade. An ally was a friend to be trusted loyally, even when that ally was such a fox as Ferdinand of Spain. Henry was soon undeceived. Ferdinand's only idea was to use his too confiding son-in-law as a catspaw, and then, having diverted an English army from its object of conquering Guienne to act as a flank guard for his own attack on Navarre, to leave him, shamelessly and secretly, in the lurch. Henry's comment was characteristic; there was no faith left in the world except in himself, and therefore God would prosper him.

He had now fortified his egotism by a deep distrust of his fellow men and a serene confidence in his own righteousness. This confidence never left him, and there can be no doubt in the mind of anyone who has followed his life and correspondence that he was simply and sincerely, in all his actions, convinced of being in the right. There was no faith in the world except in himself, and he was increasingly suspicious of unfaith in others, resenting it with savage vindictiveness. It was with a clear conscience that he put on yellow clothes to celebrate the chance that rid him of his first Katherine, and took steps for hurrying on a third marriage on the day he beheaded his "sweet sweeting". It was with all the innocence of moral earnestness that, in addressing his last Parliament, he animadverted upon the lack of Christian charity among his subjects. If we were to adopt the jargon of the latest psychology, we should say that his temperament was Narcissist, that the affections that should have naturally expanded in an increasing circle remained fastened on himself like those of a little child.[1] This view gains confirmation from the extremity of nervous resentment to which he was provoked whenever his will

[1] Whatever non-propagandist doctors may ultimately decide about Henry's physical symptoms, it is at least unnecessary for us to diagnose venereal disease as the explanation of his later career. During the fifteen-thirties he was at the height of his powers, a tireless worker and consummate master of kingcraft. Egomania is a disease of the mind, and power a more likely stimulant of it than any bacillus.

was crossed. "He shall wear it on his shoulders" was his characteristic reaction to the news that the Pope had tried to embarrass him by offering a Cardinal's hat to the saintly but uncompromising Bishop Fisher.

In the first years of his reign he showed a distinct reaction against that Tudor system of government of which he was to become an exponent. He had ideas of a spirited policy and of reviving the glories of the Black Prince and Harry of Monmouth, which were the reverse of the ambition of his more worldly-wise father. Like the splendid young man Henry VIII was, he was more inclined for the trappings than the business of government, especially as he found a minister, in Thomas Wolsey, with an inexhaustible capacity for administrative detail. Glory he did certainly, in a measure, obtain; a French army ran away before Terouanne and a naval hero was discovered in young Lord Edward Howard, who perished in a Nelsonian attempt to cut out the French fleet off Brest. Such empty glories were dearly purchased by the shattering of his father's Scottish alliance and the revival of the old Franco-Scottish combination, though thanks to the spirit of Queen Katherine and a daring flank march by the Earl of Surrey, the Scottish King, who had played the inevitable move of invading England during Henry's advance in France, was butchered with the flower of his army at Flodden Field.

As soon as it became apparent that the conquest of France was about as likely an event as the conquest of the moon, Henry, or rather the all-powerful Wolsey, now a Cardinal, conceived the plausible idea of profiting by the rivalry of France with the great Spanish and Imperial power of Charles V. A period ensued of intense interest to the diplomatic historian, of endless Machiavellian intrigue and counter-intrigue conducted, on Wolsey's part, with consummate, if unprofitable, finesse. The result of it all was that Henry not only spent the whole of his father's legacy, but came to his Parliament asking for more, and found the inevitable trouble. Not only did Wolsey sustain a nasty rebuff at the hands of Parliament, but the London mob, which in those days of imperfect communications was long to stand in the forefront of English democracy, surged round the House, at the rumour that four shillings in the pound was being granted, calling on the members to go home. The country was seething with discontent. In one village we hear of a certain Peter Wylkinson roundly declaring that he would take Harry with the crown and pull him down, and this seems to be a fair sample of the kind of thing that was being said. Nor was the discontent confined

to tavern gossip. The Welsh historian, Ellis Griffith, gives an amusing account of what might have been a serious rebellion, had it not been nipped in the bud by the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk and their retainers. Altogether ten thousand fighting men had assembled at Lavenham on the border of Essex and Suffolk, and though one Duke wanted to attack and destroy them, the other was for less heroic measures, from a shrewd suspicion that his own retainers were on the side of the rebels. After a noisy conference, the Dukes bade the men's delegates retire and press their heads together, whereupon, as so often happens, a moderate section was all for peace and surrender, while the extremists went off to sound the tocsin to rouse the town, not knowing that some wily burgess had caused the clappers to be taken out of the bells. While the extremists were going about setting the town in an uproar, the men outside, hearing no bells, thought themselves deserted and sought pardon in their shirts. This ended the rebellion, but not without giving us a brief glimpse of what, even in those days, a spirited foreign policy implied. For the spokesman of this abortive rising was a poor weaver, who put the case so tellingly to the Dukes that Sir Humphrey Wingfield, who was present, remarked that four of the ablest lawyers in the Kingdom after a week's consultation could not have made such an answer.

"Wherefore and against whom," demanded his Grace of Norfolk, "are ye intending to go?" This unknown champion of the people answered that they wanted to go to the King and complain to him of the Cardinal on account of the taxes which he set men one day after another to demand of them, and which they had not the wherewithal to pay. On being asked the name of their captain, he replied that they had no captain but poverty, and not even those grim nobles could find anything amiss with the answer. It is pleasant to record that the good-natured Cardinal was great enough to let the poor fellows out of prison and send them home with a handsome present.

Wolsey's spirited policy turned out a complete failure. He put his money on the wrong horse, and backed the already too powerful Emperor whose capture of the French King at Pavia upset the balance of power and reduced the value of England's alliance to a cipher. His own hopes of becoming Pope had proved as vain as Henry's of becoming Emperor. Henry VII's heritage, both of money and prestige, was exhausted, and, worst of all, the Pope, on whose good offices Henry was to be dependent for the divorce of his wife, was an abject tool in the hands of Henry's father-in-law.

CHAPTER II

THE REFORMATION

1

The Sands Run Out

When the Church, instead of capturing the Lollard enthusiasm for her own revival, more or less succeeded in burning it out, she had won a victory more fatal, in the long run, than any defeat could have been. It was a sign that the creative energy of her Gothic prime, the genius that had inspired her to find the correct reply to every fresh riddle of the Sphinx, was, for the time, in abeyance. During the greater part of the fifteenth century the Church of Christ in England, though outwardly never more powerful and secure, was a gigantic vested interest, buttressed less by faith than by habit and an uncritical acceptance of whatever magical sanctions she chose to claim. The testimony of every record of the time that has come down to us confirms that of the perpendicular churches to the essential worldliness of the age.

Here, more than in any other part of our history, we must beware of unqualified generalization. For the historian, as he draws nigh the Reformation, must experience some of the feelings of Christian in the Valley of the Shadow, groping his way along the razor path between the bog and the ditch, or, to put it more exactly, between the rival propaganda of Giant Pope and Giant Protestant. And the habit of constantly putting a case instead of telling a story has had the effect of presenting everything in violent primary colours, without any half tones of delicacy of shading, of turning the drama into a melodrama in which most of the prominent personalities, even when they are corporate personalities, like a Church or a monastic order, are either heroes or villains.

Thus when we talk of the decline of the Church in the fifteenth century, it behoves us to be quite clear as to what that decline really consisted in. There is certainly no evidence of any sensational wickedness on a large scale. The heads of the Church, the bishops and the abbots of the larger monasteries, appear for the most part

to have been dignified and respectable folk, who, if they did not very conspicuously adorn their positions, at least seldom conspicuously disgraced them. To all outward appearance the Church was carrying on her functions with success and even with splendour. The improvement, adornment and enrichment of her buildings showed no signs of diminishing, and over most departments of life her influence was, to all seeming, paramount. Hospitals and schools and charities, pilgrimages and mystery plays, even the rivalry of bell-ringing between parish and parish, with its necessary competition in providing the bells and the towers to hold the bells—all these things, not to speak of the religious phraseology with which the veriest worldlings and business men on the make interlarded their correspondence, might be taken as pointing to a golden rather than a declining age of ecclesiastical activity.

The Church of England was, indeed, as splendid and respectable in the days of Edward IV as that of Jerusalem under the governorship of Pontius Pilate. She was lacking in nothing except the one thing needful, that impelling force of creative genius that Bergson has called the "*élan vital*", and Saint Paul knew as the Spirit. She has ceased to produce either great Churchmen or great ideas—we cannot conceive of a Grosseteste or an Abbot Sampson or even a Becket breathing in that atmosphere. The one saintly character of the time was poor, feeble-minded Henry VI, and how much pity or respect his saintliness commanded we know. The succession of English mystics had come to an end with Lady Julian—it was not that sort of quest that appealed to contemporaries of the Pastons. Instead of encouraging new ideas, the Church was positively afraid of them; her most original thinker of this time, Bishop Pecock, who wrote a spirited defence of her against the Lollards, so far from being thanked for his pains found himself in imminent danger of being burnt for heresy. It is not surprising that under these circumstances the Universities should have sunk into a condition of intellectual stagnation, treading the dreary round of scholastic theology as a matter of formal routine.

The Church certainly did produce several men of distinguished ability, but their talents were of a kind less suited to the service of God than that of Caesar. It is notable that the most influential treatise ascribed to an English Churchman of this time is the *Libel of English Policy*, the work, it is believed, of Adam de Moleyns, Bishop of Chichester, who was murdered by some sailors who suspected him of embezzling their wages. But we look as vainly for

doctors and theologians as we do for saints. Even the monkish historians, to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of the Middle Ages, are ceasing to function—the fifteenth century is incomparably less well served by its chroniclers than its two predecessors.

The Church was, in fact, living on her past, and at the same time retaining wealth and privileges that could only be justified so long as she was fulfilling the high function assigned her by such Popes as Hildebrand and Innocent III, that of the spiritual leadership of civilization. Privilege without function is the almost certain forerunner of revolution, and no human hive will undertake the permanent maintenance of drones. Practical men—and the men of the fifteenth century were very practical indeed—cannot fail to have asked themselves whether it was really necessary for a steady trickle of English wealth to drip into the coffers of the petty and often disreputable Italian politicians who claimed to be the vicars of Christ on earth. When the crying evil of the country was disorder and lawlessness, it was at least a questionable benefit that certain religious communities should be allowed to harbour nests of criminals and even traitors that the law could not touch, and who could sally forth at any convenient opportunity. In the second half of the century we have record of no less than three raids on London by the sanctuary men of Saint Martin's le Grand, and neither the citizens nor the King himself could get a remedy.

Again the petty privileges claimed by the ecclesiastical courts were another perpetual source of irritation, and the archdeacons and summoners who were responsible for this side of the Church's activities were so generally detested that "as damned as an archdeacon" was a proverb. This irritation was brought to a head in 1514, when a London merchant called Hunne, who had resisted a claim of the Church for one of the sheets of his wife's deathbed, was found hanged in the Bishop of London's prison, murdered, so the jury found at the inquest, by the Bishop's own Chancellor. Whether this sensational story was true—and it is certainly not proven—matters less to us than the admitted fact that it was as impossible then to get a London jury to bring in a verdict favourable to the Church as it used to be to get an Irishman convicted by twelve of his own countrymen for murdering his landlord. It must have been evident what would be the result if a popular King were to start the hue and cry after ecclesiastical wealth and privilege.

If the canker of worldliness had so gravely impaired the efficiency of the Church's episcopal and parochial organization, the results

were still more serious in her permanent garrisons throughout the country, the monasteries and nunneries. Here again there is no need to look for any sensational scandals, though if we are to judge by Archbishop Morton's report on the great abbey of Saint Albans and Bishop Nicke's on religious houses in his diocese of Norwich, there must have been some pretty bad cases. But even if we give the monasteries the benefit of any doubt there may be, and allow them to have carried on an averagely respectable routine, this would not alter the fact that they were ceasing to fulfil the purpose for which they were created, and that they were tending more and more to become privileged anachronisms. The monastic rules, and those of the friars, were framed on the supposition that those who entered the orders were impelled by a high and holy enthusiasm to forsake the world and devote themselves to the service of Christ. But when enthusiasm got out of fashion, as it did during the fifteenth century, and the average monk was inspired by no higher motive than the desire of a comfortable and sheltered profession, the rules must have seemed intolerably tedious, vexatious and pedantic, and it needs very little knowledge of human nature to divine that Chaucer's monk, who frankly set aside the rule of Saint Benedict as impracticable, must have had many successors in the ensuing century. It was a grim joke when Henry VIII, by way of giving a final turn of the screw to the unhappy monks, blandly insisted that their own rules should be observed without any sort of qualification.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that the hatred of the monasteries, which produced more than one bloody revolt in the fourteenth century, is decidedly less *en evidence* in the fifteenth, though an intermittent fire of satire shows that it was still alive. Even if they would, it was not possible for the monasteries, in the increasingly difficult times that were coming upon them, to be such active tyrants as in the days when the floor of the Abbot's parlour at St. Albans was paved with the mill-stones of the townsmen. The habit of endowing monasteries, once so prevalent, had practically ceased; labour was becoming dear, and the abbots were at last finding themselves in the old predicament of the crusading magnates, that of selling charters of privileges for cash down. Thus the hand of the monastery would, as a rule, press somewhat less heavily on the neighbouring town at the end of the century than at the beginning.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century a change was taking place that could not fail to have a disastrous effect on monastic prosperity. The effect of the discovery of America was to flood

Europe with a new supply of precious metals, and thus to decrease the value of money. Now the monasteries, which for a long time previously had found it hard enough to make both ends meet, whose income was fixed by custom, and which had no fresh endowments coming in, began to find their resources wholly insufficient to their needs, and in spite of their great wealth in plate and jewellery, were declining steadily towards the abyss of bankruptcy. It is no wonder that we hear of attempts to realize their wealth by such sacrilegious expedients as abstracting jewels from shrines, or such wasteful ones as the wholesale cutting down of timber. In numbers, too, the monks had long been declining. The monasteries no longer attracted the best class of recruit, and there was at last a temptation to keep them understaffed, in order that there might be fewer shareholders in the concern among whom to divide its dwindling income. The blocked fireplace and blocked oven at Fountains tell their own tale. It is obvious, too, that the monks were no longer, with their diminishing resources, able, even if they would, to cope with the ever increasing problem of providing for the pauper surplus of the population. It is evident that before the dissolution of the monasteries, the enormous armies of beggars had got completely out of hand, and in 1530 the first of a series of savage vagrancy laws showed that the system of indiscriminate doles was no longer a workable alternative to State action.

The monasteries constituted the weakest, as the parish organization the strongest, side of the Church's system during the fifteenth century. The impression that we get is that, without being grossly wicked or tyrannous, she was gradually losing her capacity for spiritual leadership, and that, while her power to the outward eye was never more assured, the foundations of reverence and faith on which it reposed were so honeycombed with worldliness, that if it were once mooted as a business proposition that she might be relieved of her superfluous wealth, or, as a measure of patriotic expediency, brought under control of the State, she might find no very effective reply.

Had the attack upon the Church come under Lancastrian or Yorkist auspices, the story would have been one of continuous decline culminating in disaster. But the actual course of events is not quite so simple. When, in the fourth decade of the sixteenth century the storm did actually break, the Church showed that she could still produce saints and martyrs. Never during any age was she graced by two nobler figures than those of Fisher and More; never did sons of hers display the beauty of Christian heroism more

indubitably than the three martyred priors of the Charterhouse and their equally constant brethren. That such men could under any circumstances have arisen from among the worldlings of the mid-fifteenth century will hardly be believed by anyone acquainted with the records of that time.

The coming of the Tudor dynasty had, in fact, coincided with a partial but none the less genuine revival within the Church's fold. The new learning had not failed to open the eyes of a few enlightened men to the corruption and spiritual apathy that were everywhere rife, and to the need for a thoroughly drastic reform. The little band of scholars at the beginning of the new century, who enjoyed the friendship of Erasmus, seemed capable of doing for the Church of those days what the Cluniac revival and the institution of the friars had effected in former crises of her career. It remained, however, to be seen how the Church would react to the stimulus, whether she would take fire from the spark or, like a saturated bonfire, put it out.

The two dominating English personalities of this movement, John Colet and Thomas More, were both sprung from that flourishing middle class that was no less adventurous in thought than in business, and from which the ranks of the Protestant reformers were soon to be recruited. Colet, who from being an Oxford lecturer became Dean of Saint Paul's, was of a type not common in the Renaissance, a thorough-going ascetic. Though education, in the widest sense, was the master passion of his life, and though he sought the fountain of knowledge in Italy, his scholarship was not to be compared with that of his friend Erasmus, and he has left nothing behind of outstanding literary merit. It was by sheer force of personality that he influenced his age; he went about London and Oxford and Canterbury with the same uncompromising determination as Bunyan's pilgrims amid the booths of Vanity Fair to purchase the truth, and nothing less.

In this quest, though a loyal Churchman to his death, he went even further than the subsequent Protestant reformers, who appealed from the doctrine of the Church to the letter of Scripture. For not even the Bible itself was too sacred for intelligent criticism. Anticipating the critics of a much later age, Colet was actually bold enough to suggest that the story of the creation, and of Adam and Eve, was not literal fact at all, but poetry. In the New Testament Colet was equally determined to cut himself free from the shackles of formalism. He turned his attention to Saint Paul, and the Apostle's teaching

took on a new vitality—by no means congenial to the prudent ecclesiastics whose dearest wish was to let sleeping dogs and dogmas lie.

Colet's enthusiasm for the truth was not confined to criticism. He devoted no small part of his own considerable fortune to establishing a model school within the precincts of his own Saint Paul's, a school in which the formation of character and the cultivation of piety were even more of an object than the knowledge of the classics, important as this was. For, unlike the great scholars of Italy, Colet never dreamed of allowing the culture of Greece and Rome an equal place in his esteem with the faith of Christ.

It was from the pulpit of Saint Paul's that Colet, in 1512, preached a sermon of unprecedented boldness to the Bishops and clergy of the province of Canterbury, assembled in Convocation for the congenial object of extirpating heresy. But Colet, with his ascetic ardour and the almost childlike sincerity that lifted him above considerations of prudence, had a very different object in view. In a burning Philippic, which was all the more effective from the humility of its presentation, he fairly lashed the covetousness, the corruption, and the worldliness which were bringing the Church into disrepute and peril, and with the passion of a loyal Churchman, he made a burning appeal for reform.

"If by chance I should seem to have gone too far in this sermon—if I have said anything with too much warmth—forgive it me, and pardon a man speaking out of zeal, a man sorrowing for the ruin of the Church . . . consider the miserable state and condition of the Church, and bend your whole minds to its reformation. Suffer not, fathers, suffer not this so illustrious an assembly to break up without result." [1]

But Colet was preaching to men incapable of appreciating the danger and, for the most part, more eager to turn on the reformer than to practise reform. Colet's own Bishop, Fitzjames, in whose prison poor Hunne had already met his end, was one of the stern old school whose only idea was to silence criticism by persecuting the critics. He and two prelates of like mind brought an accusation of heresy against Colet, who might have shared the fate of Pecock had not the Archbishop of Canterbury, Warham, happened himself to be not unsympathetic with the reforming party.

Colet's ideas of reform were on straightforward and almost obvious lines—to give back to the Church her primitive enthusiasm and

[1] From Seebohm's *Oxford Reformers*.

simplicity. But More in his *Utopia*, which was written three years after Colet's sermon, was original and creative beyond any thinker of his time. He, in fact, visualized civilization both as it was and as it might be; his first book is a merciless analysis of the selfishness, waste and muddle of the professedly Christian politics of contemporary Europe, the second, the real Utopia, is a description of what life might be like if human affairs were taken in hand and ordered sanely and scientifically. The plan of More's romance does not allow him to have resource to the Catholic Church for the functions of spiritual direction and mind-training, and he is therefore compelled to organize his earthly paradise on principles of humanitarian rationalism strangely similar to those propounded later in the century by the Emperor Akbar of Northern India. For Akbar's Din Ilahi, or voluntary union of all faiths and creeds in the service of mankind is, in its essence, the same arrangement as that which obtains in More's *Utopia*.

But Akbar's plan was made for translation into practical politics, whereas the weakness of More was that he never attempted to build any bridge between the world he lived in and the world of his dreams. More, the visionary, could see plainly the dangers that were threatening human society with the passing of the medieval ideal of the Christian commonwealth of nations. He saw Western civilization drifting towards a suicidal anarchy of independent states conducted by Machiavellian sovereigns on Machiavellian principles; he saw that the egoistic anarchy of capitalist production without any control of distribution or any basis of moral principle was leading to enormous social evils; finally, that a state of society is conceivable in which man is the master and not the slave of his destiny. The tragedy of Sir Thomas More is that he had no faith in his own vision, that instead of staking everything on a heroic attempt to build Utopia in England's pleasant land, he elected, when power came to him, to be a commonplace, reactionary politician. There is nothing in history more sickening that Sir Thomas's own complacent account of how he, the apostle of humanity and unqualified toleration, had a wretched lunatic, guilty of unorthodox ravings, bound to a tree where "they stripped him with rods till he wared weary, and somewhat longer", or declaring that the burning alive of men heroic enough to die for their unorthodox opinions is "lawful, necessary, and well done".

The opening years of Henry VIII's reign saw the Church at the parting of the ways. Would the reforming party be strong enough

to give her back her primitive enthusiasm, to purge her abuses, and to fit her for her function of guiding and controlling the new civilization ? The supreme opportunity had evidently come when practically the whole power in both Church and State was concentrated in the hands of Wolsey, who, besides being the King's all powerful minister, succeeded in becoming the Pope's plenipotentiary or legate. Now Wolsey, though at heart an opportunist, was thoroughly alive to the necessity of reform, and was prepared to use his legatine powers to bring the Church up to date. He proposed to apply the pruning knife to the monasteries by the abolition of a number of small and bankrupt communities and the diversion of the proceeds to education, and he started this process with the endowment of his own foundations at Oxford and Ipswich. Wolsey was fully alive to the truth that education is the basis of reform, and he would have had the Churchmen in the van of the new learning as they had been in that of the old scholasticism.

Had Wolsey been able to devote his whole attention to the subject, it is conceivable that he might have carried through such a bold and comprehensive scheme of reform as would have given the Catholic Church a new lease of life in England. As it is, we can only conjecture what his final policy would have been. Colet and More had both, from their different standpoints, deplored the unchristian chauvinism that expressed itself in a desire for a brilliant foreign policy—Colet had actually withstood the King to his face on this subject. While the last sands were running out for Catholicism in England, while the trumpet of revolt was already being sounded in Germany, the man who alone could have saved the situation was wasting precious treasure and yet more precious time in an unnecessary and unsuccessful attempt to hold the balance of European power. As it was, when the accident of the King's divorce made the catastrophe and Wolsey's fall inevitable, the Church, with her monasteries unreformed and her abuses unchecked, was left to face an alliance between the affronted egotist on the throne, and the middle class, who had long been indignant at the Church's privileges and who were already beginning to be infected with the virus of heresy.

2

The Protestant Ideal

If the Roman power was undermined in England, in Germany it was already fighting for its life. A coarse-grained and foul-mouthed but terribly sincere champion of revolt had arisen in Martin Luther,

a man stout enough to beard the Emperor himself, no less than to incite the German Princes to massacre without ruth the hapless peasants whom their oppression had stung into rising. Luther was neither a consistent nor a subtle thinker; his strength was in his will. About the miracle of bread and wine he was as obstinately conservative as any Pope: "*Hoc est corpus meum*" he chalked on the table at the Wartburg, and from that position no argument could move him. But the revolution he brought about arose from his central doctrine of justification, and from this, willed he, nilled he, theological consequences he deprecated were bound to follow

The effect of Luther's teaching was to substitute a new theory of the human mind for the one previously in vogue. The psychology of Roman Catholicism is in many respects more subtle than that towards which Luther directed the Reformation. The great centralized discipline of Rome had no place for such thin lines as that between the saints and the damned. She offered salvation indeed, and without her sacraments and beliefs salvation was impossible, but it was no sudden and startling transition from death to life. Conversion was an event in spiritual progress of whose importance she was fully aware, she was capable of making the utmost use of spiritual excitement; but these were only means to an end and not the attainment of the end itself. It is necessary for a soldier, when he joins the army, to take the oath of allegiance, but the mere taking of the oath does not make a soldier of him. That is a matter of long and arduous discipline, of habits gradually formed, of constant obedience to orders. So in the Church, the Christian was never able to talk of his salvation as something already accomplished:—

> "The bells of Hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling
> For you but not for me."

Not for a moment was the discipline of Rome relaxed; at the last second the Christian might fall into mortal sin. Nor was it merely enough to be converted and repent inwardly; inward feeling, the Church held, must find expression in outward deeds. The broken heart and fount of tears were good in themselves, but the penance must be duly performed if absolution was to be obtained. It is entirely characteristic of Rome that she carried her system into the next world, and planted the Mount of Purgatory between Hell and Heaven.

The danger of this system is obvious enough to him who only studies its theory, and it must have been glaringly obvious to anyone who studied its practice in the early sixteenth century. The theory

that inward feelings must find expression, if they are genuine, in acts, might easily come to mean that acts are the only things that count, the only things, in fact, necessary to salvation. And in a cold age, these outward acts tend to lose all their connection with inner feeling, to become, on the worshipper's part, purely formal, and from the standpoint of the Church an easy way of asserting her power and raising the wind. Just as feudal services had been gradually commuted for money, so even the good works that the Church held necessary for salvation could be commuted for cash down; not a penny fell into the box without the fact being recorded in heaven, and an entry made to the credit of the donor in the Book of Life. So cynical had the Popes become, that when the notorious Tetzel went about selling indulgences, one of the few sins too monstrous to be compounded was that of buying alum from the Turk, and thereby infringing the monopoly of His Holiness's mines.

Martin Luther, who like Colet had made a close study of St. Paul's epistles, and particularly that to the Galatians, propounded a theory directly subversive to this Roman psychology, and one that has constituted the basis of Protestantism ever since. "Christians," says he, "are not made righteous in doing righteous things, but being now made righteous by faith in Christ, they do righteous things." The difference, though trivial at first sight, is fundamental. The only thing that matters about a man, according to this theory, consists in what he is, and not in what he does. If the heart is right, the good works will follow of themselves, but not all the good works of a lifetime will avail to sanctify the heart:—

> "Not the labours of my hands
> Could fulfil Thy law's commands."

A not strictly logical, but practical consequence of this theory was to make the spiritual life a thing of sharp and violent contrasts. Purgatory was abolished, penance was no longer a sacrament, you were either in a state of grace or you were damned outright—the Protestant theory did not admit of gradations. What Plato had been to the Renaissance Paul was to the Reformation, and Paul had been confronted in his day with a situation in many respects similar to that which confronted the Reformers. He, though brought up in strict Pharisee principles, had been repelled by the coldness and formalism of the Mosaic discipline. Like the mystic he was, he yearned after absolute and intimate unity with God, and he found it through the mediation of the God-man, Christ. By casting aside every outward requirement and flinging himself wholly upon the

divine grace thus miraculously vouchsafed, he attained the glorious liberty of the sons of God, the peace that passeth all understanding, in short, salvation. And salvation, the free gift of Christ purchased by His passion and not by any works or course of discipline, was a state that a man either has or has not attained. This was the core of Luther's as of Paul's doctrine, it was the solid foundation upon which Western non-conformity with Rome was built.

It is no part of our purpose to examine Luther's teaching, nor all the compromises and qualifications that he allowed, but to make clear the meaning of this spiritual wave that starting from the Cathedral door at Wittenburg, spread outwards like ripples from the dropping of a stone, and whose first stirrings were already felt in England. It was, in its beginning, like all religious movements, a tremendous effort after reality, a striving to get back from the letter to the spirit of religion. It was the same impulse that had moved the Buddha to give over his austerities and, sitting cross-legged among his disciples in the deer-park at Sarnath, to proclaim the passing of the old Vedic ritual; this, and not another spirit had fired the prophet of Islam to proclaim, in the desert, the overthrow of all idols that mocked the majesty of Him, the just, the merciful, the omnipotent. But as in these and all other spiritual revolutions, the prime impulse was marred and diverted by the very worldliness against which it was a protest. New presbyter always, sooner or later, comes to be old priest writ large.

The psychology of Protestantism was obviously subversive of the whole spiritual and therefore of the whole temporal edifice that Rome had built up. Salvation is the gift of Christ, a transaction to which sinner and Saviour are the sole parties, and requires the intervention of no priest, saint nor Madonna. If works are valueless, then of what use are the penances, indulgences, and even, to push the matter to its logical extreme, sacraments of the Church? If the communion between God and man is direct and immediate, then her symbolism becomes mummery and idolatory, a direct violation of the second Commandment. It is now the privilege and bounden duty of the believer to think and enquire for himself; if God is his, how much more is God's word! From Wycliffe onwards it was the first instinct of the Reformers to give the people a Bible they could read and understand for themselves. In brief, the system inculcated by Rome was the direct opposite of Christianity as conceived of by the Protestants; her Pope was their Antichrist, the vicar on earth not of God but of His adversary.

Protestantism itself stopped short of being completely or logically Protestant. Luther, in his great defiance, did but appeal from the tyranny of a Church to the tyranny of a book; Calvin could employ the stake to suppress one who traversed the Nicean doctrine of the Trinity; even John Locke, the father of modern toleration, refused it to atheists. So easily do the fugitives from the Egyptian bondage come to setting up the golden calf in the wilderness.

3

Protestant Origins

It was not to be expected that the idea of Protestantism would take the same hold on the practical English as on the speculative German mind. Abstract ideas have never appealed to the average Englishman, and the great revolutionary waves of Continental speculation, whether these take the form of justification by faith, or the rights of man, or the gospel of Karl Marx, have usually broken in harmless froth against the white cliffs of British common-sense or lack of imagination—according to the point of view. Previous to the Reformation there are certainly evidences of discontent against the Church, but these are mostly on concrete grounds, and there is no evidence of a widespread popular desire for any revolutionary change either of doctrine or system. As for Lollardy, the embers of it certainly smouldered, but the spirit of ascetic puritanism that had inspired it had practically died out during the fifteenth century.

But the sixteenth witnessed a real if limited revival of religious enthusiasm, and this was not without its dangers to a Church whose principal security now lay in the sheer inertia of popular worldliness. An increasing number of prosecutions and, indeed, the very Convocation to which Colet addressed his great sermon, witness to the increasing nervousness about heresy felt by the ecclesiastical authorities. When the storm broke over Germany, and Luther, in 1517, nailed his manifesto of revolt to the door of the church at Wittenburg, repercussions could not fail to be felt in England.

Some outlet had to be found for the new enthusiasm that was beginning to leaven the vast, inert lump of English Christianity. The attempt to revive the Church from within had proved a failure. Colet died; More went over to the reactionaries; Wolsey's plan of conservative reform was blocked by the pomps and vanities of *Realpolitik*. But the reforming ardour, if it could not find scope

within the bosom of the Church, was bound, sooner or later, to find an outlet of its own. As yet it was confined to a small minority, almost entirely drawn from the middle class in the towns, and the Church was able to crush individual heretics as they arose, without any general sympathy being excited on the martyr's behalf.

But the reactionaries had now a more difficult situation to deal with than in the days of Wycliffe. The invention of printing and the gradual standardization of the English language were rendering the system of popular instruction, which had served during the Middle Ages, largely obsolete. This instruction had naturally been addressed and adapted to the requirements of an illiterate populace, and one most capable of being appealed to by direct visual impressions. When the copying out of a single Bible was a work probably measured by years, and its translation into a barbarous language an unsatisfactory, if not a dangerous venture, there could be no question of the average layman searching the Scriptures for himself. So the Church was only taking the sensible and obvious course by bringing home the truths of Christianity to her children by the crude but effective method of making them see with their own eyes what they were expected to believe. Those who know the effect of the cinema even to-day on an uneducated type of mind will realize to what lengths it is possible to carry the principle that seeing even the most improbable events is believing.

To say that the medieval layman had no Bible is to miss the fact that his very church served him in this light. So thoroughly has the work of stripping and dismantling God's house been accomplished, that it is difficult for us to grasp to what an extent the worshipper found his faith literally realized all round him. Fresco paintings on the walls, stained glass in every window, showed him the familiar incidents of the Old and New Testaments and, painted over the chancel arch or glowing in the West window, the awful spectacle of the Last Judgment and Hell, the literal flames and devils that were waiting for him unless by the grace of God and the good offices of Mother Church he contrived to escape into the fair fields of Paradise by way, probably, of Purgatory. Our Lord, our Lady and the saints appeared before him in lifelike images, and in one or two instances, as that of the Rood of Boxley, the illusion was strengthened by a mechanism that imparted lifelike movement to the figures. How literally these things were taken is instanced by a charming carol, in which the shepherd boy, who has just presented the little Jesus with his pipe, his tarbox and his hat, concludes his

farewell to the Holy Family with, " Farewell Joseph with thy round hat ! " probably a reminiscence of Joseph's halo on a stained glass window.

In the mystery plays, a type of drama that one can still see performed in any Hindu village, the layman could see the incidents of sacred story before his very eyes—God, with his long white beard, arguing with Moses, or Herod, sceptre in hand, leaping from his car amid roars of delighted laughter and raging among the crowd.

It is evident what a tremendous power this method of presentation put into the Church's hands. That its general effect had been towards the uplifting and civilizing of folk who would otherwise have been little better than savages, no fair-minded student of medieval history will venture to deny. But all power is liable to abuse, and where the appeal was to the eyes so much more than to the mind the temptation to play upon popular credulity must have been well-nigh irresistible. The incidents presented to the medieval man were by no means confined to those of Scripture. If we visit the Trinity Chapel of Canterbury Cathedral we shall see three beautiful old stained glass windows that, by almost incredible good fortune, have escaped the attentions of Harry the King, Blue Dick the Puritan, and the nineteenth century vandals who demolished Lanfranc's Tower. These windows are entirely devoted to enhancing the reputation of that great asset of the Canterbury monks, the martyred Thomas à Becket. We see a little boy dying, we see him brought back to life again by a diluted mixture of Becket's blood, and then we see the boy's brother duly giving up the ghost in consequence of the neglect of the parents to pay up four pieces of silver at the shrine. The moral is fairly obvious and not unprofitable from the monastic standpoint.

During the Middle Ages, the superstructure of legend and miracle that had been erected over the original Christianity had attained gigantic proportions, and had its sordid and grotesque as well as its beautiful aspect. But what had sufficed for the uncritical intelligence of the Gothic age might prove less acceptable in the sceptical atmosphere of the Renaissance. Even loyal sons of the Church were beginning to wax impatient at the demands made upon their credulity by the custodians of celebrated shrines. Erasmus has left an amusing account of a visit that he and Colet paid to Canterbury Cathedral in the last days of its glory, and how the earnest Colet quite lost his patience with the verger who was showing him the wonders of the place. At another celebrated shrine, that of

our Lady of Walsingham, Erasmus appears to have regarded the whole proceedings as a hugh joke. To more austere or less disinterested observers it was possible that such shrines would shortly appear in the light of offences against God or—excellent things to plunder.

People possessed by the spirit of enquiry and familiar with the resources of the printing press naturally desired to take their Christianity not in the highly sophisticated form in which it was presented to them by ecclesiastical authority, but on the evidence of God's own word as revealed by His Scriptures. And the first serious challenge to the Church's authority took the form of an English New Testament, translated abroad by William Tyndale, one of the few Englishmen to be captured thus early by the doctrine of Luther, with whom he associated and on whose German translation he largely founded his own English one. Tyndale happened to be a translator of genius, and his translation, on which our own authorized version is founded, marks a new epoch in English prose. But its dissemination was, not wholly without reason, regarded as a deadly menace by the ecclesiastical authorities in England.

For Tyndale, though by no means always a clear or even a consistent thinker, was possessed of all Luther's abhorrence of the existing ecclesiastical system. His master passion, like that of every genuine Christian revivalist, was to get back to Christ. And the best way of doing this appeared to him to be to allow Christ and the apostles to speak for themselves, without any priestly intermediary. It was only to be expected, therefore, that the bias of his translation should be markedly antipapal. Certain words, he felt, had got so loaded with ecclesiastical associations as to be misleading in the mouths of New Testament characters. For these question-begging terms he therefore substituted others, which sometimes were not above the suspicion of begging the question on the other side. In addition to this, Tyndale enriched his text with notes, largely borrowed from Luther, and of a frankly and sometimes violently tendencious nature.

Tyndale's impelling motive for appealing from the Church to Christ could hardly have led him to act otherwise than he did, and there was in fact only one valid reply that the Church could have made to his translation, which would have been to produce a better one under her own auspices. There was no theoretical objection to such a course, which would have followed logically from the principles of Colet and Erasmus. But the reactionary party in the

Church, which was now dominant, had taken thorough alarm at the persistent smuggling of New Testaments that was going on at the ports, and they could think of no better way than to burn the books and even, in extreme cases, the readers. Tyndale, in fact, managed to unload a whole edition on the Bishop of London, who wanted it for a bonfire, and he used the proceeds to bring out a revised and better one. As late as 1530 the Bishops advised the King that, in the then dangerous state of popular feeling, the time was not opportune for a new translation. Four years later they had seen reason to change their minds, but the avalanche was then fairly under way.

It is an entire mistake to suppose that the majority of English people were particularly desirous of having Bibles. A desire for God's word presupposes a certain intensity of religious feeling, and England, though she had risen a little out of the trough of fifteenth century materialism, was, in the third decade of the sixteenth, anything but a religious country. But she had, on the other hand, very little fixity of faith, and her bonds of attachment to the existing system were frayed almost to breaking point. A few zealous and devoted enthusiasts might easily produce an effect out of all proportion to their numbers, and it was to just such men as these that Tyndale's Testament presented itself in the light of a new revelation. Besides, as every modern advertiser knows, the skilful pushing of a commodity is apt to create a demand for it where none existed before. Every one of these new Bibles was a direct challenge to accepted orthodoxy.

Sir Thomas More now placed himself at the head of the opposition to Tyndale, and devoted the whole of his still undimmed genius to a supreme effort to stem the rising tide of Protestantism. His *Dialogue*, a book until recently almost impossible to obtain, is written with a wit and force that make it one of the most readable polemics in the English language, but if it is a hymn of hate against Tyndale and his Testament, it is an equally uncompromising counterblast to that gentle visionary, Sir Thomas More, author of the *Utopia*. The last shreds of tolerance are thrown to the winds, and even the pretence of a judicial attitude on fine points of translation is eschewed. For all his scholarship, More reveals a bias at least as marked as that of his opponent. His demand that representations of Christ and Our Lady shall be called images and those of the pagan gods idols is as palpably disingenuous as some of Tyndale's own liberties with the text. The spectacle of this cut and thrust duel between two great Englishmen and devoted Christians is unspeakably sad, but

it has a redeeming grandeur that lifts it above the ignoble atmosphere that envelops too many sectarian controversies. Each stood for a high cause, neither had any more mercy on himself than on his opponent. And now that the dust and din of controversy have subsided, we can recognize them as fellow workers in founding the goodly edifice of English prose, and in the noble army of martyrs their souls march side by side.

4

A Question of Sovereignty

While these tremendous issues were being debated, a mean and sordid quarrel, which had nothing to do whatever with religion, precipitated the revolt of England from the Roman See. The sinister possibilities of the bluff King's temperament had so far been appreciated by no one, with the possible exception of Sir Thomas More, who instinctively shrank from his sovereign's genial advances because he divined that Henry, for all his friendship, would not hesitate to take a friend's life if it were a question of getting another castle in France. If Henry was conscious of his own ability, of his strength, and most of all of his righteousness, he must also have been conscious of his comparative failure to make good. He was neither Emperor, nor conqueror of France, nor arbiter of Europe, in spite of victories like the Spurs and Flodden and diplomacy like that of Wolsey. He must have felt that luck had been against him, and for a temperamental egotist that is a dangerous state of mind, one that is apt to drive its owner to strange lengths if to failure should be added a sense of genuine grievance.

One of his chief misfortunes lay in the fact that he had no male heir, which opened a serious prospect both for his house and for the Kingdom in the event of his death. The King of Scotland, supported by France, might easily have claimed the throne by virtue of his descent from Henry VII, as against the Princess Mary. Now Henry's marriage with his dead brother's wife had only been allowed through the straining of the Church's law almost to breaking point by Julius II, no very reputable Pope even for those days. There was, besides, a fascinating coquette about the court whose sister's favours Henry had enjoyed, but who refused to take her turn unless His Majesty would first make an honest woman of her. No one of the least psychological insight could fail to predict the effect, upon such a solemn egotist as Henry, of such a conjunction of affairs. He was

genuinely shocked at the irregularity of his union with the excellent but now unattractive Princess of Aragon, and was ready to be quite handsome and sympathetic about it, provided she were not so unreasonable as to stand in the way of his doing the right thing. For God's laws are not to be mocked, even after twenty years' complacent infraction, by those interested in keeping them.

What the Pope had done the Pope could undo, and Henry had hitherto been the spoilt child of the Papacy. A golden rose had been given him by the reigning Pope, another golden rose by Julius II, and a sword and cap, together with the title of Defender of the Faith, by Leo X. The least that the Papacy could do was to give Henry's case a fair trial on its merits. This was just what the Pope would not, or rather dared not do. Had he been of Hildebrandine temper, he might have taken his stand on God's law and the Church's, and defied the consequences. But Clement VII was no Hildebrand, he was not even cast in the large mould of Julius II. He was at once a shameless intriguer and an abject coward. It never even occurred to him that his position as Vicar of Christ imposed upon him some obligation to give just judgment; his sole thought was how to advance the interests of his small state in central Italy, and even this low aim he pursued in the spirit of a dishonest, pettifogging attorney. He veered like a weathercock with the vicissitudes of the Hapsburg-Valois feud; he desired above all to gain time. When the French army of Lautrec with an English contingent was overrunning Naples, he was on the point of giving in to all Henry's demands, but when the hand of pestilence had destroyed the commander with the greater part of his army, he was wholly in the Emperor's hands, and the sack of Rome had taught him what comes to Holy Fathers who bear too hard upon the Temporal Head of Christendom. Now the Emperor, though he cared not at all for his aunt, had a lively sense of the insult to his House implied in the dissolution of her marriage.

The wretched Clement was in the most unenviable position. He dared not offend the Emperor and he did not want to offend Henry. The damning indictment against this successor of Peter is best given in the words of Lord Acton, himself a Catholic and, moreover, an unflinching seeker after truth, whatever it might reveal. "When Lautrec was in Italy," he says, "Clement had conceded virtually the whole of the English demands. He removed every impediment to the marriage with Anne, other than the fact that Henry was married already . . . he pronounced against the terms of the

dispensation, intimating that Julius had done what a Pope has no right to do. He promised that Judgment as given in England would be final, and that he would not remove the case to Rome. He was willing that Richmond, the King's son, should marry the King's daughter, Mary Tudor. He did not turn a deaf ear even to the proposal of bigamy. For several years he continued to suggest that Henry should marry Anne Boleyn and renounce the quest of a divorce. In 1530, somebody informed him that this would not do, and that brought him to the last of his resources. He proposed . . . that Henry should live with Anne without marriage and without divorce." [1] Such was the morality of the Holy See in a transaction which has been described by a very different historian and champion of Catholicism, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in this impressive sentence: "Henry sought to lean upon the cushions of Leo, and found that he had struck his arm upon the rock of Peter." [2]

Certainly the rock of Peter solidified wonderfully when, on the conclusion of peace with France, Katherine's nephew became, to all intents and purposes, overlord of Italy. But by this time Henry's never too patient disposition had been stung beyond all endurance. The perpetual shuffling and sharp practice of the Pope were just what was calculated to snap the last bonds of scruple and tradition that restrained him from the attainment of his will at all costs. Had he been a frank cynic like his father-in-law or a mere Machiavellian trickster like the Pope, he might have stomached his discomfiture and bided his time. But Henry, with all his faults, was a thoroughly sincere and even religious man. His experiences with his brother Kings had convinced him long ago that there was no faith anywhere except in himself; he had now made the discovery that the Papacy itself, whose champion and defender he had been, was as false and cunning as the worst crowned sharper. He had a legitimate grievance, and being an egoist without humour, was only capable of seeing his own grievance. God was with him and he would go forward alone. All the pent up feelings in his bosom burst forth in terrible anger against Rome. A man, and certainly a Tudor in such a mood, is likely to stick at nothing and fear nothing.

It is necessary to understand Henry's state of mind if we are to understand the Reformation that took place under his auspices. He was a good Catholic; it was not he that had betrayed the faith but Rome. He had confuted Luther in the past and he had no use

[1] *Lectures on Modern History*, pp. 140–1.
[2] *A Short History of England*, p. 141.

for him now. The Protestants in England were as yet an insignificant minority, and if argument—for he condescended to argue—and persecution could do it, he meant to keep them so. He never dreamed of dropping his title of Defender of the Faith. Nay, rather he would step into the place that the Pope had shown himself unworthy to fill. Like the terrible figure that is the frontispiece to Hobbes's *Leviathan*, he would grasp both the sword and the crozier. Wolsey had shown him the way; the double sovereignty that the minister had wielded should be the prerogative of himself and his heirs. The Church should continue, with the sole change that the King of England should be his own Pope.

It was in this way that Henry regarded the royal supremacy, and no one who has followed his voluminous pronouncements from day to day can doubt that he saw himself, in all seriousness, as the spiritual as well as the temporal father of his people. That exhortation to charity which he addressed to his last Parliament is more the language of a bishop's pastoral than of a King's speech. "How presumptuous," he wrote to the protesting folk of Lincolnshire, "are ye, the rude commons of one shire, and that one of the most brute and beastly of the whole realm, and of the least experience, to take upon you, contrary to God's law and man's law, to rule your prince whom ye are bound to obey and serve and for no earthly reason to withstand!" The act of Six Articles, or whip with six stings, in 1539, was a terrible reminder that though the Pope was gone, the Defender of the Faith was on the throne, all the more determined to resist encroaching heresy from the fact that the task had devolved upon his unaided strength.

The idea of sovereignty, which the Renaissance had brought so prominently to the fore, was now invested with a halo of sanctity that it had never before possessed. So long as the King had been expected to share his sovereignty with the Pope, it had never been possible to elevate him into the position of a divine Cæsar. The Church had her own excellent reasons for keeping monarchs in their places, and the scholastic theory of monarchy had been, in many respects, markedly liberal. Nor had the English people been accustomed in the past to treating their Kings with the respect due to the Lord's Anointed. Of the ten who had preceded Henry VIII, exactly half had either been murdered or died fighting rebels, of the remainder, Edward IV was on one occasion turned out of his Kingdom, Henry IV's reign was one long doubtful struggle to keep himself on the throne, and Henry V plunged into foreign war to

keep his subjects' hands off his own throat; even Henry VII had to weather years of intermittent rebellion before he could feel his throne secure.

A respect for sovereignty had indeed been on the increase for some time, but the King's position was put on an altogether different footing when to the temporal he added the spiritual headship of his realm. The supernatural sanctions so elaborately devised to buttress the supremacy of Rome were now all for the enhancement of the King's prestige. For this reason alone it was to his advantage to keep intact as much of the old system as possible, for the same reason that prevents a wise conqueror from devastating a country that he intends adding to his own dominions. The exaggerated theory of the divine right of sovereigns, that caused Elizabeth to be worshipped like a pagan goddess and lured Charles I to his doom, may be said to have first attained its full development with the "prevailing of the gates of Hell" under Henry VIII.

Perhaps "theory" is the wrong word for describing what seems a form of hypnotism capable of subduing the toughest spirits of that worldly time. How else are we to account for the language of devoted loyalty used on the scaffold by men judicially murdered, by men who had showed not the least trace of humane or disinterested feeling during their lives? Of all the men of that age, perhaps the least lovable is Thomas Cromwell, who had studied Machiavelli in manuscript, and acted consistently on the worst interpretation of *The Prince*. And yet of all the murderous perversions of justice that this man had instigated, none was more monstrous than his own attainder for treason. "He loved your Majesty," Cranmer remonstrated with Henry, "as I ever thought, no less than God." "This," Cromwell had cried, flinging down his cap, when arrested in the Council Chamber, "this, then, is my guerdon for the services that I have done. On your consciences, I ask you, am I a traitor?" And yet, when he was hurried to the block, after not even the mockery of a trial, this hardened worldling of the Renaissance could not even find it in his heart to breathe the "falsely, falsely murdered" of Desdemona. "I am come hither to die," he is said to have told the crowd, "not to purge myself, as some think peradventure that I will. For if I should do so, I were a very wretch and a miser. I am by the law condemned to die, and thank my Lord God that hath appointed me this death for mine offence . . . I have offended my Prince, for which I ask him heartily forgiveness, and beseech you all to pray to the Lord God with me that he will forgive me." Surely these words,

coming from one who could have entertained no hope of earthly profit thereby, are among the most remarkable and illuminating of this time.[1]

They enable us to understand much that seems otherwise obscure and even grotesquely cruel. The enormous extension that was given to the Law of Treason is understandable when we realize that to the prestige His Majesty already enjoyed as the Lord's Anointed, he now added the sacrosanct attributes that had invested St. Thomas of Canterbury. We understand, too, how much that seems to us unintelligibly cruel must have been regarded in a very different light by contemporaries. Perhaps there are nowhere two more pitiful tragedies than those of Sir Thomas More and Lady Jane Grey. It seems as if any softness and sweetness of disposition was cut short as surely as the most delicate early blossoms by the March frost. And yet it seemed less terrible to the victims themselves than it does to us. Human life was a very cheap thing in those days—even More prided himself upon being "*hereticis molestus*"—and a terrible majesty invested the head of the State. The experience of anarchy from which the nation had so recently emerged, and whose renewal was yet an imminent danger, must have convinced the average Englishman that, without bothering too much about abstract justice, it was expedient that one man should die, now and then, for the people.

Supreme Headship

Once it became apparent that no satisfaction was to be got from Rome, Henry went about his work of smashing every vestige of alien power in his Kingdom with masterly skill. He had had the unprecedented experience, during the divorce proceedings, of being called into the Court at Blackfriars by one of his own subjects, the Legate Wolsey, and the result of his compliance had been merely that he had found himself thwarted and befooled by having the case called to Rome. Henry felt that he had stood enough of this sort of thing, and that the time had come to see whether an Englishman or an Italian was to be master in England.

[1] Even if we go to the extreme of scepticism and question the authenticity of this speech, the mere fact that it was accepted as genuine shows what was expected and natural on such an occasion. Besides, it rings true, and is in harmony with whatever principles Cromwell possessed.

For whatever may be said for or against Henry, there can be no gainsaying that one of the secrets of his success lay in the fact of his being a thorough and whole-hearted Englishman, with an almost unfailing intuition of his subjects' mentality and prejudices. However arbitrary and high-handed his proceedings might be against those who stood in his way, he nursed and humoured his faithful Commons with a patience and tact which were all the more remarkable when contrasted with the high-handed methods of Wolsey. So far from being the arbitrary tyrant he is sometimes depicted, he may almost be said to have made the discovery of the Commons. The Church held a divided allegiance and the nobility had been a perpetual thorn in their sovereign's side, but the lesser gentlemen in the country and the prosperous citizens in the towns, who were the backbone of English patriotism, might very easily come to identify their wills with that of a sovereign capable of giving them an orderly and hundred per cent English government.

The first step was to get rid of Wolsey. This, from Henry's point of view, was both timely and necessary, and he had no more regret about scrapping a faithful servant than a modern master of hounds makes about destroying any member of the pack who is past service. Wolsey had been an ideal tutor of his sovereign on all the fine points of government, but the time had arrived when the pupil had come to know more about the essentials of the business than the master. Wolsey's grandiose foreign policy had been an expensive failure; his attempts as minister-legate to ride two horses at once had ended in the two bolting in opposite directions; his dictatorial and unconstitutional methods at home had made him the most unpopular man in the country. From this unpopularity the bluff King skilfully dissociated himself by making a scapegoat of the minister. His instincts pointed him to better ways both in foreign and domestic policy.

The House of Commons that was elected in 1529 was anything but the servile body it has sometimes been represented. No doubt the King paid it the compliment of taking a hand himself at electioneering, but an assembly of Pliables was not to be created out of the gentlemen and citizens of England, and this particular House had a corporate personality that might have rendered it formidable to a less skilful manager than Henry. On the crucial question of the divorce its sympathies were by no means wholly with the petitioner. The great-souled lady who had rallied the nation to the triumph of Flodden, the lonely woman who defended her cause and honour

with such pathetic dignity, could hardly fail to command the sympathies of ordinary Englishmen, whatever they may have thought of the Pope and his pretensions. The thing of all others they wished to avoid was a breach with Katherine's nephew, the Emperor, which might affect the Flanders trade. And on one question Henry knew they would be united, which was that of money. His experiences with Wolsey must have taught him that the King who asks for taxes is asking for trouble.

He had two levers by which he might hope to control the assembly. The first was the now intense resentment excited by the power and exactions of the Church, a resentment that implied no sympathy with heresy, but was based partly on national sentiment and partly on a very English determination not to be " put upon ". The second consisted in the fact that to plunder a wealthy and unpopular minority offered an excellent substitute for the more orthodox expedient of direct taxation.

Henry's caution in dealing with the Commons was only equalled by his boldness in striking at Rome when the time came. For some time he was not without hope that Clement, once he saw that England was united behind her King and would not stick at cutting the connection with Rome, would give way. But England was far away, the grip of the Emperor did not relax, and Henry was further off than the Spanish and German mercenaries who only waited the word of command for another sack of Rome. Accordingly the Rock of Peter stood firm, and His Majesty's indignation rose to boiling point. The successive moves in the game were timed with relentless skill. First the more unpopular abuses were selected for attack; then the clergy were reduced to humiliating submission by the cynical step of indicting the whole body of them for following Henry's example and recognizing Wolsey as legate; next, the King proceeded to take the matter of the divorce into his own hands, or those of his obedient servant, the new Archbishop Cranmer, and to have it finally disposed of, without reference to Rome, in a mock trial at Dunstable; then as the Pope still proved recalcitrant and inclined to answer defiance with defiance, the last threads of connection with Rome were cut, all money that had been paid to the Holy See was diverted into the royal coffers, and in 1534 the work was crowned by an Act making the King Supreme Head of the Church of England.

Thus with surprising ease had England cut herself free from the Catholic [1] Church and proclaimed her own and her sovereign's

[1] I use this term for convenience, and without prejudice to any Anglican claims.

complete independence in the face of all the world. But the situation was fraught with dire peril. Henry had signally affronted the Pope, the Emperor, the conscience of Catholic Europe, the ancient faith of his subjects. It was not as if, like his rivals on the Continent, he could count on the support of a disciplined standing army. The best that he could muster in the way of regular troops amounted to no more than the Beefeaters, or Yeomen of the Guard. When he wanted to suppress a rebellion he had to rely on such aid as that of the local nobles and their retainers, or on a muster which left him dependent on the goodwill of his subjects for an army.

Whatever may have been the faults of the Church, such a change as that from the Papal to the royal supremacy was bound to raise the King a host of enemies. Every monastery was a centre at least of passive resistance; the preaching friars, who on their peregrinations were less amenable to discipline than the monks, were by no means satisfied with a merely silent disapproval. The glass windows of the churches, with their story of Thomas à Becket and of an earlier Henry flogged and humiliated before his shrine, pointed a moral whose significance could be emphasized by a mere pulpit gesture. Many of the old Churchmen were ready to support Pope and Church against King and country. The saintly Bishop Fisher was intriguing for the support of the Emperor, until the axe cut short his activities forever. Cardinal Pole, one of the most liberal Churchmen of his day, a scholar of singularly sweet disposition, did not hesitate to publish a book overseas, in which he urged the invasion of his own country by Spanish troops, men whose cruelties were to become proverbial.

The divorce, the ostensible cause of the whole quarrel, was never generally approved of on its merits, and the new Queen, Anne Boleyn, in spite of her English birth and pretty face, never succeeded in imposing on her countrymen for anything better than the adventuress she was. Women openly insulted her when she went about with the King, and the Duke of Norfolk once so far forgot himself, after a violent wrangle, as to call her *grande putain*. Even at her coronation procession, so many of the crowd kept on their hats as she passed that her jester was obliged to pass it off by telling them that they had scurvy heads.

We find Chapuys, the Imperial ambassador, writing, just after the dissolution of Henry's first marriage, stating that the great desire of the English people was that his master should send men. "Every day I have been applied to by Englishmen of rank, wit and learning, who give me to understand that the last King Richard was never

so much hated by his people as this King." The head of the great northern House of Percy is reported, a little later, to be not too well pleased with the King and his ministers, and his physician told Chapuys that if the Emperor would make the smallest effort, the King would be ruined. The Marquis of Exeter, a scion of the House of York, was guilty of treasonable communications; Lord Darcy talked of 1,600 gentlemen in the North ready to rise, and Lord Dawbeny of a rising of the priests. From the vast collection of Henry's state papers we can catch some echo of the murmurings of his poorer subjects, how he was denounced as a wretch, a bawdy wretch and a traitor, and how one sportsman averred in his cups that he would kick His Majesty's head like a football.

In this desperate situation, and with the menace constantly over him of a Holy League between the Emperor and the King of France, Henry displayed a calculated audacity as remarkable as his previous caution. With the active support of Parliament, he treated the country as if it were in a state of siege, and enforced what was practically martial law. He had taken the irrevocable step of asserting his sovereignty alike in Church and State; now, at the peril of his life and throne, he must strike down all opposition to his authority at home, while keeping at arm's length the threat of foreign intervention. He had at his side a minister as bold as himself but without any illusion of conscientious scruples, in the shape of Thomas Cromwell. This self-made adventurer, who had been a common soldier of fortune in Italy and had pushed his way to the top by sheer, unscrupulous ability, was a thoroughly consistent Machiavellian, and pursued his sovereign's policy with a scientific detachment that took no more account of justice or mercy than if men and women had been pieces on the chessboard. He does not appear to have been cruel—though there was no doubt a streak of this quality in Henry's temperament—and it can at least be said that their policy of " thorough " was far more merciful in practice than the saintliness of Henry VI or the chivalry of Edward III.

The first thing to do was to make one or two prominent examples of the King's determination to permit no divided loyalty. The Church had, indeed, shown surprisingly little spirit in resisting the attack on its privileges, but there were a chosen few in whom the Catholic faith still burnt bright enough to make them ready rather to die than to acknowledge a temporal sovereign as their spiritual head. Of these the most prominent were the monks of the London Charterhouse, who were, accordingly, selected for the frightful penalties of

high treason. When their prior and two fellow-priors of the order who happened to be staying with him were, with certain of the brethren, disembowelled alive in their canonical habits, the rest of the Churchmen must have recognized that they had now a sovereign who would stick at nothing. The Carthusian martyrs found no successors. But one further lesson was needed. Fisher and More enjoyed a reputation not only English but European as leaders of the spiritual Renaissance, the one for his saintly life, the other for his scholarship. But they were known to disapprove of Henry's claim to the supreme headship of the Church, and their very existence might serve as an encouragement to others. They were accordingly confronted with the choice between treason to their faith and their sovereign, and choosing the latter, were graciously permitted the axe instead of the rope and knife. About the same time a dozen or so Dutch Anabaptists were burnt to death, but about this piece of ecclesiastical routine neither Royalists nor Papists particularly bothered.

Though Henry had thus piled horror on horror's head in the face of an astonished Christendom, the thunderbolts of vengeance almost ostentatiously hung fire. There had been much fear of a Spanish invasion, but Charles V was not of the stuff of which crusaders are made, and Henry proceeded quietly to consolidate his position by getting rid of the papal garrisons in the shape of the monasteries. A commission was appointed to enquire into their abuses—no new thing, as Henry VII's Archbishop Morton and Wolsey had both provided precedents—but Cromwell and the very shady characters he appointed to carry out the investigation had no other object than to find a pretext for their destruction. By looting the monasteries, Henry would be providing himself with a means to avoid asking for taxes at a time when rising prices were making it difficult for him to attain the vital aim of living of his own ; it would also serve to create a vested interest of those who shared in the plunder, and would stand to the last by a regime which was their sole security for keeping it.

In 1536 Parliament was induced to dissolve all monasteries of a less income than £200 a year—for in this, as in all other matters, His Majesty was determined not to hurry his Parliament faster than it was prepared to go. It was in this year that the first serious trouble occurred in enforcing the new policy, and its location is significant in enabling us to estimate to what an extent the nation was really behind Henry in his attack on the Church. It is an extraordinary

fact, when we come to think of it, that a veritable revolution, accompanied by unheard-of sacrilege and piteous martyrdom, could be carried out without exciting in the more civilized parts of the Kingdom so much overt opposition as had been aroused by the attempt to collect the taxes levied in support of Wolsey's policy.

But in the Northern counties, which were furthest removed from Continental influences and where more primitive conditions of society obtained, an attempt, by means of a Parliament preponderantly Southern, to overturn the whole social system, could hardly fail to excite that rebellious spirit of which the North was so prolific. It is probable that the monasteries here—so many of them situated in the wilds and away from the great centres of population—were performing a more useful service than in the South, where the vagrancy problem had reached dimensions beyond the capacity of monastic resources. It was in the North that, after a revolt in the backward agricultural county of Lincolnshire had been easily suppressed, a really formidable rebellion broke out in which all classes participated, and whose leaders seem to have been high-minded men inspired by a religious idealism quite unique in that age.

Henry met the situation, the most formidable with which he ever had to deal, with an address that Machiavelli might have envied. His own forces on the spot were outnumbered and disaffected, and it was of vital importance to get the rebels to demobilize. This he did by fair promises, an amnesty, and the offer—which throws a flood of light on the political significance of the rebellion—of a Parliament at York. Having once got the rebels to go home, the King had the game in his hands. An excuse was easily found for revoking the amnesty, and such a thorough application was made of military frightfulness that the Northern counties were crushed and cowed into complete submission. Nor did the King neglect to follow up his advantage, for by means of a Council of the North he subjected this most turbulent part of England to so powerful an administrative machine as to bring it for the first time under effective royal control.

¶ The time had now come to push the campaign against the Papacy a step further by making a clean sweep of those shrines whose miraculous attributes formed no small part of the Church's prestige, and produced a fat income out of the wallets of devout pilgrims. A war of plunder and ghoulish sacrilege, waged not against the living, but against the bodies of dead saints, constitutes, to our modern minds, the most horrible phase of this grim struggle of the new

monarchy against the old spiritual empire. We shudder when we hear of Saint Cuthbert having his coffin burst open, and of the smith crying in horror, "alas, I have broken his leg!" It is dreadful to think of Christian Englishmen dishonouring the remains of Saint Alban, the first of our martyrs, of Saint Edmund, of many another hero of the faith, hallowed by the unquestioning reverence of centuries.

But it is only fair to remember that the opponents of the Church had some reason for regarding these dead saints as being more formidable than living enemies. The Church had not hesitated to use them even for the pettiest ends. Laymen striving for what they deemed their rights against some monastic corporation might find themselves accused of robbing not the monks, but Saint Alban or Saint Edmund. It was only natural that these worthies should share in the unpopularity of the proceedings done in their name, and that when it was proved, by profane demonstration, that their supernatural powers could not protect them from outrage, there should have been a certain unholy pleasure in violating their taboos.

We have already seen how even reforming churchmen like Erasmus and Colet had regarded with amused or impatient scepticism the whole supernatural paraphernalia of such lucrative pilgrimage shrines as Canterbury and Walsingham. It was easy, therefore, to start the cry that these supernatural claims that had brought in so much solid cash to the religious houses, and gave the Church such a formidable though vague power, reposed on a foundation of sheer fraud and humbug. What Erasmus had regarded with amused tolerance was received by reformers of the new school with fierce moral indignation, which easily communicated itself to the public at large when the claims of these images were one after the other exposed; when the image of Christ at Boxley, which had bowed its head in token of forgiveness, was shown to be a puppet worked with wires (and if the device was perfectly above board, no one, we imagine, would have been so foolish as to expose the thing publicly in the neighbouring town of Maidstone); when honest Latimer threw out of doors an image that was supposed to be immovable; when a drop of our Saviour's blood, at Ashridge, that had been secured at vast expense by Earl Edmund, nephew of Henry III, turned out to be a drop of clarified honey, and a similar discovery was made about the even more famous Blood of Hailes in Gloucestershire. It was a grim and characteristic joke of the time that a huge wooden image from North Wales, which possessed the power of drawing souls

from Hell, was used as fuel at the burning alive of a certain Friar Forrest.

The most dramatic iconoclasm of all was when Henry showed that he had still power to stagger Christian humanity by looting the most famous shrine in all Europe, that of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and casting the Archbishop's sacred body out of its shrine no man knows whither. There is no conclusive evidence for the story that the dead man was actually summoned to appear and answer a charge of treason, and was condemned by default, but we can only say that the incident would have been thoroughly in keeping with Henry's character and sense of the dramatic, and he was quite capable of arguing that if Becket could come gliding out of his shrine to celebrate Mass, as we see him doing on one of the Canterbury windows, he was equally capable of coming into court. Henry at least paid Becket the compliment of treating him as a living and powerful enemy, and when he ordered every image or representation of the proud priest to be destroyed, he was removing a perpetual challenge to the supremacy by which he stood or fell.

The larger monasteries were now marked down for destruction. This was mostly done by peaceful surrender, for the terror created by Henry and Cromwell was such as to appal the stoutest of abbots. Another dramatic example was however considered expedient, which consisted in the hanging, drawing and quartering of the heads of three of the greatest Houses, those of Reading, Glastonbury and Colchester. The spirit in which Cromwell went about his work is shown by his instruction, in the same paper, for the execution as well as the trial of the Abbot of Glastonbury, the most sacred spot in England. No circumstance was omitted that could shock the feelings or affront the susceptibilites of devout Romanists. The lesson was sufficient. The monasteries fell one by one with scarcely the faintest show of resistance. One after another the most splendid buildings in England had the lead stripped from their roofs, their stones carted away, perhaps to build some rich man's mansion, their rich libraries dispersed, their inmates turned adrift, and the crafts, of which they were the nurseries, lost.

It probably occured to few to repine at the fearful loss involved in the destruction of so many noble buildings—the only contemporary reference, that we remember, to the beauty of the monasteries occurs in a proclamation of the Northern rebels. How great a reverence was entertained for a sacred building, even under Catholic

auspices, is shown by the fact that the lovely glass of Lincoln Cathedral had been used, by the citizens, as a mark for crossbow practice, and the glass in Exeter cloisters was "all to brast" by the tops and tennis balls of the young sportsmen who thus beguiled the hours of divine service. To the average man of the Tudor age a building was intended for some definite purpose, and when it no longer fulfilled that purpose there was no reason why it should cumber the ground. Why retain an enormous church at Glastonbury, that was perfectly well served already by its own parish church, when the stones could be put to much better use in paving a road across the marshes to Wells and the lead could be stripped and sold by some titled profiteer? Where a church was retained, just so much of it was kept as sufficed for local requirements, usually the nave, as at Dunstable, Waltham and Shrewsbury, though at Pershore, with excellent judgment, the choir was selected. Only in one or two instances, as at Tewkesbury and Saint Albans, was the whole building preserved —even the royal foundation of Westminster only just escaped from the clutches of Lord Hertford, afterwards the Protector Somerset.

There is no need to waste words on what no words can express, the sordidness, the shamelessness and the vandalism of the whole proceedings. When we read of that furtive adherent of the old faith, the Duke of Norfolk, joining with Cromwell, whom he hated, to share between them the venerable priory of Lewes, when we hear of Lord Audley selling off the stones of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, one of the most imposing buildings in London, with all its monuments, at sixpence a load in order to clear the ground for his own house, and know that this was only typical of what was going on all over the country, we feel inclined to disown our fathers, but even this seems less monstrous than the perfect indifference with which Henry appears to have regarded the obliteration of the tombs of his own ancestor, the first of his name, at Reading, and of the mighty Arthur, Champion of the British race, from whom our Kings had been proud to claim descent, at Glastonbury. But neither at the time, nor for long afterwards, does the destruction of the monasteries appear to have aroused any widespread sentiment of this nature. Never, so far as the more civilized and prosperous part of the country was concerned, was change so momentous accomplished with such ease and smoothness.

6

The Road to Ruin

At the end of the fourth decade of the century, Henry had obtained an authority and prestige that even the greatest of his predecessors might have envied. The alien power in England was utterly shattered; the Church was even more under the King's control than the State. He had eclipsed all records of sacrilege, he had outraged the cherished beliefs of centuries, with complete impunity and success. In so far as policy can be regarded apart from morals, his success had been deserved. He had pursued his ends with unerring discrimination and self restraint. His audacity at home had been rendered possible only by a masterly inactivity abroad.

The worst apparent danger was fairly weathered. It must have been the nightmare of every loyal Englishman that sooner or later the two great Catholic potentates, whose feud was paralyzing the arm of Rome, would compose their differences and unite for the destruction of the arch-heretic, who could not even be sure of the undivided loyalty of his own subjects. At least once this contingency seemed on the point of being realized. But not for a moment did Henry waver or display the least signs of alarm. He knew perfectly well with whom he had to deal. The Machiavellian kingcraft does not lend itself to Crusades nor to knight errantry on behalf of injured aunts or Pontiffs. Francis did not scruple to fling the Turk against the Christian bulwark of Vienna nor to ally himself with the heretic princes of Germany. As for the Emperor, the very vastness of his possessions weakened him for attacking England. He soon found that his subjects in the Low Countries cared more for English wool than for any wrongs of the Church or Katherine of Aragon. The economic necessity for maintaining the old Burgundian Alliance soon outweighed any considerations of imperial or family policy. At the height of his peril, Henry coolly gave a slight object lesson of his real strength by closing the Staple at Calais, thereby bringing an embassy of almost frantic remonstrance from a distressed Flanders. The lesson was sufficient; the Low Countries would not help the Emperor in cutting their own throats to spite his nephew's face. "I never saw the King merrier than he is now," was the comment of an observer,[1] at about this time.

It was a question of foreign policy that led to the fall of Cromwell. He had been feeling after an alliance with the Protestant

[1] Quoted in Professor Pollard's *Henry VIII*, p. 307.

princes of Germany against the Emperor, and with this end in view had promoted a marriage between his master and the Princess Anne of Cleves. But the lady in question turned out to be an ugly, German frau, whom, to her own great contentment, her now experienced bridegroom quickly divorced and pensioned off. Cromwell's policy was beginning to savour too much of Wolsey's, and Henry, whose own policy had been one of calculated unadventurousness, and who had no desire to advertise himself as the champion of heresy, came to the conclusion that Cromwell had served his purpose and would be most useful as a scapegoat. He was therefore disposed of with as little sentiment as he had displayed towards his own victims.

Henry was now on the full tide, if not of a Catholic, at least of an anti-Protestant reaction. He had taken himself terribly seriously in his new role of Supreme Head of the Church. He was perpetually at work supervising, dogmatizing, settling what truth his subjects should and should not believe, with as grave an assurance as if his royal will were to be done in Heaven as it was in England. But looking at it, as we can now, in a truer perspective, we can see that Henry himself was being carried along by forces that he could neither understand nor control, and that both his friends and his enemies agreed in overrating his importance. At the beginning of the divorce case he had probably had no other object than to get his way with the Pope. Afterwards he had hoped to retain the old doctrine and system intact with himself in the Pope's place. But it is impossible to knock the keystone out of an arch without injuring the fabric, and in the course of his desperate struggle with Roman power in England, Henry had found himself obliged to knock out much more than the keystone.

The Church of which he had made himself Supreme Head was cut off from organized Christendom, deprived of her permanent garrisons, impoverished and discredited. The dykes which she had erected against heresy were pierced; the breach, insignificant at first, was continually enlarging itself, and it was beyond the power of any sovereign to say to the flood, "thus far shalt thou come and no further." For however orthodox Henry may have intended to be, it was impossible to embark on a mortal struggle with the Papacy without playing into the hands of those who were fighting the same enemy on doctrinal as well as political grounds. Henry was not above a certain amount of conscious collusion with Lutherans abroad, while at home his natural anxiety to fill prominent ecclesiastical posts with men who were sound against the papal connection could

hardly fail to let in some who harboured advanced, not to speak of heretical views on points of doctrine. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, was travelling as fast towards Protestantism as his timid and king-fearing nature would permit.

In no way could the King have done more to open the floodgates of heresy than by his determination to provide every church in his realm with the Bible in English. He had some reason for this partiality to the Scriptures, for it was on the strict letter of the Levitical Law that he had taken his stand in the matter of the divorce, as against the arbitrary fiat of a Pope. Cromwell and Cranmer were both determined to force the English Bible on the Church, and though up to the end of the reign Tyndale's version was officially anathema, it made its appearance, so far as it had gone, under a very thin disguise in a translation called Matthew's—the rest of it being based on a translation from the Latin by Miles Coverdale. This was the basis of our English Bible, and of the magnificent folio that was published by royal authority in 1539 and ordered to be placed for public inspection in every Church in the Kingdom.

But Henry had gone much further than he intended. By inviting Tom, Dick and Harry to judge for themselves on matters hitherto expounded for them by their spiritual fathers, he had started a movement that even in illogical England could hardly fail to reach a Protestant conclusion. The whole realm was seething with controversy, and to devise royal or episcopal formularies was only to add fuel to the fire. Henry was pursuing two utterly inconsistent aims when he tried to shatter the prestige of the Church in order to defeat the Pope, and to maintain that prestige under his own headship. The miracles of the shrines had been exposed with contumely all over England, and yet His Majesty imagined that he could retain the supreme miracle of the altar. Our Lord's Blood at Hailes and Ashridge had been resolved into honey or gum, and yet to hint that it was wine on the parish altar was to incur the guilt of heresy.

Henry's iron will and the humourless gravity with which he accepted his position as Supreme Head knew no limitations. The last eight years of his reign saw him strenuously endeavouring to maintain the Roman faith and system in an anti-papal England. Londoners were presented with the rare double spectacle of Catholics, ripped up for treason, having their last moments consoled by the spectacle of blazing Protestants. The English Bible was indeed retained, but its use was forbidden to women (except very well born

ones), artificers, servants, working men, and others not considered fit to have their own judgment. And meanwhile the tide swelled in spite of the royal notice board that showed so proudly above the waters. Henry himself, there is some reason to believe, was inclined to make a further move in the Protestant direction when death cut short his activities forever.

In these last years, when he was a sick man and his nervous irritability had become almost a mania, his statesmanship appears to have lost some of its cunning. The infinitely patient diplomatic finessing that had kept him free from foreign attack during the critical decade of his struggle with the Papacy was at last discarded in favour of a foreign policy as adventurous and costly as that of Wolsey. Henry had all along cherished designs of uniting the British Islands under his own rule; he had met with a large measure of apparent success in Wales and Ireland, and the alliance between Scotland and France was a long-standing nuisance. Failing to draw Scotland into his sphere of influence, he tried, in 1542, to cut the knot by the sword, and was so far successful that the Scottish main army bolted from a handful of English troops, and the King of Scotland died of grief, leaving an infant daughter, whom Henry determined to secure as a bride for his son Edward, and thus to unite the two realms. His method of courtship, however, was by military frightfulness on a scale that might have brought a blush to the cheek even of Edward Longshanks. Finally Henry availed himself of Protestant assassins, to get rid of the head of the Catholic party in Scotland, and an English fleet succeeded in carrying most of the gang to safety. The net result of these proceedings was that Scotland was reduced to misery and England nearly to bankruptcy.

The natural sequel to a Scottish war was one with France, which Henry undertook, in conjunction with the Emperor, the nephew of the woman he had driven into a premature grave. Instead of marching, in 1544, on Paris in co-operation with his ally, Henry wasted time and money in capturing Boulogne, an utterly useless acquisition that cost far more than it was worth and whose possession constituted an intolerable affront to the French King. The Emperor hastened, on the first opportunity, to conclude a separate peace, leaving Henry in the lurch, with the result that next year a great French armada descended on our shores. The fleet, however, that Henry had raised by the plunder of the monasteries proved amply sufficient to deal with the menace, and in 1546 a peace was

patched up with France that left Henry saddled, for a term of years, with the expense of keeping up Boulogne.

These unprofitable futilities had given a fatal tilt to Henry's policy. At a time when it must in any event have been hard, owing to the decreasing value of money, it had now become utterly impossible for the King to live of his own. It is proof of the ascendancy he had acquired that he could draw on his Parliament for subsidies on a lavish scale, and even get them to sanction the repudiation of his debts. But there were limits even to Henry's power of squeezing his subjects, and by this time the credit of the country was on its last legs, and Henry's agents were having the greatest difficulty in getting the Antwerp financiers to advance him any more. The monasteries were thoroughly gutted, and it was a choice between bankruptcy or finding fresh extra-parliamentary means of raising the wind.

The means that he adopted, and that were improved upon after his death, have a strangely modern sound. They were confiscation, and the inflation, or, as it used to be called, the debasement of the currency.

A Patriot Polity

The most noteworthy feature of Henry's reign consisted less in what he did than in what he refrained from doing. He might raise the power of the monarchy to an unprecedented height, he might burst the bonds of Rome, but not for one moment did he attempt to burst the bonds of the English Constitution. If he aspired to be Pope in his Church he stopped short at being Caesar in his realm. He would no doubt greatly have preferred this position had it been attainable—his use of the word "imperial" testifies to this—but it was just the strength of the Tudors to know when a thing was not attainable.

In his struggle with Rome the King found Parliament an invaluable and even indispensable ally. The Church had made a mistake in tending to isolate herself as a body from the lay estates of the realm, and deliberately retiring into her own Convocation. True, the presence of Bishops and Abbots in Parliament did something to maintain the connection, but the Commons' House was naturally hostile to a community alien in sympathies and owning another allegiance than its own. As Bishop Fisher cried, "Now with

the Commons is nothing but 'Down with the Church'. And all this, meseemeth, is for lack of faith only."

Henry was the ally and not the tyrant of his Parliament, which was becoming, in many respects, an even more powerful body than it had been in the Middle Ages. Its privileges were not only maintained but extended. The Commons were now, what they had not been before, a debating assembly, and even Thomas Cromwell, at the height of his power, found it expedient to get himself elected for the borough of Taunton, besides getting as many other reliable people elected as the arts of the corrupt electioneer could secure. That Henry usually got his own way was not due to any weakening of the Commons' power, but rather to a temporary conjunction of circumstances that put him, to some extent, out of its reach, added to the fact that he and the Commons were, for the most part, working together for a common end. If Charles I had been in as little need of taxation as Henry VIII, there would have been no Petition of Right and no scaffold set up at Whitehall.

Not at the most triumphant period of Henry's reign were the Commons ever a servile body. They might alter the succession and create various new kinds of treasons, for these things they were not concerned in opposing. But they had no hesitation in throwing out, more than once, an unpopular government measure like the Statute of Wills and Uses. Hall tells us that a motion was actually before the Reformation Parliament urging the King to take back his wife, and the Imperial Ambassador amplifies the story by telling his master that two members, with the general approval of the House, demurred to providing for the defence of the Border on the ground that the Scots could do nothing without foreign aid, and that the best plan would be for his Majesty to put himself right with the Emperor by taking back Katherine. It required all the royal arts of persuasion to get this dropped. In 1534, we find the Commons refusing to make spoken words treason. So late as 1545, we read of government measures like the Bill of Colleges having narrowly escaped, and of "divers others" finally dashed in the Commons. It is true that a statute was passed in 1539 giving royal proclamations the force of law, but with the important qualification that they should not be prejudicial to the life or property of any subject. Even so, the statute appears to have remained a dead letter during the few remaining years of Henry's reign, and under the auspices of the Protector Somerset it was immediately repealed.

Even more important than Parliament itself was the Common

Law, that labyrinth upon whose foundation our liberties are built. There is no doubt that, unlike Parliament, the Common Law was in a parlous, if not a critical condition during Henry VIII's reign. The Year Books, which had formed a unique feature of English Law during the Middle Ages, first became intermittent, and then, in 1535, ceased altogether. The power and prestige of the prerogative courts were at their highest, and put the courts of the Common Law quite into the shade. In Germany the Civil Law triumphed even more decisively than the Reformation, in Scotland the English Common Law proved quite unable to hold its own. Professorships of the Civil Law were founded at Oxford and Cambridge; Reginald Pole had tried to persuade his cousin, the King, to receive the Roman Law in England. And yet the Common Law lived on, the Inns of Court maintained a continuous though undistinguished existence, the very abeyance into which it had fallen saved the ancient Law of England. Nobody knew better than Henry not to waste time and energy in rooting up a plant that is doing no harm, merely because it is untidy. And a new period of legal activity was shortly to end the darkness that divides the age of Littleton and Fortescue from that of Smith and Coke.

The nation, now that the question of an undivided sovereignty was in the way of being definitely settled, was becoming organized to an extent that the Middle Ages had never known. Two years after the Royal Supremacy had been definitely affirmed, Parliament took the momentous step of passing an Act of Union with Wales. The Principality was now divided into shires and received representation in Parliament. She was, in fact, to be, as far as legislation could effect it, completely Anglicized. English law was transplanted into Wales, superseding all the Welsh customs, regular judicial circuits were arranged, and the unfortunate Welsh were compelled to use the English tongue, which very few of them knew, in all legal procedure. The enormous pedigree surnames of which the Welsh gentry were so proud had now to be dropped, whereby, as old Bishop Fuller puts it, "much time is saved for other employment, especially in winter, when the days be short." Hardship and the injured dignity of a proud people were the result of these changes, but the full weight of England could be brought to bear, and the Council of Wales had the situation firmly in hand. One of Henry's ablest administrators was Bishop Rowland Lee, its president, a man of ruthless will who put down disorder with an iron hand. England was strong enough to accomplish in the little state at her doors what she lamentably

failed to do on the other side of the Irish Channel. The rude and turbulent Northern counties, the seat of chronic rebellion, were taken in hand with equal firmness by the Council of the North.

Under Henry VIII's auspices England was fast becoming mistress in her own house. Her system of government was beginning to take the form it was to retain until the King himself became the figure-head of an oligarchy. At the centre of the administrative organization was the Council, which, as we can see from all the literature of the time, occupied a position of enormous importance, and was, on the whole, the most successful part of all the Tudor polity. It had now ceased to be a collection of magnates who, under feeble sovereigns, had succeeded in overshadowing the Crown; new men of the type of Dudley and Cromwell had come to preponderate in it; it was, in a truer sense than any modern cabinet, a committee of experts, and well under the control of a strong monarch. Local government had already taken the unique and typically English form of organization under the local gentry of each shire, appointed by the Crown through the Lords Lieutenant, and armed with judicial and executive powers of the widest scope. This was, on the one hand, a powerful check on the Crown, which could not control the justices of the peace as a Caesar or a King of France his local officials, but it might, in time, pave the way for a more insidious and pervading tyranny, that of the squire and his relations.

Such was the polity that was being shaped by the directing hand of the Tudors and those influences which, because they are up to the present beyond the control of human will, we sometimes vaguely designate as social forces. We find the circumstances faithfully reflected in the thought of the time. It is Machiavelli, with his conception of sovereignty and kingcraft, who is the great European influence at this time, but for the intellectual fatherhood of the Tudor system we should be rather inclined to look to Fortescue. The Tudor ideal was not that of the Italian Prince, ruling by any means whatever, but rather of the strong constitutional sovereign ruling by law. But the sovereign had gained incalculably in prestige and authority by the elimination of the Catholic *imperium in imperio*. It is characteristic of the time, and indeed of European thought between the Renaissance and the French Revolution, that a very high estimate was taken of the sovereign's powers, both for good and evil. He was conceived of as the potter, and his realm as the clay for him to mould. If anything was good for the State, it was the sovereign's business to carry it out, either by his

personal fiat, when this fell within the limits of the law, or by legislation. For Parliament did not as yet propose to take on the functions of a legislative assembly more than to sanction or, on occasion, reject, legislation proposed by the King and his Council. The powers of the Crown were, by general consent, exceedingly wide, and extended to the regulation of the minutest details of national and personal life. Men must keep the fasts of the Church after these fasts had been officially branded as superstitious, in order to encourage the fish-trade; they must bury their friends in woollen shrouds to provide employment for clothiers.

The social philosophy of this time bears an obvious resemblance to that of the eighteenth century, particularly of the French *philosophes*, whose doctrines, though they may have indirectly helped on the Revolution, were the stand-by of more or less benevolent despots like Joseph II of Austria and Frederick the Great of Prussia. But there is an important difference in the fact that the *philosophes* thought of men as all being very much alike, more or less homogeneous units in the pattern arranged by the legislator, but the men of the sixteenth century had inherited from the Middle Ages the conception of a social hierarchy in which everyone had his degree, and obtained his ful deve'opment in the limited sphere to which God and his birth had assigned him. That was the idea of the great schoolmen as much as of homely reformers like the author of *Piers Plowman*. The sixteenth century retained the conception of the social hierarchy, but tended to lose sight of the Christian and democratic basis on which it had reposed, the idea, that is to say, of the great world made up of little worlds, each a complete universe in itself—the great world of the State comprehending the little worlds of Richard the King and Piers the Plowman, each made in the image of the great world and the great God, and though maintaining its place, since " in His will is our peace ", each of equal and infinite importance in the sight of God.

But now the Renaissance has set in, with its tendency constantly to belittle the importance of the individual in the scheme of the universe. The great world remains, but the little world tends to be lost sight of. A spirit of real social contempt and superiority begins to creep in, that is essentially unmedieval. A lord is now a being of nobler clay than a ploughman; a rich man would be less insulted at being assigned a " place on the serpent's knee " than at being addressed as " brother Dives ". Even Henry VIII, a really popular King, does not hesitate to tell his subjects of Lincolnshire that they

are " brute and beastly ". The destruction of St. Thomas's shrine at Canterbury is an event of less importance than the break up of the Canterbury pilgrims, or rather of the spirit that made that uproariously democratic journeying a possibility.

Perhaps the conception that is most dominant in the political writings of this time is that of " degree ". Its most illuminating because its most naive expression is in an essay written by that pathetic, though too priggish and cold-blooded child, Edward VI. His earnest determination to do the best for his Kingdom evinces itself in his resolve to have all his subjects neatly arranged in their proper social niches. " No one part of the body doth serve for two occupations; even so neither the gentleman ought to be a farmer nor the merchant an artificer, but to have his art particularly. Furthermore, no member in a well-fashioned and whole body is too big for the proportion of the body; so must there be in a well-ordered Commonwealth no person that shall have more than the proportion of the country will bear; so it is hurtful immoderately to enrich one part. I think this country can bear no merchant to have more land than £100, no husbandman nor farmer above £100 or £200, no artificer above 100 marks; no labourer much more than he spendeth." Poor boy—he was never to have the chance of proving how such simple-sounding schemes of state socialism work out in practice!

The early reformers, who constituted the most active intellectual force of this time, were for the most part thoroughly imbued with this conception of society. It was the State that had vanquished their arch-enemy Rome, and it was the State Church that they hoped to capture for their doctrine. The great Luther, so terrible to the Roman Church, had been more subservient to the State and more brutally contemptuous of the bottom dog than any schoolman. Logically his doctrine tended, and did eventually lead, to Radicalism, but these early reformers were for the most part Tory and conservative. The Church Catechism exhorts the Christian to order himself lowly and reverently to all his betters, to " submit himself ", to " honour and obey ", and to do his duty in that station of life unto which it shall please God to call him. Thomas Becon, in his *Flower of Godly Prayers*, has one for " all men, that they may walk in their vocation and calling ". Sometimes this tendency to exalt the powers that be leads to the formulation of doctrines which would justify naked despotism. Even honest old Hugh Latimer, no flatterer of kings, allows himself to proclaim that the

King "must have as much as is necessary for him . . . and that must not thou, or I, that are subjects, appoint, the King himself must appoint it."

Vehement Latimer, the man of the people, might sometimes allow himself to slip into language like this, but nowhere do we find a finer and more fearless exposition of the Tudor social doctrine than in his sermons. For his conception was of a country, an England, ordered like a disciplined army, in which the officers hold their commissions, not as a privilege but as a solemn responsibility, in the consciousness that to whom much is given, from him shall much be required. He never hesitated to thunder the most unpalatable truths, in good homely English, at the greatest in the land—no timeserver, he! Sprung from the stock that had provided the "poor archers" of Agincourt, he loved England with that passionate, and—if we may borrow the idea from Wordsworth—motherly affection, that is more apt to find vent in scolding than in praise. He is as sure, he says, of his mission to preach God's word to Englishmen, as if he had heard Christ say a thousand times, "go preach to Englishmen, I will that Englishmen be saved." Lack of charity and spirit of social service on the part of the rich, neglect of duty by the great, covetousness in all, he fearlessly denounces. He even draws a comparison between bishops and the devil, to the advantage of the latter, who is at least diligent about his business. The social hierarchy, which is a mechanical contrivance in the conception of young Edward VI, and was becoming a cloak for tyranny in less disinterested minds, glows in the vision of this noblest of our Protestant reformers with a fire as holy as that of Piers Plowman. Indeed, those who believe in reincarnation might easily imagine that Latimer was Langland come to life again.

The separation from Rome does, indeed, mark a notable advance in the growth of patriotic feeling. The Papal influence was the direct negation of patriotism, just as old Rome had extinguished all local and tribal sentiment in the provinces under her rule—and England was not even, in the Papal view, a distinct province. When it was a question of serving either Rome or England, the greatest of our Churchmen, Pole and Fisher, were ready to sacrifice the country of their birth to that of their spiritual second birth. Even More, the most accomplished Englishman of his time, can hardly be classed as a patriot. He dreamed of Utopia as being the exact opposite of the island Kingdom he knew, and his conduct while in office shows how little he dreamed of realizing Utopian

conditions in England. "If I should take any country for my own," he writes during his last imprisonment, "it must be the country to which I come, and not the country from which I come." Even Wolsey, worldling though he was, had come to his fall because it was impossible for him to pursue a foreign policy conducted solely in the interests of his country and sovereign. He was hampered, fatally in the end, by the consciousness that in the last resort he could not break with Rome.

The reformers were under no such divided allegiance except during the brief interlude of Mary's papal restoration. Then, indeed, we find the martyr Hooper praying for his "natural country" which had passed from the Pope's curse to God's curse. But even so, these reformers did not, like Pole, disown their allegiance and affection for their country—how should they, who had no earthly alternative? Patriotism was as natural to the believer in a State Church as it was hard for a citizen of the spiritual Rome. The evils of a divided allegiance were too obvious to escape the notice of the reformers. "Read the chronicles of England," counsels Tyndale, the translator of the Bible in his *Obedience of a Christian Man*, "and thou shalt find them (the churchmen) always both rebellious and disobedient to the Kings and also churlish and unthankful, so that when all the realm gave the King somewhat to maintain him in his right, they would not give a mite," and, in short, "in all their doings, though they pretend outwardly the honour of God or a commonwealth, their intent and secret counsel is to bring all under their power."

The most striking patriotic manifesto of this time comes from Thomas Becon, a reformer whose writings have fallen into an unjust oblivion, accountable for only by the fact that he had not the honour of martyrdom, but lived comfortably on into the reign of Elizabeth. As we might expect from so wholehearted a lover of his country, he had taken much of his inspiration from Latimer. His little treatise on the Policy of War is worthy to be classed among the most eloquent expressions, in our language, of patriotic sentiment. "Our parents," he says, in words that would have been endorsed by Aristotle, "only give us this gross, rude and mortal body. Our country doth not only receive and joyfully sustenate it, but also most opulently adorn and garnish both that and the mind with most goodly and godly virtues." With one of those intimate touches, of which Wordsworth was to be so prolific, Becon remarks how glad is an Englishman when in foreign parts to get any letters telling him of what is being done in his native country.

"It doeth me good," he cries, "yea, it maketh me seriously to rejoice even at the very heart to see how glad my countrymen are to serve the commodities of this my country, England. Whatsoever our most excellent prince or any in his name commandeth, it is with all reverent fear and loving expedition accomplished. No man grudgeth, no man muttereth, no man thinketh the precept unrighteous nor the burden heavy, so fervent a love do they bear their country. All with one consent employ their endeavours to satisfy, even unto the utmost of their power, the imperial precept of the King's most royal majesty." It is characteristic of the time and of the reformers that one of the prime effects of patriotism should, in Becon's view, be obedience to a superior.

Such was the standpoint of a patriotic Englishman towards the close of Henry VIII's reign. It is no doubt sweet and glorious thus to love, as to die for, one's country. But he who is tempted to give himself to the full tide of Becon's enthusiasm may perhaps be arrested for the moment by the sweet irony of Sir Thomas More's smile, and the deep, penetrating eyes that look at us out of the canvas at Knole. He at least found no cause "seriously to rejoice" in the state of his native country. He dreamed of a land where work should be a pleasure, where instead of a mad, suicidal competition of man against man and people against people, all should harmoniously unite, by every imaginative and scientific means, to obtain for the common weal the kindly fruits of the earth, so that in good time all might enjoy them—a land where all wills should be united in the simple task of being happy. The good Sir Thomas knew that it was a dream; he would be a bold man who would maintain that we are nearer Utopia in the twentieth than in the sixteenth century. And yet the sole hope of civilization rests in such a dream becoming practical politics.

8

The Social Problem Becomes Acute

Perhaps More was the only man who had any clear vision of the sinister possibilities of the new social order that was superseding that of Catholic Christendom. His life was cut short before he had time to see the most catastrophic shock of all administered. The egotism which gave such terrible strength to Henry's purpose carried with it the disadvantage of making him an opportunist, a strong

man without vision. All his might and cunning were bent to the sole purpose of securing a free path for his will; he felt the Pope's opposition as a sick man feels some intolerable irritation, and provided he could make an end of it he had little thought of the ultimate consequence to his realm. When, by Herculean efforts, his path was clear, this tendency in his nature became more and more dominant. His egotism took on a definitely neurotic tinge, he became furiously impatient of the least opposition. To live with him was now a dangerous adventure, even to so mild and tactful a sixth consort as Catharine Parr.

When by the destruction of the monasteries he put the seal on his policy of breaking the Roman power, he had one of the greatest opportunities that have ever come to an ambitious monarch. He might have more than realized the ideal of Fortescue, and put the Crown in a position to live of its own. For there are in every nation two kinds of property, one of which is in the hands of individual citizens, or groups of citizens, and the other which is retained in the hands of public bodies or of the State itself, and is what Coleridge designated "the commonalty". The monasteries stood somewhere on the borderland between the two; originally and in theory administering their property for God's sake and the Church's, they were, in practice, more and more sinking to the level of private corporations. Now if the King could have secured the whole, or even the greater part of this property, here would have been an ideal opportunity for him to have carried out a perfectly practicable policy of social betterment, one not at all beyond the scope of the best intellects of that time, and at the same time immensely to have strengthened his own position. The need for education was one especially appreciated by the men of the Renaissance, to supply it is the first of the reforms aimed at by Edward VI in his essay. Here was a golden opportunity to have stepped into the place of the Church, and endowed education on the liberal scale that might have been expected from the friend of Erasmus. The relief of the poor might have been organized, and what had been carelessly performed by the monks as a matter of routine might have been carefully and wisely taken in hand by the State.

Unfortunately Henry did not see further than the attainment of the two objects of breaking the Roman power, and providing himself with a temporary substitute for taxation. His position was no doubt a difficult one. Without the support of a standing army, he could only conquer the opposition of part of his subjects

by making allies of the remainder. His reliance was most of all upon the new men, who had risen up under the auspices of his House, and who were not likely to be hampered by scruples or traditions in putting through his policy. But to carry out so startling a revolution as that of destroying the whole monastic system of the country, they must be bribed by a lion's share of the proceeds. The faithful Commons, many of whom had already an interest in the land, might require something more than argument to overcome their scruples. Henry's eye was not on the future but the present, and to break the monasteries at all must have seemed a startling enough feat. And so it came about that the great opportunity was missed, with momentous consequences both to the Crown and nation. The Crown profited to quite an insignificant extent compared with these upstarts, who were practically turned loose to plunder the wealth and lands of the monasteries.

It is from this time that most of our great families, that finally achieved the double feat of robbing the peasantry and making the Crown a figure-head, come into light. We need only cite one typical instance, that of the Whig House of Russell. Obsequious genealogists have discovered the original Russell amongst the knights of the Conqueror, but the less imaginative historian traces the founder of the House in a pushing merchant of Weymouth in the reign of Henry VI. This merchant, probably a Gascon, having made his money in the wine trade, consolidated his social position by marrying the daughter of a Dorsetshire squire. But the man who first brought the name of Russell into the prominence it has retained ever since was John Russell, who eventually became Earl of Bedford. He was a vigorous adventurer, one of those men who seem born with the gift of getting on, and are not greatly scrupulous about the means they employ to that end. He was a brave soldier, and neither better nor worse than the average courtier of Henry VIII. The King soon found out that Russell was a useful man and kept him pretty constantly employed. He bore his part in one of the darkest and dirtiest transactions even of that time, the judicial murder of the last Abbot of Glastonbury, a good and able man, who had been indiscreet enough to defend, to the utmost of his power, the treasures of his monastery, and whose head was, in consequence, fixed on its gate. In the same year Russell became a peer, and when, in 1555, he died, full of riches and honours, he bequeathed a princely estate formed out of the loot of monastic houses all over the country. The names of Covent (or Convent) Garden, and of Woburn Abbey

testify to this day on what foundations the wealthiest of our ducal Houses is built.

There is no need to sentimentalize, as is sometimes done, about the monasteries. To talk of "the shaven men that were quaint and kind" is to display a woeful ignorance of the real facts about the monks, who were very far, at the best of times, from forming disinterested colonies of philanthropists. Even in the heyday of medievalism the monasteries were corporations with a keen eye to their business interests, and with as little hesitation as Shylock himself in exacting the uttermost farthing of their dues. The chronicle of Jocelyn of Brakelond, admittedly the most pleasing picture of monastic life we possess, shows how the attention of the whole community was focussed on the problem of enforcing the last letter of their legal rights. When the poor men rose in the great peasants' revolt of 1381, the two objects of their special hatred were the lawyers and the monks. It was not that the monasteries lacked the will to be oppressive, but that they were too much fettered by tradition and routine to adopt the go-ahead methods by which the lay landlords were transforming the social system of the country-side. They were therefore less likely to disturb customary tenants, or to turn tillage into pasture in order to ensure higher net returns.

Therefore when the greater part of the monastic lands fell into the hands of business-like parvenus, who rack-rented and evicted with the object of making the most possible out of their new estates, the process of social change was enormously accelerated, at the very time when some steadying influence was the thing most needed. But as if this was not enough, Henry's military extravagance induced him to strike another blow at the social system hardly less shattering than the dissolution itself. He debased the coinage. This policy was carried forward to even more scandalous lengths under the hungry adventurers who ruled the Kingdom after the fall of the Protector Somerset.

Thus was the Tudor idea of raising money by any and every extra-Parliamentary means pushed to the point of madness. Even if we had not the experience of history to confirm it, a little reflection would suffice to show that nothing can be more revolutionary in its effects than violent and arbitrary fluctuations in the value of money. All customary economic relations between man and man are either dissolved or suddenly changed in fact, while remaining unaltered in name. Habit is the great conservative force of society, but the habit of contentedly accepting a shilling is likely to be rudely

broken when that shilling comes to buy less than a sixpennyworth of goods. No more unfortunate time could have been chosen for Henry's experiment, since prices were already on the upgrade and would tend to be so owing to the amount of silver that was beginning to flow into Europe from the New World. For about a year after the first debasement matters hung fire—the country had not time to adjust itself to the change; then prices rose steeply and universally. We have the evidence of one of the shrewdest economic observers in our history, John Hales, as to the effects of this change. Every class was hit. The gentlefolk, whose avarice had been the theme already of More's denunciation, now found themselves driven by the keenest necessity to make both ends meet. Many of them who had been accustomed to maintain a goodly retinue of servants were now reduced to abandoning their estates and taking lodgings in London, or hanging about the court with "a man and a lackey". The result was that, finding the value of their rent roll reduced to a half or a third of what it was, they were either driven to rack-renting or turning tillage into pasture and driving the poor cultivators off the land. Employers of labour in the towns complained that it was impossible to find their apprentices and servants meat and drink at the enhanced prices, and that they were obliged to dismiss them all except one or two apprentices. "Therefore the journeymen . . . being forced to be without work, are the most part of these rude people that make these uproars abroad, to the great disquiet of the King's Highness and also of his people." But it was, as usual, the man at the bottom of the ladder who was hit hardest of all. With rents being raised, food costing more and more, and men turned out of their holdings on every hand to make room for sheep, his lot was a hard one. Those who have studied present labour conditions might be tempted to surmise that wages would have risen in proportion to the price of living. This, unhappily, was impossible, because in the universal scramble the labourer was far less capable of helping himself than the landlords and merchants, and because, with a society in rapid transition from a customary to a business footing, the labour market was considerably overstocked. To substitute sheep for men was too often a paying proposition.

The tragedy of the time is expressed, eloquently enough to those who have had experience of such things, in the dry words of Thorold Rogers, who points out that when the currency was finally reformed by Elizabeth, it was too late to repair the mischief. "The proportionate value of meat is nearly three times the old rates,

that of corn nearly two and a half times, that of dairy produce two and a half times. But the rise in wages is little more than one and a half times." In other words, the poor man not only lost the comparative security he had enjoyed in the Middle Ages, but he emerged from the turmoil of Reformation and Counter-Reformation with less food and less clothes and less command over the good things of life than before. These are more tragic happenings than the loss of Calais and the removal of a few titled heads.

But inflation did not exhaust Henry's extra-Parliamentary means of filling his gaping pockets. The monasteries were gone, but there were still various kinds of wealth that might be assumed to be tainted by Papist superstition and that might bring in a much-needed harvest to the Court of Augmentations. The ring of *nouveaux riches* who had grown fat on the profits of the monasteries were impatient for another share out, and the straits of the government were desperate. Accordingly the next objects to be singled out for plunder were "colleges, free chapels, chantries, hospitals, fraternities, brotherhoods, gilds and stipendiary priests." In theory it was the religious or superstitious property of these institutions of which they were to be relieved, but the connection between religion and philanthropy was very close, and this act, and a subsequent one passed in the first year of the next reign, were put in force by men whose interest it was to interpret it in the most grasping sense possible.

Thus commenced a pillage meaner and more fraught with misery than that of the monasteries, a pillage that went on with redoubled zest when the hand of the strong King was withdrawn and the realm was at the mercy of the spoilers' ring. All over the country hospitals were being closed and their inmates flung out to die, schools starved for lack of funds, churches stripped of everything that would sell, from the bells to the communion plate. The exact extent of the damage may have been overstated by the righteous indignation of historians who, in modern times, have come to realize the sort of work that was being done under the guise of reformation. The larger hospitals may, as Professor Ashley maintains, nearly all have managed to survive; a certain proportion of the schools may have taken on a new lease of life as grammar schools; the trade fraternities may not have been so much affected, and economic forces were at work that must in any case have created the pauperism and unemployment that the process of pillage only accentuated. But confiscation so shameless and so systematic cannot have been carried out without incalculably increasing the distress and lowering the moral

tone of the country. It is only by multiplying instances—and they are legion—that one can understand how true is Canon Jephson's dictum that "the richer classes went mad with the lust of gain." One of the most impressive is gleaned from the records of All Saints' Church at Bristol, where we can still see the site of what is probably the first free library on English record, established by the Gild of Calendars, and conducted on thoroughly up-to-date principles, the prior acting as librarian, and explaining and lecturing to readers. This was sold off for the benefit of a certain Sir M. Partrick, leaving but the bare room and a gracious memory. Thence we have only to walk some hundred yards and we shall come, at the foot of Christmas Steps, to a headless Madonna flanking the beautiful Early English door of a warehouse. It was once the Hospital of Saint Bartholemew.

Statistics are proverbially easy things to dispute over, but the evidence is plain and obvious, without touching figures at all, that the social problem, as we should now call it, had become dangerously acute towards the middle of the century. There is no thinker or statesman worthy the name who is not sensitive to the alarming increase of distress throughout the country. Latimer is not afraid to tell the rich to their faces of their covetousness and the straits to which it was reducing their less fortunate brethren. "London was never so ill as it is now. In times past men were full of pity and compassion, but now there is no pity; for in London their brothers shall die in the streets for cold, he shall lie sick in the door between stock and stock, I cannot tell what to call it, and perish there for hunger; was there ever more unmercifulness in Nebo? I think not." This testimony is more than confirmed by that of another reformer, of a more extreme type than Latimer, the puritan divine Robert Crowley, who writes in a rude but telling style of the golden opportunity that was missed when the abbeys were suppressed "all by a law". He tells us of a merchant who, coming home from overseas, sees a splendid mansion on the site of an almshouse:

"Good Lord!" said this merchant,
"Is my country so wealthy
That the very beggars' houses
Be built so gorgeously?"
Then by the wayside
Him chanced to see
A poor man that craved
Of him for charity.

" Why," quoth this merchant,
" What meaneth this thing ?
Do ye beg by the way
And have a house for a king ? "
" Alas ! sir," quote the poor man,
" We are all turned out,
And live and die in corners
Here there and about.
Men of great riches
Have bought our dwelling-place,
And when we crave of them
They turn away their face."

Tammany and Common Prayer

It was too true. Men of great and often of plundered riches had succeeded in obtaining a monopoly of power, now that the Church was conquered and the strong King dead. For with all his faults, Henry VIII never ceased to be both strong and popular, and if any justification were possible for the ruthlessness of his government, it would be found in the events that happened after his death. Woe, indeed, to the land whose King is a child ! The man who tried to take the reins of government from Henry's hand is one of those characters that must ever remain a puzzle. The Duke of Somerset, as he now became, was among those who had enriched themselves most lavishly out of the general plunder, he was a strong and could be a ruthless soldier, and yet, like so many brave soldiers, he was of weak and vacillating character, and unlike the generality of those who have grown fat on tainted wealth, a pitiful and sincere friend of the poor, a man with a preference for gentle over harsh methods of government. " What is the matter then ? " complained one of the hard-bitten Lords of the Council, " liberty ! liberty ! And your grace would have too much gentleness ! " The people, after his death, spoke sorrowfully of Somerset as " the good Duke ".

Somerset tried to substitute liberal principles for the iron rule of Henry VIII. He made a genuine and most honourable effort to do justice in the matter of enclosures, and a Commission was appointed to make a thorough investigation of the evil with a view to remedying it. It would have required a stronger man than the Protector to have enabled it to succeed. The new rich were now

firmly in the saddle, and able to employ all the arts of corruption to defeat the efforts of the commissioners. Somerset hesitated; he tried to be gentle with men who were as capable of appreciating such leniency as famished sharks, and he was lost.

The commons of the most civilized part of the country, the East Anglian counties, rose in desperate revolt. They were no wild and cruel revolutionaries, like those of the French Jacquerie, but earnest, moderate men, who conducted themselves with dignity and restraint, and who were by no means confined to the members of one class. They set up their own system of justice and refrained from any acts of cruelty. They were, in their English way, merely asking for what they considered their legal rights, which the head of the State had shown himself unable to enforce, and they pulled down the enclosures and slaughtered the sheep with as good a conscience as will. Their moderation threw away the one slender chance they had. They were content to sit quietly down in their camp at Mousehold Heath instead of taking the offensive. Somerset, for his part, was unwilling to strike at men whom, in his heart of hearts, he knew to be fighting against intolerable wrong, but at last, in an evil moment, he committed the suppression of the revolt to the Earl of Warwick, subsequently Duke of Northumberland, who achieved the rare distinction, in that age, of being the greatest scamp of the Dudley family, and therefore of the new upper class. This man, with the appropriate aid of trained Spanish and Italian mercenaries, achieved a piteous massacre of the unhappy peasants. The revolt had failed even more miserably than that of Wat Tyler, and the path was now clear for a social revolution which, on this occasion at any rate, was not from below.

The "good Duke" did not long survive this triumph of order. His head rolled on the scaffold before a grief-stricken crowd. The whole machinery of government was now in the hands of what was little better than a gang of thieves. The coinage was still further debased; Parliament was packed with Northumberland's nominees; corruption and pillage went on unchecked. To free his hand for the plunder of England, Northumberland concluded a treaty that surrendered all our conquests in France and Scotland—which it must be admitted we were better without—and brought the Northern kingdom, whose little queen was now at the French court betrothed to the Dauphin, completely within the French sphere of influence, a fact that caused the King of France to talk inflated nonsense to the effect that he had added Scotland, if not England, to his

dominions. It was a humiliation that Henry VIII would have cut off his right hand rather than have endured.

The problem of pauperism now begins to force itself upon the attention of statesmen. It is probable that the suppression of the monasteries, which had doled out broken meats indiscriminately to beggars at their gates, had insignificant effects in comparison with constant evictions in the country and chronic unemployment in the towns. These were creating a surplus in the labour market with which the monasteries would have been incompetent to deal. As in India now, when each village is an economic unit governed by custom and almost sufficient to itself, the problem of pauperism hardly arises. Each locality is capable of dealing with its own poor. The transition from a local and customary to a national and capitalist economy is bound to entail a certain floating residue of unemployed with which the State alone is competent to deal. Incidentally, the bargaining strength of capitalism depends upon the largeness of this residue. It is in 1536 that the first comprehensive attempt was made to deal with the poor relief, but the government had not yet got beyond the idea that the provision of relief is an act of charity, and therefore voluntary. They thus made a sincere attempt to regulate relief without providing the means. The temper of the governing class in the next reign, as well as the panic aroused by the growing hordes of vagabonds, is evinced by an act of 1547, which was happily repealed after a year, ordering that any able-bodied man or woman refusing to work should be branded with a hot iron, made the slave of the informant, and, after two attempts to escape, put to death.

It is noticeable that on the restoration of the Roman faith under Mary, Parliament, which was subservient enough when it was a mere question of burning heretics, was adamant against any proposal to make the owners of monastery lands restore their doubtfully gotten gains.

Meanwhile the Protestant reformers were reaping the full benefit of the political situation. Somerset had been a man of real tolerance, and presented the almost unique phenomenon in a ruler of that time of a Broad Churchman, who desired to go as far as practicable in the direction of religious liberty. Northumberland, who cared neither for religion nor liberty, was made of sterner stuff, and was perfectly well aware that living, as he and his associates were, on the plunder of the Church, it would be as well for them to put as wide a gulf as possible between England and Rome. Accordingly

he threw his whole influence, backed by the powers of the State, actively and intolerantly on the side of the Reformers, who accordingly saluted him as a faithful soldier of Christ, and also as Joshua and Moses, a compliment that might considerably have surprised that meekest of men.

Just as Henry had tried in vain to arrest the Reformation altogether after having got rid of the Pope, so Northumberland and his gang were forcing the pace a great deal faster than the nation was prepared to stand. A new type of Protestant was coming over from Germany and Switzerland to whom Lutheranism was only a shade less heathenish than Popery itself. John Knox, who was to carry Scotland for Calvinism, was an influence to be reckoned with in England. The newly appointed Bishop of Gloucester, Hooper, was a thorough-going Puritan, who objected even to wearing vestments. There seemed every chance that if only the King could have lived and Northumberland have kept his ascendancy, the religious Radicalism of Zwingli and Calvin might have been forced on the country.

It is strange to think that among so many masterful characters, the Henries, Cromwells and Northumberlands, the Gardiners and Maries, who dominated the stage during this time of flux and turmoil, the man whose influence proved most lasting and whose views were substantially embodied in the final settlement was the timid and vacillating Archbishop Cranmer. His distrust of logical extremes and his instinct for compromise were thoroughly English and his scholarship and gift of writing beautiful prose enabled him to render priceless service to the new born national Church. The prayer book, whose use was enjoined by Act of Parliament in 1549, and which was considerably stiffened up, in a Protestant sense, under Northumberland's regime, was largely his work, with the assistance of Ridley, Bishop of London. It is a thoroughly conservative compilation, founded mainly on the old Catholic Use of Sarum and a more recent breviary composed by Cardinal Quignon, and enriched by Cranmer's wide reading in ancient and Oriental liturgies. Hardly anywhere does it aspire to be an original composition, except in the Catechism, where Cranmer and Ridley afford splendid demonstration that it was from deliberate policy and not from lack of genius that they stuck to translation.

Just before Edward's death, the fabric of Anglicanism was completed by the issue of forty-two articles, which are substantially the same as Elizabeth's and our own thirty-nine. The result was

a Church and a compromise calculated to infuriate a logical Latin or Calvinist, but as thoroughly in harmony with our national temperament as the Common Law itself. Based upon immemorial precedent, deliberately framed so as to provide as many loopholes as possible for tender consciences, amiably vague on what were, in more than one sense, burning points of doctrine, orderly in externals, respectful of person and class, and yet breathing a fragrant tenderness peculiarly her own, she is, in fact as well as in name, the Church of England, and so strongly had weak Cranmer built, that his Church and his prayer book have survived all the assaults of Catholic reaction and Puritan revolution.

10

Protestant Radicalism

Towards the middle of the century, the contending forces of Rome and reform entered upon a deadlier and more uncompromising phase of their struggle. With the doughty but illogical Luther as the principal figure of Protestantism, the issues at stake were not clearly enough defined to preclude the possibility of a compromise. The best intellects on either side were making tentative efforts towards such a solution, and at one time it seemed as if the liberalizing section of the Catholic Church, that represented by Erasmus, was about to gain the mastery. Protestantism was not yet by any means an ideal fighting cause. It was hampered by a subservience to the powers that were, which was constantly enjoined by Luther. This was all very well where the reigning prince happened to be a Protestant, but when he was not it constituted a fatal handicap, insomuch that even Luther himself was obliged to hedge somewhat, towards the end of his life, by excepting the subjects of ungodly princes from the necessity of obedience in matters of faith.

Even worse were the liberalizing Catholics from a fighting standpoint. Their aim was to weaken the traditional strength of the Church at the very moment of peril. The keen edge of dogma was to be blunted, the iron discipline relaxed, the acid of criticism applied to who might know what matters of faith. A new conquering empire of light and reason might seem desirable enough to scholars of the Renaissance like Erasmus, but it had no part in the system or programme of Rome. By authority she stood, with its relaxation she would fall. A rigid centralization was the strength of the

Pontiffs as it had been of the Caesars, their temporal predecessors. Between Rome and liberty there was a great gulf fixed.

In any prolonged conflict of ideas, backed by force, the tendency is always for the extreme sections on either side to gain control. This is perhaps, more than any other, the besetting evil of warfare in all its forms. Where truth and righteousness cease to be striven for, and the object is to overcome an enemy, the voices of reason and of moderation cease to be heard. Nobody wants to see his opponent's point of view when he is going over the top ; in the heat of a contested election good party men are more ready to score off an opponent than to sympathize with him. There is one fate for the Girondin, the Menshevist, the Modernist and the Trimmer. For the survival of the fittest implies, more often than not, the killing off of the best.

So in the Reformation, as the sense deepens on both sides that they are fighting for dear life, the men of compromise and reason are forced to give way to the extremists. The divergent tendencies are now pushed to extreme limits, and it is appropriate that the man who first accomplished this for Protestantism was the Frenchman, Calvin. It was his business to sweep away the compromises and inconsistencies of the earlier reformers, to formulate and define a fighting creed as keen-edged as a sword, and whose strength lay in its principles being the logical antithesis of those of its opponent. For in faith and organization it pitted a consistent Radicalism against the Toryism of Rome.

In Calvin's view the whole of mankind was, from birth, divided into two rigidly defined and mutually exclusive classes, the elect and the damned. The degradation of man was unspeakable, his utmost efforts could do nothing to mitigate it, but God's grace was infinite and His purposes inscrutable, He gave it and denied it to whom He would. It followed that such a thing as the freedom of the will did not exist. You were bound for Heaven or Hell as you might be locked into the up train or the down train, and there was an end of it.

Now it would be easy enough for anyone to show that the logical result of such a belief would be to paralyse all human effort. Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we are saved, or damned, as the case may be, would be the counsel of ordinary common-sense, in so far as we can conceive of an absolute automaton being in a position either to give or receive any advice worth having. Calvin himself meets these criticisms by characterizing them as "the

gruntings of filthy swine ", or by arguing in a circle that because the evidence of election is holiness of life, it is therefore incumbent upon him who would be saved to induce a state over which he has no control whatever, by counterfeiting the symptoms. But to criticize Calvinism on grounds of reason would be as absurd as to discuss the logic of a bayonet. Its value was not speculative but practical, and it is not in its conscious appeal to the reason but in its subconscious appeal to the emotions that its strength lies.

For, in practice, it amounts to this, that the devout Calvinist always happens to be, and feels himself to be, of the elect, and his enemies, with equal certainty, among those whom God will arise and scatter in this world and roast in the next. This absolute conviction lends him a terrible strength. God is for him and with him, mightier than all those who are against him, his is the spirit of the fierce and confident Hebrew battle songs. The elect man needs no priest nor ceremony to intervene between him and the God Who already dwells in his bosom; he needs not to adorn his churches, who is already adorned with all the beauty of holiness. Strength is his, and also, too often, a hard and intolerant spiritual pride—do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? The believer will go so far, upon occasion, as to believe that Heaven would cease to be what it is without the pleasing spectacle of the damned all writhing below. He will be utterly pitiless against those whom God Himself has cast out. At Geneva, under Calvin's auspices, a child was beheaded for having struck his parents, and one of the reformer's personal enemies done to death by torment for mistaken views about the Trinity. And yet Calvin was a faithful friend and an entirely disinterested enthusiast. His creed may have been gloomy, austere and unlovable to the last degree, but it was as terribly efficient for fighting purposes as that of Islam, which it so closely resembles.

The Church organization conceived of by Calvin was exactly calculated to take root and flourish in lands dominated by the power of Rome. It is true that he accepts the scriptural precept about obeying the civil power, but with the important proviso that the obedience we owe to the will of God, which with the elect usually coincides with their own wills, shall remain unimpaired. For the rest, the Church is no centralized despotism, but the whole body of the elect organized on a rigidly democratic basis. In Calvinism everything is organized from the bottom upwards; the flock elects the pastor, and no greater sanctity attaches to his person after his

election than before, since all God's people are equally holy. The Church is no centralized despotism; it owns no head but Christ, and wherever two or three are gathered together, in a barn or an open field, there is He in the midst of them, there is His Church in all completeness. It will easily be seen how perfectly adapted is this system for propaganda in a hostile country. Every group of the faithful must be burnt or rooted out before Calvinism could be conquered. Its strength was that of the Hydra.

At the same time the fact was never lost sight of, that the end of Calvinism was to create the most efficient fighting spirit possible. If the organization of the Church was democratic, it eschewed the very idea of liberty. Its discipline was adamant and all pervading. The most intimate affairs, even the decencies of private life, were not exempt. The elder or pastor might, in theory, be a man of like sanctity and passions with his flock; in practice he was often a remorseless inquisitor, and every community of the faithful constituted itself collectively into a permanent vigilance committee over the sins and peccadilloes of its individual members. The simple fact of being happy with any but the solemn mirth of assured salvation was enough to bring persecution on the offender's head. Those who felt themselves already fully saved had not the least hesitation in judging and condemning those whom their consciences happened to put outside the pale, and to the faults of others their consciences were peculiarly sensitive. The dividing line between a Valiant-for-truth and a Holy Willy was not always so easy to draw in practice.

Calvinism after all only carried the Protestant faith so far as was necessary for the maximum combative efficiency. The logical end of Protestantism is rationalism; it is as easy to refuse the authority of Scripture as that of the Pope and General Councils. To-day it may be the Church that is rejected, to-morrow it may be Christ. Such great minds as Newman's have seen that there can be no logical halting place between complete acceptance of authority and stark unbelief. But complete unbelief makes poor fighters, and the day had not dawned when belief could be sustained without magic. The magic of Calvinism was cruder and less elaborate than that which it superseded, but it was sufficient. The Bible became a magic book, texts of an ancient civilization, often imperfectly translated, became potent spells—even honest Bunyan could talk with devout fervour of the grasshopper being a burden. Sunday, or rather the Jewish Sabbath, though not with the sanction of the

first reformers, fell under a regular taboo, and became a day of unchristian gloom. A peculiarly horrible superstition was the belief in an all-pervading black magic; it was enough to be an old woman and poor, to be in daily peril of the most fiendish cruelty that malice and brutish fear could devise. With such weapons at command it is easy to understand how new presbyter came to be old priest writ large.

CHAPTER III

GLORIANA

1

Counter Reformation

The Church of Rome was at last thoroughly aroused to the necessity of closing her ranks and tightening her discipline, for a supreme struggle to check the revolt against her power and to recover her lost provinces. Her intellectuals, who followed more or less the lead of Erasmus, were thrust aside or capitulated, in effect, to the new uncompromising policy. Few of them were, in fact, men of much moral stamina, and some, like our own Cardinal Pole, were ready to vindicate their suspected orthodoxy by encouraging persecution.

Centralization had ever been the strength of Rome, and now, in the hour of peril, it was her obvious policy to draw the bonds of her despotism, mental and spiritual, as tight as possible. The first step of all was to define her dogma, and this was done in the long, desultory and sordid Council of Trent, which was at least efficient in laying down the doctrine of the Church in a form that permitted of no compromise with Protestantism, nor hope of it. The next step was to impose the whole of, and nothing but, this dogma upon the minds and consciences of the people. The Church did not condescend to argue, nor did she permit argument against her. A man must believe or burn. Hence the refurbishing and strengthening of that most terrible instrument of bodily and mental tyranny, the Inquisition.

It was, moreover, time for Rome to look to her legions. The sloth and indifference of her old monastic garrisons had grown notorious; this was to be reformed as far as possible, and new, and more formidable fighting orders were to be called into existence. As the Albigensian heresy had called forth the Dominicans, so now did the Protestant heresy call forth the Barnabites, the Capuchins, and above all the Jesuits. This last order carried the principles of bodily and mental despotism to their extreme limits. The Jesuit ceased to be a man, he became part of a machine. He was the best

drilled of soldiers, his life and conscience were placed unreservedly at the disposal of his superiors, he thought nothing of going to be tortured scientifically by Red Indians nor of venturing into countries where the very membership of his order was death. Perfectly organized, subtle and resourceful beyond measure, the Jesuits were everywhere—conquering the heathen, winning back the heretic for Rome. As for the priesthood, this was taken in hand by the Theatines, an order of priests with monastic vows.

The dogmas of the new Catholic revival may have been the very antithesis of Calvinism, but there was a curious similarity in spirit between these rival versions of Christianity. For the Counter Reformation inaugurated a Puritanism hardly less rigid than that of Geneva. Gone now was the luxurious worldliness of the Renaissance, that made the rooms of the Borgias a delight forever and found its proudest expression in St. Peter's at Rome. Popes of a new type had come to reign, men of austere earnestness, capable of torturing themselves as well as others. The pomps and vanities of the world were severely frowned upon; even music, that special object of the Puritan's aversion, was in danger of being driven out of the Churches by the Council of Trent, and was finally saved when Palestrina played so beautifully before the Pope that he compared his music to that heard by St. John in the New Jerusalem. Saints, as devout as any of the Middle Ages, walked the streets of Rome, and one of them, the blessed Philip of Neri, revived something of the spirit of St. Francis. The children, whom he specially loved, might, he said, chop wood on his body, so that it were not displeasing to God. And meanwhile the thought and beauty of the Renaissance were being strangled in the land of its birth. The Popes, with the immense resources of the Vatican library, tried to start a Christian culture, but it was a culture in chains. The power that burnt Bruno and imprisoned Galileo was the manifest enemy of enlightenment, powerful only to destroy. The spirit of the Renaissance died out of Italy. Painting became sickly with Guido, meaningless with the eclectics. Literature died away in the sad sweetness of Tasso, and, with Ariosto, ceased to take even itself seriously.

But it was not Italy that supplied the spearhead of the Counter Reformation. It was the fierce and solemn earnestness of Spain, engendered by centuries of struggle with the infidel, that supplied Rome with her best hope of enjoying her own again. The first of the genuine Counter Reformation Popes, the fierce old Neapolitan bigot Paul IV, was indeed fool enough to fight her and knave enough

to seek the aid of the infidel Turk against her. But the silken coercion of that most loyal and dutiful son of the Church, the Duke of Alva, soon brought him to his senses, and henceforth Spain was the sword arm of Rome. She burned with that sombre and dreadful enthusiasm of the kneeling monk clasping a skull in Zurbaran's masterpiece in the National Gallery. It is not altogether a coincidence that the chief work of her Carmelite mystic, St. John of the Cross, should be called the Dark Night of the Soul. The soul of militant Spain was indeed a dark night of cruelty, of austerity, of superstition, but a night illumined by stars of heroism and saintliness. The last of the Crusades was won at Lepanto by the Spanish King's half-brother, Don John of Austria, and of all the long line of Catholic mystics, none is greater than Santa Theresa.

The man on whom it devolved to become, in effect, the Commander of the Faithful to Rome, was well suited for the part he had to play. Philip of Spain, son of the Emperor Charles V, combined the intellect of an industrious office clerk with the austere fanaticism that causes him still to be remembered in his own country as a great and pious sovereign. He could be perfectly cruel and perfectly treacherous when it suited him, or rather when it served the cause to which his life was devoted. If he could preside at auto-da-fés without turning a hair, he could also bear the most excruciating agony with the constancy of a saint; if he sent the Armada to its doom, he was the only man in Spain who could submit to the stroke of God without murmuring or recrimination. He had so identified himself with the cause of Christ's Church that he became like one of those impersonal forces of nature, blind and slow, but inevitable. And this Philip, just when the Counter Reformation was gaining strength, was called to the throne of Spain, of the Netherlands, of half Italy, and of the new world across the Western Ocean. The conquest of Portugal was to add an Eastern to his Western Empire. Philip did not know that the steady stream of gold, that poured into Spain and was kept there as far as the law could keep it, was raising prices to such an extent as to choke Spanish industry, and thereby pave the reduction of Spain to a third class power; these things were hidden in the future—but that Rome and he should quench the Reformation in blood and fire was a prospect of alarming imminence, and most of all to relapsed England.

Thus the lists were set for an European struggle of deadly intensity. The time was past for the voice of reason to be heard; it did not occur to men that in matters so vitally affecting their

well-being it would be best to put their heads together in order to find the truth. It did not even occur to them that the final truth about the universe and its government might be beyond the reach of men who had only lately discovered that the world was round. While Calvin was labouring at his Institutes and the divines at Trent were intriguing and squabbling about what exactly should constitute the living doctrine of the Church, the unseen forces of the universe moved on in their majestic inscrutability. And yet Europe was to be torn asunder, every horror and cruelty enacted that man can devise for man, fair provinces reduced to deserts, and all from the insane delusion that the truth can be advanced one iota because Peter, who happens to think that bread becomes the Prince of Peace, succeeds in spilling the brains of Paul, who merely thinks that the bread symbolizes Him. Such is the logic of human conflict, which those must justify who believe war to be an essential factor of civilization.

2

The Catholic Reaction

The course of England, between the death of the Bluff King and the accession of Elizabeth, may be likened to that of a cyclist who, caught on a turn by a sudden skid, heels over violently to one side, recovers himself by lurching in the opposite direction, and then succeeds in righting himself and proceeding normally along his new road. Edward VI's reign witnessed a premature triumph of Protestantism, that of Mary an uncompromising and cruel reaction, and in neither of these had the nation its heart. The triumph of each cause was effective only to its own undoing. Earnest and sincere reformers allowed themselves to enter into alliance with thieving magnates who plundered the land under pretence of governing it, and to be parties to Northumberland's disreputable plot to put his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, on the throne. It was the gambler's last, desperate throw, and it failed because Englishmen, quite apart from the political and religious merits of the case, sympathized with the cynically wronged Princess Mary as they had sympathized with her mother over the question of the divorce.

As everybody must have foreseen, the accession of this new sovereign meant a complete reversion to the old Papal supremacy from which Henry VIII had been at such pains to free the Church.

The reformers, who had allowed themselves to be associated with the gang of enclosers and pillagers who had lorded it for the last few years, had not made themselves popular enough for this consummation to be particularly regretted. But important political consequences were also involved. Mary was half a Spaniard by birth and—in spite of her cousin, the Emperor's, sage advice to her to go slow and be a good Englishwoman—strongly Spanish by sympathy. Her accession therefore involved an immediate change from a pro-French to a pro-Spanish orientation of policy. In the year following her accession she sealed this alliance by marrying Charles's son, Philip, who shortly afterwards succeeded to the whole of his vast Empire, with the exception of Germany.

Now was seen a strange phenomenon which should provide food for thought for believers in a Machiavellian or Bismarckian diplomacy. To all appearance the two great powers, France and Spain, had gained the most brilliant of diplomatic triumphs in bringing Scotland and England respectively so completely under their influence. The King of France had actually talked of Scotland as if she were not an ally but a vassal, and even so able a modern diplomatic historian as Seeley has written as if England had become part of the Hapsburg Empire, like the Netherlands. As a matter of fact the Continental dynasts had left out of their reckoning the strength of national sentiment, which reacted so strongly against even the semblance of foreign domination, that the traditional Franco-Scottish alliance was finally dissolved, and the English friendship with Spain changed to mortal enmity.

The Spanish marriage was thoroughly unpopular, and even before it was concluded, a revolt, led by Sir Thomas Wyatt, came within an ace of turning Mary off the throne. Philip was not allowed to exercise any regal authority or to land a single Spanish soldier in England. Nevertheless England got dragged, in the wake of Spain, into a war with France, and after having assisted her ally to win a great victory at St. Quentin, sustained what seemed to every Englishman a shattering disaster—it was really a blessing in disguise —in the loss of Calais. This was a humiliation great enough to bury in oblivion the worst ineptitudes of Edward VI's lords.

While Mary's pro-Spanish policy was bringing lasting discredit upon her rule, the savage persecution with which she attempted to stamp out Protestantism was arousing a hatred against her which has crystallized in the epithet "bloody". It is at least arguable that the saviour of the Protestant cause in England was this sour

but not ignoble old maid, whose affection for her mother made her cling, with passionate obstinacy, to her mother's Church, and whose mother's wrongs were burned so deeply into her soul as to drive her to an act of such stupid cruelty as forcing a martyr's crown upon the seven times recanting Cranmer.

Historians and controversialists of a modern Catholic revival have protested vehemently against the accusation of blood-guiltiness that has attached itself to the very name of Mary. Her sister, Elizabeth, they argue, was just as bad, or worse, in her treatment of Catholics, of the priests and Jesuits who were hanged, drawn and quartered under her auspices. To talk thus is to miss the whole point of the difference between executing a Jesuit at Tyburn and burning a heretic at Smithfields. The former, however horrible, was in spirit and intention an act of self-defence. When the Queen, on whom everything depended, was leading a charmed life and in daily peril of assassination, when Catholics within and without the realm were conspiring, with every prospect of success, for its destruction, it would be too much to expect of human nature for it always to temper with mercy the justice of what was practically a state of siege. But Mary's persecution was something to strike the naturally kindly and easy-going English temperament as cruel and vindictive. It is quite true that the deaths of a few isolated heretics like Anabaptists, or even Protestants in Henry VIII's day, failed to impress the popular imagination, but under Mary everything was done to enhance the horror of burnings whose number might have seemed impiously scanty to the mighty persecutors of the Continent.

The very conspicuousness of some of the victims, the humble circumstances of others, the steadfastness of all but one, made their sufferings impressive, and their heroism, often heightened by little intimate touches of pathos—" blessed be God I am even at home "—left an unforgettable and, even at this day, unforgotten impression. The one exception to the general heroic standard, that of poor, vacillating Cranmer, probably had a more disastrous effect on the Roman cause than any other martyrdom. A rugged constancy like that of staunch Latimer or zealous Hooper has fewer bonds of sympathy with ordinary human nature than the tardy resolution of a weak old man to thrust into the fire the hand which had sinned against the truth, " for fear of death, to save my life if it might be." Mary and her advisers, in burning Cranmer after his recantation, had not been playing the game. What still further damaged the cause of Rome was that both the stronghold of

Protestantism and the headquarters of persecution were in London, which in those days of imperfect communications might almost have been described as the mind of the Kingdom.

Certain it is that the fires of Smithfield burned so deeply into the national consciousness as to create a horror of Roman domination in the most intelligent parts of the Kingdom, the like of which had certainly not existed in Edward VI's day, and, what is more, to blacken out of the memory such accompaniments of the Reformation as the great share-out. The English temperament is not, like the Spanish, capable of taking an austere delight in auto-da-fés; brutal it may sometimes be, but it has no taste for sustained cruelty, and it was with an accumulating horror that Englishmen watched the proceedings of men like Bonner, the persecuting Bishop of London.

> "When two men and a sister dear
> At Beccles were consumed to dust,
> When William Sleche, constant and clear,
> In prison died with hope and trust,
> When these, our brethren, were put to death
> We wished for our Elizabeth."

It is from the crude monotony of this Register of Martyrs that we gain the truest impression of how the minds of ordinary folk were affected by repeated spectacles of torture, culminating in the supreme horror, paralleled only in the records of American lynching, of a woman giving birth to a child in the flames. There is no record of any such revulsion from the severities practised under Elizabeth.

Indeed, there is no aspect of the English Reformation so distinctive as the minor part played therein by purely religious motives. However excited zealous divines might become about such matters as transubstantiation, the general body of the people seems to have desired nothing better than to be "godly and quietly governed". They allowed themselves, with astonishing ease, to be transferred from papal to royal supremacy and thence onwards to advanced Protestantism, back into the fold of Rome and thence again to a more modified Protestantism. The seeds of Calvinism had indeed been planted, but they would require a long time to come to maturity on the tough soil of the English mind. The ordinary John Bull of that time was content with any reasonably efficient religion; what he did know and really care about was that he was not going to have Spaniards or other foreigners interfering with his concerns, that he was sick of Smithfield burnings and furious at having lost Calais, and that above all other things he dreaded the prospect of a civil strife complicated by foreign intervention.

8

The Elizabethan Settlement

Scarcely at any time in our history have things looked so dark and desperate as when Mary's death placed on the throne her half-sister Elizabeth. The Counter Reformation was just beginning to gather strength; the great Catholic family of Guise were coming to sway the affairs of France, a daughter of their house was regent of Scotland, supported by an army of French veterans, and the Franco-Scottish alliance was thus revived in its most dangerous form. Philip himself, lately King by marriage of a now apostate realm, was in Flanders at the head of a large and victorious army. The national defences on land and sea were in a state of chaos, and worst of all, no one knew whether half or more than half of Elizabeth's subjects would not join hands with any invader who should offer to set up Popery.

The need of the hour was to get some settled form of religion, which should unite as large a proportion of Englishmen as possible, and then to see that this form was respected, if not for the sake of the eternal welfare at least for the temporal salvation of the country. Never was woman more thoroughly wrapped up in the affairs of this world than our good Queen Bess. She was her father's daughter and a true child of the Renaissance in her temperamental leaning towards the colour and pomp of the old worship; she had a natural antipathy for earnest enthusiasts like Grindal, her second Archbishop, who showed an indiscreet sympathy for "prophesyings", and lost his post in consequence. But whatever religious leanings Elizabeth may or may not have had, her determination was fixed to be supreme head of her own Church and State, and to tolerate no interference whatever from the Pope without or zealots within her realm.

The Archbishop chosen by her to succeed Pole, whom Mary had appointed to Cranmer's vacant archbishopric and who most obligingly accompanied his mistress out of the world, was a man after her own heart. Matthew Parker, master of Corpus and Dean of Lincoln, was by no means of the stuff of which martyrs are made, having kept carefully out of harm's way during Mary's persecution. No more appropriate man could have been found for establishing the Anglican settlement; his very face, with its broad commonsense and sober kindliness is reminiscent of many a right-reverend man of this world and the next who has, since his day, donned lawn sleeves at the behest of the State. He was, in fact, a thorough Anglican,

a man of no marked religious enthusiasm but, in the best sense of the word, a gentleman. He was also, as befits a don of his University, a notable scholar and antiquary; it is him that we have to thank for the rescue of many a monastic document that would otherwise have perished. His letters to Lord Burleigh, a kindred spirit and his constant friend, are full of charm. "Experience doth teach," he writes, in reference to some noisy Puritans who have been "cocking abroad" and wanting to pull down fonts, "the world is much given to innovations, never content to stay and live well." To stay, and live well was the end of Parker's desire as far as the Church of England was concerned.

The settlement, under such auspices and with such aims as those of Parker, Burleigh and Elizabeth, was bound to result in a compromise as illogical as the English temperament. The articles and prayer book of Edward VI were taken as a basis, in preference to reconstructing the whole fabric of belief, but the rough edges were conveniently smoothed away and the controversial points involved in a wise obscurity. The very fact that few have ever wanted to read or need scruple to sign the thirty-nine articles is perhaps their chief merit. At a time when different kinds of religious enthusiasts were cutting each others' throats and burning each other all over Europe, there was a good deal to be said in favour of a Laodicean attitude. Men whose Protestantism is less a faith than a convenience have not enough interest in points of dogma to apply torch to faggot more often than absolutely necessary. The Catholic who liked to keep quiet and abstain from the House of Rimmon, in the shape of his parish church, was in danger neither of the stake nor the gowk's stool, though he might have to contribute a shilling a week to the poor box, no unreasonable payment, as some might think, for escaping one of the prescribed and ample homilies.

The great and earnest reformers of Edward VI's reign had mostly perished; the Church of Elizabeth's early years is conspicuous for its absence of striking personalities. The most considerable work in its defence is Bishop Jewel's Apology, a respectable and unusually well-mannered production, citing voluminous testimony of early Fathers against Popish practice, but touching on no broad, general principle—the type of book that is bought cheap at an auction to fill the shelves of some clergyman's library, there to repose in portentous but unbroken peace. The judicious Hooker was not yet, and Hooker, when he did come, provided the Church with a classic more in harmony with this world than the next. But the early

reformers had not worked in vain. Tyndale had already laid the foundations of that monument of the English tongue, the Authorized Bible, and the hand that penitent Cranmer held steady in the flames had penned the hardly inferior prose of our Book of Common Prayer.

4

Scotland Before the Reformation

Our last glance at Scotland was on the recovery of her independence, and the outburst of patriotic enthusiasm that supplied Wallace with an army and Barbour with the theme for an epic. Since that time her history had been a chequered one, and there was scant revival of the prosperity that had been hers under her Alexanders of the thirteenth century. The conditions were too hard for the growth of peaceful civilization. England, though not strong enough to conquer, was nevertheless capable of inflicting enough annoyance and misery to paralyse her development. Bannockburn was an exceptional victory over a disunited nation and an incompetent commander, but as a rule, even when at war with France, England was capable of putting an army into the field that was more than a match for her neighbour, a fact sufficiently demonstrated by the victories of Halidon Hill, Neville's Cross, Homildon, Flodden and Pinkie. The fertile strip of East Coast, along which now run the expresses from King's Cross to Aberdeen and which was naturally the most prosperous part of the country, was thus exposed to English invasion from the days of Edward I to those of the Butcher Cumberland. It is too characteristic of English methods, that during one of the most savage of these expeditions, with the strange object of wooing the infant Queen of Scots for Edward VI, the murder and looting were accompanied by the distribution of cartloads of Bibles.

These invasions in force, though sufficient to put back the clock of civilization for many a decade, were comparatively few and far between. But the trouble on the Border was never-ceasing, and what was practically a permanent state of irregular and private frontier war, combined with indiscriminate looting and blackmail, continued for centuries. This was bad enough for England; the Northern counties were the most backward, and the Northern lords the most powerful and rebellious, the Northumberland Percies,

in their own territory, being like little kings. But the Border was a long way from London and the vital Southern and East-Anglian counties. It was far otherwise with the Lowlands, where Edinburgh itself was in striking distance from the Tweed, and where the great Lowland Houses, which the very necessities of their own and the nation's defence rendered strong, were able to overawe the Crown. The atmosphere generated by Border war may have been the soul of romance, but it was the bane of good government. In Border minstrelsy the note that recurs with a reiteration almost monotonous is one of dark and sombre treachery, Clerk Sanders murdered asleep, Burd Helen shot in her lover's arms, Edom of Gordon firing the house of Rhodes and catching an escaping child on the point of his spear. It is notable to what an extent the atmosphere of these ballads pervades Scottish history. Kings murdering nobles, nobles murdering Kings, blood-feuds, treason—of these the History of Scotland is full, though we must not forget the redeeming instances of romantic loyalty which the very name of Stuart seems to arouse, of indomitable patriotism, as of Wallace's columns of Falkirk, and of the Scottish spearmen, who, at Flodden,

> "Still made good
> Their dark, impenetrable wood,
> Each stepping where his comrade fell."

But as if it were not enough for Scotland to have one Border, she had also, on the North, the menace of the well-nigh impenetrable Highlands, with their practically independent clans, the facilities they offered for the retirement of any temporarily unsuccessful rebel, and the menace they presented to the towns within their reach, such as Inverness, which was burnt twice. It was out of the Highlands that Sir Robert Graeme, with his three hundred spears, descended in the night upon the sleeping castle of Perth, to murder James I, "a poet true and a friend of man," the first King of a tragic line. How little love there was lost between Highlander and Lowlander may be seen from Dunbar's gruesome description of Hell, where the Devil, after having amused himself with a dance of the Seven Deadly Sins, concludes the entertainment by a pageant of Highlanders, who emit such a hideous yell that His Majesty is fain to stifle them all in smoke.

It is not surprising that under these circumstances Scotland remained, in comparison with England, a poor and backward country. Poverty was, in fact, the consistent though not very generous taunt with which Englishmen were accustomed to twit the

Scots down to the days of Samuel Johnson. Towns like Glasgow and Aberdeen were little better than glorified villages of a few thousand inhabitants, and Edinburgh itself did not, in the fourteenth century, include more than some sixteen thousand, whose wretched mode of life astonished their French allies. The industrial arts were slow to take root on Scottish soil, and the wealthy monopolists of the gilds merchant were successful in enforcing a policy of free imports and burghal privilege that did little to protect the native craftsman. The export trade, except for a rough and inferior home-spun cloth, was almost entirely in raw materials.

Constitutional development on English lines was a thing almost impossible in medieval Scotland. The Lowland Scot was not, indeed, like the Irish and Welsh Celt, cursed with a natural inability to unite with his countrymen for political ends—the reformed Kirk was to afford proof enough of his capacity—but the poverty of the country and the perpetual danger from South and North helped to keep alive the worst evils of feudalism. The necessity for the protecting hand of a local lord was keenly felt when any night might be lit with the flames of homesteads and byres. It was a well-nigh hopeless undertaking for a sovereign to make permanent head against subjects, a single one of whom might, like the Douglas, be as strong as himself, and two or three of whom might, in combination, be overwhelmingly stronger.

Thus the blessing that the Normans and Plantagenets had conferred upon England, a strong central government, was denied to Scotland. Her great lords were little less powerful than our own "devils and wicked men" of Stephen's reign. The right of "pit and gallows", of hanging men and drowning women, was freely exercised, if we may judge by the grim evidence of bones. How great was the power exercised by these petty tyrants may be gauged from an incident that took place so late as 1693, in what was supposed to be a polite and cultured age, when Lindsay of Dunrode, who was playing on the ice, and had been annoyed at some trifling lapse on the part of a retainer, had a hole knocked in the ice and the poor man drowned then and there. What justice could be expected when a border ruffian like Bothwell, who murdered Queen Mary's second husband in order to become her third, could come to a court of justice attended by thousands of armed men?

The history of the first five Jameses is one long record of able, though not always scrupulous men struggling with an impossible situation. As the life of a Scottish King was cut short with unfailing

regularity, the situation was rendered still worse by a series of minorities, during which the nobles were able to do more or less as they pleased. English institutions, though the Scots were wise enough to adopt them, at least, in form, started with a fatal handicap. There was a Scottish Parliament, which never progressed beyond the stage of being an assembly of the three separate estates, as on the Continent, and not a judicious blending of them, as in England. The result was the adoption of a system which, when Richard II had tried it in England, had brought about a revolution. Parliament delegated its powers to a committee, called the Lords of the Articles, and was often little better than a voting machine for registering their decisions. Where there is no unquestioned national sovereignty, there is no scope for Parliamentary government, and sovereignty in Scotland was vague and fitful at the best.

English law, which was the true basis of the English constitution, struck few roots in Scotland. It was fully established in the fourteenth century and continued with little change to the beginning of the sixteenth, but the means of enforcing it were lacking, and such an institution as the jury was capable of being reduced to a farce by the power of a great nobleman. The Year Books and Inns of Court, which lent such toughness to English law, were lacking in Scotland—there was no great vested interest of common lawyers, no Scottish Littleton or Fortescue. It therefore came to pass that when the flood of Roman law swept over Europe at the Renaissance, the Scottish Common Law was submerged. The decisive moment was when James V, by the advice of Lord Chancellor Dunbar, determined to centralize the administration of justice and overcome some of the worst evils of private jurisdiction. With this object he set up the Court of Session, of seven clerical and seven lay judges, with a clerical President. The interest of the sovereign and the traditions of the Roman Church were sufficient to ensure the law administered by this court being Roman and not English, and the intimate connection between France and Scotland helped to keep it so. Colleges were founded at Paris, where Scotsmen could become expert in a law whose dictates were regarded as little inferior to those of reason itself. Nevertheless, we have Maitland's authority for doubting whether Roman law made the complete conquest of Scotland it did of Germany.

If the power of Parliament and the Crown was small, that of the Church was enormous. It has been pointed out, with perfect correctness, by Buckle, that the very scenery of Scotland lends itself power-

fully to the growth of superstition, or, as we should prefer to phrase it, to a belief in the supernatural. The gloomy skies, the sudden storms sweeping through the mountains and across the lochs, the sombre grandeur of the granite peaks and the vast expanses of barren moorland, create almost inevitably a belief in eerie and sinister presences. The genius of Shakespeare was never more convincingly displayed than when he scarcely permitted the light of day to shine on his tragedy of Forres. It has been noted by Mr. Yeats that the gentle fairy presences which haunt the imagination of his countrymen became formidable and evil so soon as they are transferred to Scottish soil. One has only to stand in the pass of Glencoe, and then think of the Wicklow Mountains, to know the reason why. With poverty and constant peril the life of this world must have seemed dismal enough to the medieval Scot, and his tendency would be to lay up for himself treasures in the world to come.

The Church, from these or other causes, came to be immensely wealthy, and was usually in alliance with the Crown against the power of the magnates. Unfortunately, the corruption of religion that swept over all Europe at the Renaissance entirely pervaded her, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century she was even more dead to religion than her sister of England. Immorality and worldliness were rife among her priests and monks, and there was no redeeming heroism or saintliness like that displayed by More, Fisher and the Charterhouse martyrs. Never did Church fall more tamely and less regretted than the Roman Church of Scotland. She was, in fact, at last little better than an engine of oppression—Sir David Lyndsay, in a famous play or masque, describes how an honest man is reduced to poverty because when his two old parents die, two good Ayrshire cows are taken by the vicar, not to speak of the grey mare seized by the landlord, and how, when his wife dies with the grief of this, the insatiable vicar has the third remaining cow, and takes the dead woman's uppermost blanket to give to his clerk. The life of the poor must have been hard enough, though it is fair to say that Willeinage was abolished in Scotland fully two centuries before it was abolished in England, and a system of short leases was made habitual, which removed any incentive for the cultivator to improve the land.

For one brief period it seemed as if the Renaissance were going to bring light and prosperity to Scotland. This was during the reign of James IV, an able and accomplished Prince, who seemed in a fair way towards bringing his realm into order and established a brilliant court, upon some of whose poets the spirit of Chaucer seemed

to have descended, more than upon the worthy Lydgates and Hoccleves who strove to keep it alive in England. A spring-tide of joyousness broke for a moment over Scotland, and we have the testimony of the Spanish ambassador, Ayala, to a certain rude but increasing prosperity. Above all, what has always been the noblest feature of the Scottish character, the zeal for education, was conspicuous under James IV's auspices, as befitted the time and the man. Scottish scholars thronged to Paris, and for those who could not afford the journey there were no less than three Scottish universities. In 1496, Parliament enacted a comprehensive scheme of compulsory grammar school and university education for the sons of gentlefolk. Unfortunately the Southern enemy proved too strong, and the disaster of Flodden cut short the hopes of a Scottish Renaissance. The usual minority followed, and the merry Scotland of James IV and the poet Dunbar

" Reeled back into the beast and was no more ".

The Scottish Reformation

When Scottish patriotism triumphed gloriously at Bannockburn, the country had, in fact, been committed to a hostility against England, which was, in the long run, bound to be a source of danger to the stronger and of positive ruin to the weaker country. Union, though in the form of a free and honourable partnership, was necessary for both, and this had been retarded by Edward I's fatal attempt to substitute conquest. This had the effect of driving Scotland, until the middle of the sixteenth century, into political and economic alliance with England's enemy, France. The rugged independence which, despite feudal tyranny, continued to be the basis of Scottish character, resented the least thought of domination by a neighbour who was known only as a remorseless and cruel foe, on the look out for any chance, if not of conquering, at least of plaguing and paralysing the country. Thus the stubborn patriotism that informs the lays of Barbour and Blind Harry was never suffered to die, except among those unworthy magnates who did not scruple to advance their private ends by intriguing with England. It broke the heart of James V when the army of Scotland, owing to the lukewarmness of its leaders, ran away in panic from a handful of English cavalry at Solway Moss.

After the catastrophe of Flodden, the idea of union with England became increasingly rife on both sides of the Border. Henry VIII, with his imperial dreams, would dearly have loved to add Scotland to his dominions as he had finally incorporated Wales and as he thought he had subdued Ireland. Unfortunately, his idea of attaining this end was in harmony with the precepts of Machiavellianism, interpreted in its basest sense, and herein he displayed less good sense than his prosaic father, who had tried to break up the Franco-Scottish alliance by the peaceful method of marriage. Henry VIII and Somerset after him were determined to enforce their will by violence and treachery. The statesmanlike idea of securing a union of crowns by marrying Edward VI to the little Mary, Queen of Scots, was foiled by the overbearing terms and bullying methods of the English wooing. Of what avail was it to win a brilliant victory, and to carry fire and destruction through the Lowlands, if the object of all these delicate attentions was quietly shipped off to France, eventually to marry the Dauphin ?

As so often happens in foreign policy, the more England succeeded in attaining her immediate objects, the further she was from success in the long run. Such victories as those of Solway Moss and Pinkie Cleugh had only the effect of pulling Scotland together and throwing her into the arms of her ally. Instead of a Union of Crowns, Scotland was under a French regent who maintained order with a small but exceedingly efficient French army. The pendulum now swung the other way, and the success of the French proved fatal to their alliance. The foreign army encamped on their soil was by no means popular with the Scots, and patriotism was diverted against the French. The growing party in favour of the Reformation now began to seek English support against the triumphant alliance of France and Rome, when England at last made up her mind to stand, with whatever qualifications, for the Protestant cause. It was therefore a masterstroke of Elizabeth to cut the knot that the Scottish reformers could not untie, by marching an army to take the French headquarters at Leith. It was an inefficient army compared with those that had won Flodden and Pinkie ; it went about its military task in a blundering way, but on this occasion the English had come not as conquerors but as friends, and having seen the last French soldier out of the Kingdom they returned, leaving Scotland to work out her own destinies. They had no smashing victory or plundered city to their credit, but they had done more than any English army before them in that they had at last killed the deadly Franco-Scottish

alliance, brought Scotland into line with England in the Reformed cause, and made the union of the two only a matter of time.

The Catholic Church in Scotland, which was propped up by French pikes, collapsed like a house of cards when that support was withdrawn. It commanded neither respect nor affection; the moral force of the country was behind the preachers, and its material resources with the magnates who, for reasons of their own, saw fit to embrace the Protestant religion. But the version of Protestantism that appealed to the Scot was more consistent and logical than the respectable compromise that Elizabeth and her counsellors set up. The Scottish temperament had, possibly owing to the mixture of the Northumbrian with the Celtic and Pictish stock, taken a markedly intellectual turn, and Erasmus had already remarked how the Scots were wont to pretend that the genius of their native soil made them good disputants. It was only to be expected, then, that they should go all the way with, and even beyond Calvin. It was rendered certain by the rugged and sombre personality of her chief Reformer, John Knox.

Among the English reformers there was no such commanding figure, for Henry VIII may almost be said to have forwarded the Reformation in spite of himself, and the personalities of the Oxford Martyrs and Elizabethan Archbishops seem shadowy in comparison. John Knox was not only a moral enthusiast, but a constructive statesman of a very high order. In the *First Book of Discipline*, which he intended to be the guide for the new reformed Kirk, he adapted the Genevan system of his friend Calvin to the requirements of the Scottish nation. He laid down no rigid and unalterable constitution—there was, in fact, ample room for development—but the foundation was firmly laid in the local congregation electing its minister. There was subsequently to be elaborated a hierarchy of representative bodies, culminating in the General Assembly of the Kirk. The principle on which Knox, and still more his successors, proceeded was democratic in the extreme. Calvin himself had laid it down that the rawest novice in the ministry might, when the spirit moved him, admonish the most venerable. This parity of its ministers was the great principle for which the Kirk was fight against the attempts of the Crown to set up an ecclesiastic Toryism under a Bench of Bishops.

But equality, which is the true principle of democracy, is often in direct opposition to liberty. So it came about that the Scottish Kirk, though one of the most consistent democracies, was also one

of the most thorough tyrannies the world has seen. A minute and all-pervading discipline was established over every department and relation of life. The Kirk was about the path of each individual and about his bed, spying out all his ways. Even the most sacred intimacies of domestic life were not exempt from the prurient questionings of its elders and ministers. No more than its decencies was the dignity of human life respected—the gowk's stool was one of the ways of humiliating anyone whose way of life displeased the corporate old maid called the Kirk of God. The joy that had seemed to be breaking over the land was extinguished under a deliberately fostered gloom. To be happy was an offence against what the Kirk called God; a long and bilious countenance was in itself a sign of grace. The plays, that the Scottish Renaissance had allowed even in Hell, were too great a relaxation for a Calvinistic world, and the holidays and saints' days, which had done something to enliven the tedium of a worker's life, ceased to be. The only substitute for toil was Divine Service, a holy horror, from which there was no escape. Sometimes the wretched worshipper might be treated to twelve hours in the course of a day; preachers were valued by the length to which they might be inspired to sermonize—one doughty champion actually succeeded in going on for four hours at a stretch.

Sunday, on which Knox had found Calvin playing bowls with a quiet conscience, was developed towards the close of the century into a day of that blasphemous gloom in the face of Heaven for which Dante had reserved a place in Hell. This remarkable superstition, unknown to the early Reformers, has been one of the most lasting effects of the later Calvinism. It is in harmony with the conception of the universe which depicts God as a malevolent and unjust demon, and man as a creature black with sin and incapable of lifting a finger to help himself in a world which Adam's fall has left about as bad as it can be, and which according to some devout theologians, is going on getting worse and worse.

The tyranny of such a system naturally hardened the heart and engendered the vice of cruelty, often a petty and sneaking cruelty that blighted the life by slow degrees, but sometimes cruelty in a form so blatant that it might have shocked Thugs or Iroquois. The belief in witches had, of course, been part of the Catholic system, and there was persecution under Roman auspices, but never had it attained to such insane and grotesque horror as in the century following the Reformation among certain Protestant communities. Methods of slow and scientific torture were invented to end the days

of women all over Scotland, who were usually old and feeble, and nearly always poor. One devoted woman, from whom the utmost agony could not wring a confession of witchcraft, had her little child tortured before her eyes by these followers of Christ—then she confessed. The extreme emphasis laid on Hell, and even the joy of the elect in the spectacle thereof, are part of the same instinctive cruelty.

All this is horrible to read or to write about, and it must have been infinitely worse to have lived through. Why, one is tempted to ask, could a sturdy and intelligent people have put up with it for a moment? How was it that the sermons were not choked in the nearest pond, and the witch prickers operated upon with their own needles? Nothing of the sort did in fact take place; on the contrary we have every evidence that the people, as a whole, clung to their Kirk with passionate devotion, that they were ready to suffer persecution for it and to die for it, that a King might succeed in dispensing with an English Parliament, but that when he tampered with the Scottish Kirk he was sealing his own doom.

This is partly, no doubt, due to the fact that the desire to tyrannize over others seems often to be a stronger constituent of human nature than the objection to being tyrannized over oneself. It might be that Jock would gladly take his chance of the gowk's stool for the pleasure of seeing Sandy thus enthroned. There might be disadvantages in having one's own affairs pried into, but after all one was a member of a community which pried into everybody else's affairs.

Then, again, the state of elect holiness after which every devout Puritan aspires, unlovely as it may seem to us, may well be worth the sacrifice of the whole world for him. To be united to God through grace, to be washed in Christ's blood and cleansed from all sin, was an ideal that could at least be consistently defended. The world and its pleasures, some devout preacher might say, were only renounced in order to attain the peace and inward satisfaction that are far too deep for outward mirth. "True it is," says Knox, "that this weaning—or spaneing, as we term it—from worldly pleasure, is a thing strange to the flesh, and yet it is a thing so necessary to God's children, that unless they are weaned from the pleasures of the world, they can never feed upon that delectable milk of God's eternal verity."

Not the least of Knox's titles to fame is the magnificent scheme of universal education which, improving upon the precedent set by James IV, he sought to make part of his system of Kirk government.

Unfortunately he was never able to put this into practice, nor yet that part of his discipline which was to finance the new ministers out of the property of the old Church. As the nobles too truly gave him to understand, such projects were all "vain imaginings". These pious magnates had not overthrown the Church merely to enjoy the delectable milk of eternal verity, and they had as keen an eye for the ecclesiastical estates, which in Scotland were better managed than their own, as any English Russell or Seymour. As Knox bitterly put it, two thirds of the Church's lands went to the Devil, and the remaining third had to be divided between God and the Devil. To judge by some of the fruits of Calvinism, one might be tempted to doubt whether, under its auspices, there was more than a verbal difference between these two personages.

6

Elizabethan Statecraft

The bold and skilful act of statesmanship that had broken the Franco-Scottish alliance gave Elizabeth a breathing space, but her position was still, and was to be for the next thirty years, one of desperate peril. Hard as had been the task of her father in keeping his realm intact after the severance with Rome, her own was much harder. To any impartial observer of Henry's time it might have seemed that Rome's cause was doomed, with the Papacy itself corrupt and lukewarm and the great Catholic powers only formally concerned in her defence. By the time of Elizabeth's accession the Counter Reformation was a mighty and rising force; the Church had risen from her ashes and glowed with an ardour and majesty worthy of her palmiest days. Catholic Europe was drawing together, the House of Guise was bringing France into line with Spain, the possibility of playing off Hapsburg against Valois, which had been the trump card of Henry VIII, could no longer be counted upon by an England dispirited, ill-defended and almost bankrupt.

From such a situation the country could only be saved by a statesmanship of extraordinary ability, and one that was practically immune from mistakes. It is one of the blessings for which those who believe in a special providence should be most thankful that the hour brought forth the woman, perhaps the only woman in all history who could have pulled the country through. And yet Elizabeth was not, as many of her subjects thought her, a heaven-descended

goddess, but the last of the Tudors, fully seised of the family tradition, and applying the principles of her father and grandfather with at least equal ability and without their errors and eccentricities. This should be steadily kept in view in any estimate of her character as a Queen. She was, moreover, perhaps the only female sovereign who has, at all times, been completely her own mistress, able to keep her favourites, like Leicester and Essex, in due subordination, and to impose her independent will upon the deliberations of her wisest counsellors.

She was, like all her family, and unlike some of the otherwise most capable sovereigns of history, an excellent judge of men. With the solitary exception of her wanting to pit the military ability of Leicester against that of Parma, she seems to have had an almost uncanny faculty of getting the right man into the right place. The Council in her reign was at its zenith of power and ability, and of the Council the dominating wisdom was that of William Cecil, Lord Burleigh, and, after his death, of his son Robert. How multifarious were its activities and how strangely modern its methods can best be realized by a perusal of the State Papers or the enormous collection of documents preserved at Hatfield House. Space does not permit us the fascinating task of following these activities even in the scantiest detail; we must devote our attention to the principles that inspired Her Majesty and her advisers at this most critical period of our history, and to the broad outlines of their policy.

The most important consideration of all in the mind of Elizabeth Tudor was that of husbanding her resources. Upon this, as she understood as well as any of her family, her power depended, and she had to face greater difficulties than any other monarch of her line. For the restoration of the coinage, with which she began her reign, did not bring the expected fall in prices. She had to contend against the cheapening of money that resulted from the stream of precious metals flowing into Europe by way of the Spanish Peninsula. And yet so great was her forbearance from expensive adventures, that until the very last years of her reign she contrived to keep her Parliament at arm's length and her people contented. Those who talk about Elizabeth's meanness should bear in mind that a policy of strict retrenchment was absolutely forced upon her, and pursued deliberately and with consummate success. She was not the mere miser that her grandfather—not altogether justly—is supposed to have been; when occasion demanded she could strike well and hard, as at Leith and against the Armada, for at the decisive sea-fight

off Gravelines it was the Spaniards and not the English who were short of ammunition. The legend of her having starved her fleet is now exploded; it was the difficulty of transport and not the Queen's parsimony that kept them short. She had mastered the hard truth that in matters of foreign policy it is better, in nine cases out of ten, to sit still than to do the brilliant thing.

But Elizabeth and her advisers were wise enough not to stop short at a merely negative economy. They made it their aim not only to avoid squandering but positively to increase the national resources. The way had been pointed out clearly enough by Hales, through the mouth of his shrewd old Doctor Pandotheus, who advised his companions in the tavern that the best way to pull the nation out of the ruts was to restore the coinage and to foster native industry. Burleigh was the doctor come to life, and he pursued this policy with unremitting zeal and entire incorruptibility, in which he set an example that was unhappily lost on an even greater than he, Francis Bacon. Burleigh was typically English in his avoidance of abstract theorizing; it would be difficult to label him with any political or economic doctrine, unless we are to call him a moderate protectionist in days when every statesman was, to some extent, a protectionist. It was his way, as his correspondence proves, to deal with each question on its merits and as it arose.

His task and that of his colleagues was one of reconstruction. The medieval system had broken down; feudalism had become a mere pageant; the gilds were monopolies that stood in the way; the Church had become a State department; capitalist enterprise had brought in its train an unemployed surplus in the labour market. The task of the government was to carry on the work of previous reigns by substituting a national for a local economy. With this object a statute was passed in which the State took over the work of the gilds in regulating the conditions of apprenticeship, and provided for the fixing of a fair wage by its local representatives, the Justices of the Peace. About the effect of this measure there has been endless controversy. It was, certainly, no more in theory than the application of the old medieval doctrine of a fair price, to which Piers Plowman and, before him, Thomas Aquinas had subscribed, nor is there any reason to doubt the goodwill of the Council to effect an honest settlement. But it argues too rosy a view of human nature to imagine that in a dispute about wages any impartial settlement can be obtained by the decision of an employers' committee, which is what the Bench of Justices really amounted to.

The general consensus of opinion, in the very difficult matter of estimating real wages, is that these never recovered from the drop that took place at the time of the Reformation. Perhaps the most authoritative evidence is that of shrewd Parson Harrison, whose survey, taken about the middle of the reign, leaves us with the impression that while what we might describe as the lower middle class, the yeomen and small farmers, were raising their standard of comfort, labouring men were hard put to it to provide themselves with bread, and that unemployment was so rampant that evicted paupers had the choice between emigration and thieving. Nevertheless it must be said on the other side that the most common complaint against the Justices was their failing to put the Statute into force.

Elizabeth and her Council were after all not planning a Utopia, but dealing from hour to hour with a situation that might at any time become catastrophic. To their mind's eye there must often have appeared the towering galleons of Philip, the gaunt face and lean beard of Alva, the swords of Saint Bartholomew's Eve, the ghastly fires of the Inquisition. The marvel is what they did, and not what they failed to do under circumstances so desperately adverse. They worked out a solution of their problem which, if it failed to check the operation of social forces in whose grip we, of the twentieth century, are still blindly struggling, did at least bring the country to a glorious issue from her foreign perils, establish her definitely as a great industrial and trading power, pave the union of Great Britain, and start the country on her career of expansion. In the social sphere they set up a well-considered and working order, that left the country in a state at least far better than that which had obtained in the beginning of the reign.

The great Statute of Apprentices to which we have already referred, and the two making the relief of the poor compulsory and national, were only the most conspicuous landmarks in a policy that proceeded by means of minute and ever changing expedients. The government of Elizabeth was no longer content that England should confine her main energies to exporting new materials in foreign ships for foreigners to work up. Every possible means was taken towards the planting of new industries, both indirectly by a tariff so arranged as to encourage native production, and directly by the judicious grant of patents. This, indeed, was a conspicuous feature of Elizabethan policy, and has been a good deal misunderstood. She and her advisers had grasped the fact that if you are to have

successful industries, you must attract capital into them, and that if a man is going to adventure his wealth in making a new departure in business, he must have some security for the enjoyment of its fruits. These patents or monopolies were granted at first with a discriminating hand and after careful consideration both of their immediate and ultimate effects, but the opportunities for driving a corrupt bargain with the State were too obvious to escape the notice of the *nouveaux riches* who had sprung up as thick as weeds after the Reformation. The thing became a national scandal, and raised at last a parliamentary storm of such violence that the wise old Queen, now near the end of her reign, saw the expediency of a graceful surrender.

Not the least important factor in this policy was the encouragement given to the foreign Protestants whom the Counter Reformation was driving to seek refuge on our shores, and who came, bringing with them their trade secrets, which the Council were quick to exploit for the benefit of their fellow countrymen. The problem of overcoming local prejudice against the new settlers was one of considerable delicacy. There were also aliens of a less desirable sort as we may see from the records of the Borough and Corporation of what was then the flourishing seaport of Rye, one of the gates of the Kingdom. The fact that the Bishop is ordered to exercise a religious and to assist the corporation in the temporal supervision of these strangers, throws a curious sidelight on the position of Bishops in the Elizabethan state system, and also goes to show how largely the alien problem was one of religion.

Commerce as well as industry was an object of solicitude. Burleigh had all along been opposed to the privileged position of the Teutonic Hanse League, that absorbed so large a part of our carrying trade, but it was necessary to go warily, because our navy was dependent upon them both for ships and armament. However, thanks to the exertions of men like Sir John Hawkins, the nation became gradually capable of supplying its own naval requirements, and the Jesus of Lubeck was the last German-built ship. Our merchant adventurers, after the ruin of Antwerp, were driven to seek depots in Germany, and were soon competing with the Hansards in their own markets. This roused the Germans to desperate retaliation, and the effete resources of the Empire were actually brought into play, but England was now more than able to hold her own, and the contest ended in the Hansards being turned bag and baggage out of the London

Steelyard they had occupied for so long. When James I allowed them to come back, it was without their time-honoured privileges.

Indeed England had no longer any need of a carrier, for she was taking to what was henceforth to be her element, the sea. The providential loss of Calais was forcing upon her the realization that she was not a Continental but a world power. The merchant adventurers were reinforced by the great regulated companies that pushed England's trade in every quarter of the globe. The policy of the government was to keep a light hand over these companies, to prevent them from becoming closed monopolies, and to foster in every way the spirit of individual enterprise. Never in their endeavours after national wealth did Burleigh and Elizabeth forget the prior claims of national defence. Indeed it is one of their chief titles to fame that, however varied the expedients they adopted, the ends of their policy were conceived on simple and comprehensive lines and were steadily held in view.

They may claim the credit of having found England at the nadir of her fortunes, and left her at their zenith. When Elizabeth died England was not only a victorious but fast becoming a wealthy nation, and her wealth, being on a sound basis of national production, was likely to go on increasing. At last she bade fair to rival the Low Countries themselves as a manufacturer of cloth; the finer processes of manufacture were now mastered and alum workers had been smuggled out of the Pope's mines to put the finishing touches. Her shores were inviolate and not seriously threatened; her merchant navy was only rivalled by that of Holland. Of her intellectual and spiritual development we have yet to speak. And if beneath the surface there was the canker of social injustice, if the growing Puritan fervour was making demands that Renaissance worldliness could never satisfy, let us at least give our great Queen and her councillors the credit of having accomplished all that could be humanly expected of mortals endowed with less than superhuman prescience and insight. They had their faults and they were many; it is easy to expatiate on the vanity of Elizabeth, the unheroic suppleness of Burleigh, the Machiavellian craft of Walsingham, but where so much was admirable and so much accomplished, any generous Englishman may well be content and sink his criticism in praise to whatever gods he owns for famous men and our fathers that begat us, not forgetting the virgin Queen they served with such a loyal wisdom.

Law and Degree

It is essential to our understanding of Elizabethan statecraft to realize how far it was from embodying any simple or consistent theory. What consistency there is about Elizabeth's government is one of spirit and not of doctrine. She herself was as impatient of opposition as any other Tudor, and the most cavalier of any of them with her Parliaments, and yet she was, and made it her pride to be, a monarch whose throne was buttressed upon the consent and love of her people. "Let tyrants fear," was her calm vaunt as she rode along their ranks at Tilbury. "I have always so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal heart and goodwill of my subjects." Self-willed woman though she was, she never dreamed of placing herself above the law nor of allowing herself to be drawn into a constitutional struggle. When it was a question of giving way, she was quick to see the necessity and made a grace of it.

Certainly, until the great debate upon monopolies at the end of her reign, there was never a sovereign of her line, not even Henry VIII, who succeeded in imposing his will with so little real opposition. This was no doubt largely due to the tact that Elizabeth displayed in harmonizing her own will with that of the nation. Moreover she had mastered the Tudor secret of never asking for a penny more than was absolutely necessary. There is a third reason that is perhaps less obvious, which is that at the beginning of her reign the Common Law was only just rising from the trough of its greatest depression. The new feeling of continuity with the past, which was part of a rising patriotism, was making Englishmen gradually more alive to the excellence of their ancient law, and in proportion to this awareness does the sensitiveness of Parliament to its privileges increase. Sir Thomas Smith, the doughty champion of English law, also maintains the high and absolute power of the Court of Parliament.

So far as we can attach a label of any kind to the Elizabethan conception of government, we should call it Tory, in the best sense of that much disputed word. It reposed upon the ideas of law, of duty and of degree. It is safe to say that Elizabeth regarded herself as the maintainer of the law, while she would probably not have taken kindly the compliment that she was a champion of liberty. No Tudor sovereign ever doubted for a moment that his

or her power was limited by the law; even Mary had promptly consigned to the flames a book which propounded the suffragette theory that, being a woman, she was exempt from a man-made law. And it is upon the conception of law that Hooker, the great apologist for the Elizabethan compromise in Church and State, bases his argument. He sees the whole universe subject to the reign of law; God Himself wills to confirm to the law of His own perfection. All His creatures, from the angels down to inanimate matter, are subject to law—and it is the law of reason planted in the heart of man that drives man to take unto himself a government and a positive law of human devising. In short, as Hooker expresses it, the seat of law is the bosom of God, its voice the harmony of the world.

This noble conception of a reign of law, from which God Himself is not exempt, leads the good Hooker to what is, in effect, a rationalist social philosophy. The greater part of his book is, no doubt, taken up with arguments based on Hebrew mythology and the orthodox authorities, but this is the part that the modern reader skips, and the essentials of Hooker's teaching stand out all the more clearly for the omission. Society is based upon reason and the evidence of reason is the "general and perpetual voice of man", which is as the sentence of God Himself. It makes little practical difference whether we say that reason is the sentence of God, or that God is merely a convenient personification of reason. If laws are based upon reason, it is easy to see that they must be based upon consent, "laws they are not which public approbation hath not made so." Mere force or authority is no rational compulsion—"utterly without our consent we could be at no man's commandment living. And to be commanded we do consent, when that society whereof we are part hath at any time before consented, without revoking the same after by the like universal agreement."

This is, of course, the fiction of a social contract, an explanation of society that was coming into vogue at this time, both among the French Huguenots and the Scotch Presbyterians. But the social contract, like evolution in a later age, could mean anything or nothing. It might be used to justify naked despotism, by the interpretation that men have once and for all time committed their destinies into the hands of the sovereign, or it might be understood to mean that the sovereign is merely the servant of the people, and holds his office because, and so long as, they will. The whole question is whether the contract was settled once and for all in the remote past, or whether it needs to be perpetually renewed. Hooker's solution

is a compromise with a considerable bias in favour of the sovereign and of a permanent contract. But like a true Elizabethan he qualifies his doctrine to an extent that is no doubt purposely indefinite. The State is a continuous being; the consent of the forefathers may be taken as that of the children; Hooker owes his allegiance to Elizabeth because his ancestors may be presumed to have freely given theirs to her first predecessor, but what the general consent has done, the general consent can undo. Above the positive law there is always the law of reason, and the very English conclusion seems to emerge that if the State is to be obeyed, it must be decently reasonable, in other words, both sovereign and subjects, apart from the letter of the law, must play the game. This is exactly what the Tudors understood, and the Stuarts did not.

Law, in the Elizabethan conception, is twin brother to order, and order implies every man having his place or degree in society, and faithfully accomplishing his duty therein. This is no new conception, but in Elizabeth's time it is expressed with a fervour and magnificence that raise it to the dignity, almost, of a religion. Everybody knows the magnificent passage in which Shakespeare expresses, through the mouth of Ulysses, the whole spirit and justification of Elizabethan Toryism :—

> "O when degree is shaked,
> Which is the ladder to all high designs,
> The enterprise is sick! How could communities,
> Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
> Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
> The primogenitive and due of birth,
> Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
> But by degree, stand in authentic place?
> Take but degree away, untune that string,
> And hark what discord follows! each thing meets
> In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
> Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
> And make a sop of all this solid globe:
> Strength should be lord of imbecility,
> And the rude son should strike his father dead:
> Force should be right; or rather, right and wrong,
> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
> Then everything includes itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite;
> And appetite, a universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce a universal prey,
> And last eat up himself."

The same doctrine is propounded with hardly less eloquence by Spenser, in the fifth book of his *Faerie Queene*, which treats of

justice, as embodied in the rather priggish and unamiable Artegall, the champion who goes about attended by an iron man called Talus. In the prologue to this book, Spenser attributes the degeneracy of the times to the fact of degree being vizarded, and quaintly remarks that the very signs of the zodiac have shifted from their ancient houses. The most significant passage in Artegall's career is where he engages in debate with a giant who is a complete democrat, and in fact a communist, and who has announced his intention of levelling the mountains with the plain:

> "Tyrants, that make men subject to their law,
> I will suppress, that they no more may reign,
> And lordlings that the commons overawe,
> And all the wealth of rich men to the poor will draw."

The scandalized champion of justice and aristocracy is prompt to enlist the Almighty on the side of things as they are. It is God, he dogmatizes rather than argues, who makes sovereigns powerful and subjects obedient, who makes some wealthy and others poor—what blasphemy is it to oppose His will! It is a line of thought that has never failed to command pious assent among the possessing classes, and is appropriately clinched by the iron man seizing the poor giant, pitching him off a cliff, and then mercilessly belabouring with his flail a "rascal rout" who have the impudence to demur to this method of settling sociological differences.

The Elizabethan State doctrine is, despite the rationalist standpoint of Hooker, tinged with a lively mysticism. "There is," says Shakespeare,

> "a mystery (with whom relation
> Durst never meddle) in the soul of State;
> Which hath an operation more divine
> Than breath or pen can give expression to."

This may render intelligible the seemingly ridiculous homage that Elizabeth received from all classes of her subjects, and how, even in her old age, imagination endowed her with perpetual youth and beauty. She was, in fact, less of a woman than a goddess in their eyes, she was Gloriana, England incarnate. There is pathos as well as humour in the story of the little tailor who fell so much in love with his elderly sovereign that he actually died of it. She was one whom her subjects might well delight to honour, and even now a responsive chord may beat in the breasts of some Englishmen to that quaint address:—

> "O, beauteous queen of second Troy
> Accept of our unfeigned joy."

In truth, the love that her people bore for Elizabeth was scarcely to be distinguished from the purest patriotism. It was in her image that they visioned their country. The complete subordination of the Church to the State naturally tended to throw a halo of sanctity around the head of the State and the motherland of which both Church and State were part.

This Toryism of the Elizabethan system might seem not very different from that of Piers Plowman, but the difference, though subtle, is profound. The acid of the Renaissance had destroyed the Christian democracy of the Middle Ages. The Plowman had indeed gone as far as any Elizabethan in recognizing the inequality of men in the State, but this was quite overshadowed by the fact of their equality in the eyes of God. All were equal citizens of one invisible Kingdom which counted for infinitely more than the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof. That membership of the Kingdom of Heaven was, to the men of the Renaissance, little better than a pious fiction. The inequality of men was unqualified and fundamental.

Contrast the outlook on life of Chaucer and Shakespeare. Chaucer was certainly at least as much of a courtier as Shakespeare, and he would never have dared to treat sovereigns with the freedom of him who created Claudius and Lear. But the spirit of the age forced him to a practical recognition of human equality. His poor men in the Canterbury Tales are treated with a tenderness and respect by no means inferior to that accorded to the knight and the prioress. Chaucer does indeed view them with the sweet humour that was born in him, but it is in no sense a humour dependent on class distinctions. He does not invent for them contemptuous or ridiculous names simply on account of their lowly station. There is, in his company of pilgrims, no Feeble nor Mouldy nor Wart nor Starveling. The humour of being a Starveling would have been lost upon an age when poverty was sacred, and when it was not profane to represent Christ Himself as a ploughman, or as a labourer surrounded by His tools. It is true that Shakespeare has his Sir Toby Belch and Justice Shallow, but names like these are exceptional for his gentlefolk, and, besides, refer to human and not to class foibles.

This is by no means to belittle Shakespeare's gentle and passionate humanity; the very largeness of his nature makes his imperfect sympathy with democracy all the more remarkable. It is a characteristic that no unprejudiced person can deny. His mobs and his mob-leaders cut a sorry figure; Jack Cade, who is quite

unhistorically endowed with the same opinions as Spenser's democratic giant, is a mere vulgar ruffian, and if Shakespeare ever heard of Magna Charta, his *Life and Death of King John* affords no evidence of it. The ardent kindness of his nature leads him more than once to indignation with the sufferings of poor men, but it is not the indignation that moves the very stones to rise and mutiny. He loves a master who, like Theseus or Brutus, is gracious and condescending to dependents; he loves a servant who, like Adam in *As you like it*, serves his master loyally; but to the idea that Jack is as good as his master, which is Christ's and that of Gothic Christianity, he makes no approach, except in one famous passage which is put into the mouth of the mad Lear. The whole atmosphere of his plays is one of social inequality. So far had the new spirit already gained upon Christianity.

8

The Twilight Years

We are accustomed to speak of the Elizabethan age as if the whole reign were equally fruitful and creative from beginning to end. The fact is that the spirit we know as Elizabethan hardly becomes manifest during the first half of the reign, and only attains to its full glory after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The causes of this are well worth investigation, and afford one of the clearest instances imaginable of the close interdependence of the events of history and the manifestation of creative genius.

Elizabeth's reign divides itself roughly into three periods, the first shading by imperceptible degrees into the second, and the beginning of the third signalized with dramatic clearness by the blow of the axe that severed the neck of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the invisible bond that had restrained King Philip from launching the full force of his Empire directly at England. We may characterize these three periods of the reign as first that of utter gloom, second that of rampant individualism, and third that of full national self-consciousness.

There could, in fact, have been nothing less Elizabethan, in the usual sense of the word, than the spirit of the country during the first years of the reign, until well on into the seventies. Its mood was of a depression as unrelieved as that which had obtained after the loss of Henry V's conquests in the preceding century.

Henry VIII had indeed given Englishmen reason to be proud of themselves, but after his death nothing had seemed to go right with the country. Under Mary what was, in form at any rate, exceedingly like a Spanish conquest, had taken place, and while English auxiliaries had pulled Philip's chestnuts out of the fire for him at St. Quentin, he had allowed his ally to sustain the cruellest of all her blows on the Continent, in the loss of Calais. It might well seem that the coming of Elizabeth was only a respite. It was almost absurd to imagine that the little Kingdom, but imperfectly united within itself, could permanently sustain the upgathered might of the Counter Reformation. The Queen and her statesmen, playing coolly and unostentatiously for safety whilst they built up the resources of the nation, must, in secret, often have well-nigh despaired of winning through in the long run.

Nine years passed, eventful chiefly from the fact of their comparative uneventfulness, and then a new and terrible danger took shape almost in sight of our shores. The Low Countries had always been the vital part of the Continent from the point of view of English diplomacy, which had aimed, as it aims at this day, at keeping them from passing under the sway of a first-class European power. For the last half century, indeed, they had belonged to the Monarch of Spain, but they had shown themselves sufficiently independent not to be the subservient tools of his policy, a fact that had done more than anything else to save the England of Henry VIII. Philip determined to put an end to this once and for all. Out of Italy came marching a small but beautifully disciplined army under the first captain of the age, the terrible Duke of Alva. Against such a force resistance seemed hopeless, the Low Countries were held in a grip of iron for the Counter Reformation. Nobody knew at what moment these invincible and implacable veterans might not effect a landing on our own shores. There were those who would have welcomed them; the greatest nobleman in the land, the Catholic Duke of Norfolk, had intrigued to bring them over before his decapitation brought it about that, in the words of Professor Pollard, "for more than half a century England had to do its best—defeat the Spanish Armada, conquer Ireland, circumnavigate the globe, lay the foundations of empire, produce the literature of the Elizabethan age—without any ducal assistance."

The situation was rendered no easier by the presence, in England, of the fugitive Queen of Scots, who, with her Catholic faith and French antecedents, found her position impossible from the first

in a fiercely Calvinist Scotland, and who threw herself on Elizabeth's mercy to escape from her own subjects. As claimant to the English crown she became the centre of every Catholic intrigue and the hope of every adherent of the old faith. Then the Papacy, which had hesitated to commit itself, so long as there was any chance of bringing the erring Elizabeth back into the fold, launched the dread sentence of excommunication and deposition, which some bold hand, that in all probability knew the use of knife and pistol, nailed to the wall of Lambeth Palace in the night. The Queen was now a marked woman. The presumptive heir was her prisoner Mary, and only Elizabeth's life stood between the Counter Reformation and the conquest of England. The weapon of murder was well known to the champions of Christ's Church. It was gravely defended even in theory. The Jesuit Mariana advocated it in the course of a friendly dialogue which is supposed to take place beneath the orange trees of Seville. It cut short the career of Philip's worst enemy, William the Silent, the liberator of Holland, and on the fourth day of the most elaborate torture that could be devised the pious assassin was able so far to retain his clear conscience and sense of humour as to join in the laugh at the executioner when the latter struck his own thumb. It removed the last of the Valois as it was to remove the first of the Bourbons. Elizabeth's death would have meant more to the Church than any of these—and yet she lived. Her subjects cherished that life with an intense solicitude. On one occasion, when some unskilful duck-shooter landed a shot in the royal barge, her Majesty obtained great kudos by saving him at the last moment from being hanged.

The black and secret army of the Jesuits was abroad, men whose consciences would stick at nothing in the cause they served with blind obedience. It is not to be wondered at that every Catholic came to be looked upon as a potential traitor, and that the law should declare the avowed soldiers of the Papacy, the priests and above all the Jesuits, to be traitors by the mere fact of their being in England. This was the more unfortunate because many Catholics succeeded in remaining loyal Englishmen in spite of their Holy Father's anathema. Such men were in a cruelly hard position because the government, though by no means intolerant, was in a perpetual state of not unnatural nervousness. The records of the Treshams are a pathetic instance of how a naturally loyal family can be so far embittered as to be driven to take part, at last, in gunpowder treason. At the time of the Armada they had begged to be employed against the enemy, but her Majesty, while courteously acknowledging

their loyalty, had them shut up "alonely to frustrate the enemy's expectation of finding any succour." So, willed they, nilled they, into the palace of the Bishop of Ely they went, subsisting on a diet carefully assimilated to that of the Fleet prison, and watching, with what feelings we can imagine, levies no more loyal than themselves drilling beneath the windows.

England was now to all intents and purposes in a state of siege and under martial law. There was probably not a monarch in Europe more indifferent to the religious principles of his subjects than Elizabeth, but it was her principle, as it was to be that of Wellington, that the Queen's government must be carried on. For anyone who stood, or might be suspected of standing in the way, there was short shrift. If her hand was heavy on the Catholics, it was by no means light upon too zealous Protestants. There were Puritan as well as Catholic martyrs, and it is significant of the public spirit that one of these, who had only his hand and not his head cut off, promptly waved his cap with the other, with the cry of "God save the Queen."

For the first years of Elizabeth's reign, after the coup of Leith whose results were more profound than showy, her policy was one of steady and imperturbable stonewalling. It was no time for brilliancy; it was enough, in all conscience, if she could keep out of mischief. There was little outwardly inspiriting in what she accomplished. She managed, by taking advantage of internal dissensions in France, to occupy the old English conquest of Havre, but her garrison was ignominiously expelled as soon as the French were able to unite against it, and the shadowy claim to Calais went by the board at the same time. She was, however, to accomplish a more brilliant coup against the redoubtable Alva, with whom she was formally at perfect peace. With that superb calculation that made her know exactly how close to the wind it was safe to sail, she calmly seized a rich treasure on the way from Spain to the Governor of the Netherlands. It was a shrewd blow, for it impelled Alva, whose economic ideas were of the crudest, to supply the deficiency by putting crippling taxation on trade, a matter which touched the Dutchmen in a more tender spot than the Inquisition and Alva's Council of Blood. The Netherlands burst into rebellion.

And yet during all this time and for long afterwards the ponderous empire and ponderous intelligence of King Philip remained quiescent. This man had something more than the patience of a Red Indian; he was like some slow and impersonal force of nature, his policy had

the movement of a glacier. He believed that time and God and money and the invincible battalions were on his side; he would crush his enemies to powder at the right hour, and the hour had not struck. There was one consideration more than any other that made him hold his hand. Mary, the Catholic Queen, lived; once Elizabeth was out of the way—and nobody knew better than Philip how such a contingency was likely to be hastened—his policy would accomplish itself. So he waited and waited, and nothing would provoke him until the fall of the axe at Fotheringay.

The beginning of Elizabeth's reign saw the nation wrapped in a mental gloom out of which it was impossible for any great art or literature to be born. The impulse that had produced the delicious lyrics of Wyatt—"and is thy heart so strong?"—and the pedestrian but not uninteresting efforts of Surrey to bring the Italian music to England, had been damped by the adverse circumstances of the times. They had no immediate successors; the seed they had sown was choked among the thorns of national humiliation. The principal composition of Elizabeth's early years was a laborious and depressing compilation called *The Mirroure for Magistrates*, which had been begun in the last reign, and contained "the falls of the first unfortunate princes of this land". This uninspiriting subject proved so well attuned to the spirit of the times that the series of unfortunate princes was continued up to quite recent years. This voluminous dirge was, in fact, on an immense scale, one of those "draftie songs" which, when recited by the pilgrim monk, had worn out the patience of Chaucer's host—and moved him to unmentionable comment. Sackville, the principal contributor to the *Mirroure*, also wrote a dismal tragedy called *Ferrex and Porrex*, the application of which to the dramatist's own time is only too obvious:

> "To each force of foreign princes' power,
> Whom vantage of your wretched state may move
> By sudden arms to gain so rich a realm,
> And to the proud and greedy mind at home,
> When blinded lust of reign leads to aspire,
> Lo, Britain realm is left an open prey."

all pointing to a moral with which Englishmen had good reason to be familiar:

> "These be the fruits your civil wars will bring."

A study of the literature of this time does, in fact, reveal the fear of civil strife that had been seared into the consciousness of the nation. England was too obviously a house divided against itself. Now and for a long time afterwards, the direst of evils that poet

or dramatist could imagine was a divided England, and this feeling helps to explain how it was that the nation instinctively sought refuge in a system like the Elizabethan, which subordinated religious and all other considerations to the one object of keeping it united under a firm government, and yet without forfeiting that which gave it its distinctive character and made England lovable to Englishmen. It was the one redeeming feature amid the general gloom that Englishmen were, on the whole, convinced that only themselves could be the architects of their own ruin. It was not Rome that had conquered Arthur, but Mordred; it was, in Sackville's play, the quarrels of their own princes that had left our Trojan ancestors a prey to the foreigner.

The merciless rigour with which any subject was pursued who was suspected of threatening the peace of the realm is explained by the fact that Englishmen saw themselves under a humiliation that would never have been but for traitors, national blacklegs. That they had not lost their belief in the essential soundness of England is shown by the fact that the gloom is relieved by one fine panegyric of the Commonwealth by Sir Thomas Smith, who, lawyer that he was, found the basis of our constitution in our Common Law, as distinct from the Roman Law of the Continent. And yet if Elizabeth had perished by force of arms or the assassin's knife at any time within the first twenty years of her reign, her name would have been linked with a time of singular barrenness, and we should perhaps have talked of "Poor Queen Bess's cheerless days".

9

The Age of Adventurers

Elizabeth's policy was to sit still and play for time, but to follow such an example of wise passivity was not necessarily in accordance with the desires or interests of individuals among her subjects. The two outstanding features of a situation charged with peril and hostility were that for reasons of their own, neither Elizabeth nor Philip would fight—as yet. Everybody knew perfectly well that at the first favourable opportunity Philip would make such a Hell in England as he had made in the Netherlands; there was one time when his half-brother, Don John of Austria, had been on the point of transferring the whole Netherlands army to England, in the cause of that lady in distress, Mary, Queen of Scots. It became equally

well known that Elizabeth desired nothing better than to do all the harm she could to Philip without quite stepping over the line between peace, of a sort, and war. Another fact was beginning to be discovered about the colossal Empire of Spain. Its very size made it vulnerable. The veterans of Alva and Parma might be invincible in their own element, but the coast was the limit of their power. The sea was for the adventurer.

The conditions of Elizabeth's reign gave the adventurer the golden opportunity for coming into his own. Even before her accession he had been abroad, pushing into the ice of the arctic winter in quest of the North East Passage that did not exist, or putting out from some Cornish creek in pursuit of a well-laden Spaniard trading between Antwerp and Cadiz. The fiery persecution of Mary's reign had the effect of driving a number of Protestant gentleman of good families to seek their safety and fortunes on the high seas. Conspicuous among these were the natives of the two South-Western shires, Devon and Cornwall, that had once formed the Celtic hinterland of Wessex. It is permissible to conjecture that the strain of Celtic blood had something to do with the restlessness of imagination, the desire to push forth into the unknown, that inspired so many of these worthies. But the whole spirit of the Renaissance was to develop the personality in this world on account of the very restriction that cut off its hope of the next. New worlds were calling, Eldorados, empires—of that day much more than of our own are Mr. Kipling's words true :—

> "The blindest bluffs hold good, dear lass,
> And the wildest tales are true,
> And the men bulk big on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,
> And life runs large on the long trail—the trail that is always new."

The discovery of Columbus had changed England from an outpost of Continental Europe to an island in the middle of the world, but it took our slow imaginations more than half a century to realize the difference. The chief work of the pre-Elizabethan years was the cutting loose of our Continental moorings. Henry VIII had burst the bonds that tied us to Rome, and the fall of Calais had destroyed our bridgehead for French adventures. But England had lagged behind Spain and even France in the exploitation of the New World, and when she did come into the field it was, characteristically enough, not, except indirectly, as part of State policy, but by the enterprise of individual Englishmen.

It would be profitless to attempt any condensation of the splendid

story of Elizabethan adventure; it requires to be read, every page of it, in Hakluyt. A glance at a map, on which the tracks of some of these men are marked, will show how Englishmen, through almost incredible difficulties and hardships, won their way to the remotest parts of the globe, opening avenues for our now rapidly expanding trade. Their enterprises are none the less wonderful for their frequent mis-direction. Englishmen were obsessed with the idea of finding a North East or a North West Passage, and it was this that fortunately hung back their colonizing efforts and, incidentally, enabled us to get into lucrative trade relations with the Tsars by way of Archangel. It would have been fatal had we tried to develop an empire on the lines of Spain. Perhaps the most interesting, in the light of subsequent history, of all these journeys is that of Fitch, who gave the first detailed English description of what was subsequently to be our Empire of India, and who covered the long, straight, twenty-two miles of road from Agra to Fatepursikri, at the time when this was one continuous bazaar, in the reign of a monarch who could have given an example of toleration and enlightenment to every sovereign in Europe—the wise and magnificent Akbar.

There was, however, a class of adventurer who found a less reputable field for his activities. When men take the law into their own hands, it is an easy transition from smiting the enemies of one's faith and country to plundering anyone whatever with pockets fat enough to pick. Where the individual is let loose on the seas with little or no control from higher authority, he will naturally tend to thrive according to his nature, and an atmosphere of general lawlessness does not tend to make men too delicate in their methods. There is a seamy side to the doings of even our most gallant adventurers. It is not pleasant to read of Cavendish capturing three Spaniards and a Fleming and torturing them for news, as if this were all part of the day's work, nor of the particularly mean trick played by Sir Jerome Horsey on a niece of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, whom he deliberately betrayed into her uncle's far from gentle clutches, a piece of service which, he wrote, "was very acceptable, whereof I much repent me." And if these were the doings of the best and, we might almost add, official adventurers, what could be expected from the many exceedingly rough diamonds who were able, in those days of light tonnage and small crews often armed with bows and arrows, to man a ship and put to sea? Such jolly work, no doubt, as when

" Four-and-twenty Spaniards,
Mighty men of rank,
With their Signoras
Had to walk the plank." [1]

The fact is that the Channel swarmed with every description and nationality of pirate craft, and the line between a pirate and a lawful adventurer was not an easy one to draw. Many gallant gentlemen accepted letters of marque from the Huguenot leaders in France, and some of these died fighting bravely for the Protestant cause, either as the Queen's men, or the Prince of Condé's in France. Some of them left their irregular career to take important posts under the government, like Ned Horsey, who became Sir Edward Horsey and Governor of what was then the important outpost of the Isle of Wight. But there were others, and of what kidney they were is rendered sufficiently apparent by a dispatch of Sir F. Chamberlain to the Privy Council, in 1546, from the Isle of Guernsey. " The coasts there," he writes, " are much haunted by piratical Englishmen, by whom many murders and outrages are committed," and he asks to have a small, well-manned pinnace placed at his disposal, a proof that most of these marauders must have been gentlemen in a very small way of business, much the same, no doubt, as put out from every port and creek during the passage of the Armada down the Channel, to swarm, like angry wasps, round the straggling crowd of galleons.

The records of the Port of Rye are filled with the doings of pirates, whom it was quite beyond the resources of either State or municipality to control, but whose efforts against Catholics were cordially assisted by the inhabitants of the town. The Sea Beggars of the Netherlands, who started the revolt against Alva, joined in the game with letters of marque from the Prince of Orange, and were popular enough among the townspeople until they went the usual way of extending their attentions to the ships of all nations. There is a petition to the Privy Council, in 1582, from the Mayor and inhabitants of Poole, " for reform of abuses occasioned by notorious pirates who haunt the harbour and road of Stondland to the utter undoing of the poor town of Poole, and who threaten not only to break the prisons there, and so to carry the prisoners away pirates, but also to fire the town, or take away the victuals carried by its small barks." One Spanish ship was actually taken by a pirate out of Falmouth harbour.

But while it would be misleading to treat Elizabeth's adventurers

[1] Quoted in *Highways and Byways in Devon and Cornwall* by A. H. Norway.

as if they were all the worthy Protestant sea-dogs dear to the heart of Kingsley, it would be unjust and, for an Englishman, unnatural, to lump them together as if they were all ruffians and pirates in the ordinary sense of the word. The fact is that they included every kind and shade of character, from Sir Francis Drake, one of the noblest and most lovable men that ever lived, to scoundrels like Ward, who, when the death of the great Queen ended the days when it was safe to plunder Spaniards, took service with the Barbary corsairs. The pages of Hakluyt establish it beyond a doubt that many of the adventurers were men of great and simple heart, and often religious enthusiasts. Frobisher set up for his crew, when they fared forth into the icy waters North of Canada, a standard of daily life that might have satisfied the severest requirements of Cromwell's "saints", and there is no more impressive scene in our history than that of Captain Doughty, who had been justly condemned for calculated indiscipline, partaking with Drake of the Holy Communion before his execution. Nothing could better express the best type of Englishmen's serene confidence and consciousness of a just cause, than Drake's words on the approach of the Armada: "Never was fleet so strong as this, but the Lord of Strength is stronger."

It would be the veriest cant to talk as if the operations of our adventurers against the Spaniards, on this or the other side of the line, were just ordinary piracy. Spain may have been nominally at peace with England, but the cruelties that she practised on innocent English traders and seamen, for no worse crime than their holding the established faith of their country, were notorious. A Spanish port was no safe place for an Englishman. There was also the monstrous pretension, on the part of Spain and Portugal, and subsequently of Spain alone, to establish an exclusive monopoly over the whole of the New World, to shut out all other nations from peaceful trade, and to enforce this monopoly by every device of cruelty and treachery imaginable. Horrible stories were told of the dungeons of the Inquisition, and it was only human nature that English seamen should retaliate by such methods as that of Cobham, who sewed up a Spanish crew in a sail and so consigned them to the fishes. Peace or no peace, Spanish merchandise and Spanish gold were fair game, and we entertain infinitely more respect for the methods of our Drakes and Oxenhams than for those of the respectable Russells and their like whose depredations were at the expense of their own countrymen—too often of the poorest.

It is only fair to say that the Queen and her council did their

best to suppress piracy, properly so-called. Burleigh was an uncompromising enemy of pirates, and he looked with scant favour on the adventures of Drake himself—the Captain Doughty to whom we have already referred was supposed to have been inspired by him. "I hate all pirates mortally," wrote Burleigh on one occasion, and there is no doubt of his honesty in the matter. But the problem was one with which no government could cope, and Elizabeth was not above giving secret encouragement to men who were plucking the feathers of her great enemy. When she openly knighted Drake on his return from a buccaneering voyage of unprecedented returns, when she wore plundered jewels [1] in her crown and calmly threatened to imprison the Spanish ambassador when he hinted at the affair coming to cannon, it began to convince even the slow intelligence of Philip that something decisive must be done.

The Elizabethan adventurer was a land-dog as well as a sea-dog. We have seen him already fighting for the Huguenots, and the rebellion of the Low Countries gave him an even more promising field of operations. There were plenty of Englishmen in the Netherlands before Elizabeth took the cause into her own hands by allowing the Earl of Leicester to join in the defence of these provinces with English troops to support him. This episode is chiefly remarkable for the affair which ended in the death of the most brilliant of all the Elizabethan gentlemen, the young and accomplished Sir Philip Sidney. He illustrates the strength and also the weakness of the system which allowed the most important objects of policy to be carried out by individuals more or less on their own initiative. With all his gracious and endearing qualities, he had not the sense of discipline that makes an efficient soldier or servant of the State. He had wanted to accompany Drake on one of his voyages, but Drake had not wanted him, and for the best of reasons—Drake was a disciplinarian and meant to be obeyed. The affair that ended in Sidney's death would, under modern conditions, have ended, if he had survived, in a court martial for gross disobedience of orders, the charge in which he and other young bloods took part having sacrificed the whole military objective, which was the capture of a Spanish convoy.

It was the exploits of these adventurers and not any national enterprise that began, about in the seventies, to lift the spirits of

[1] It may not be out of place to remark that even her sister Mary's Catholicism had shrunk from restoring one immensely valuable crown jewel pilfered from the shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury.

Englishmen out of the gloom into which they had fallen in the beginning of the reign. It was the adventurers, whose exploits, passed from tongue to tongue and hawked in broadsheets about the streets, began to ruffle up the spirits of Englishmen, and convince them, in the absence of any great national victory, that they were still the men of Cressy and Agincourt. And literature, when it begins to revive and gather inspiration with astonishing rapidity, passes through a phase of wild and chaotic individualism, as the spirit of the sea-dogs enters into it. As in travel and buccaneering, so in letters, abundance of life is seeking vent in action, real or imaginary, in wild and bizarre experiments—abundance without discipline and therefore, as yet, without full coherence. This phase may be said to last right up to the final breach with Spain and the triumph over the Armada.

The last and greatest of these author adventurers is Kit Marlowe, the premature and bloody close of whose career ushers in the dawn of Shakespeare's, and whose influence is plainly apparent in the greater dramatist's earliest work. The towering and hectoring swell of Marlowe's metre, the ruthless and boundless thirst for power that is the dominant motive of all his heroes, and their innocence of public spirit, are the faithful reflection of a time when the high seas were every man's hunting ground and to whom, as jesting Shakespeare put it:

> "the world's my oyster,
> Which I with sword will open!"

Most triumphant of all Marlowe's characters is the figure he makes of the terrible Duke of Guise, in a topical play written to voice the horror excited by the massacre of St. Bartholomew. It is obvious that Guise ought to be the villain of the piece, and so, in a sense, he is. But it is evident that Marlowe loves Guise as much as, and more frankly than, Milton loves Satan. The Duke's personality dominates the play, the finest lines are given to him, even in death he is glorious—unconquered—

> "*Vive la messe!* Perish Huguenots!
> Thus Caesar did go forth, and thus he died!"

Marlowe's *Edward II* is not, like Shakespeare's chronicle plays, devoted primarily to the glory and development of England, but is a thunderous and almost unmeaning clash of tumultuous personalities, it is, in fact, a first-class costume play, not a criticism of history. In *Tamburlaine*, Marlowe fairly surpasses himself in drawing such a hero as every true Elizabethan must have seen

himself sometimes in his rosiest dreams, riding in a chariot, driving a team of Kings, and rating them for not being able to do more than twenty miles a day. As for *Dr. Faustus*, it is amusing to contrast Marlowe's version with that of Goethe. The Elizabethan doctor has no yearnings after the one metaphysically perfect moment, and Marlowe, though he had little enough sense of a joke, would have rocked with laughter at the notion of a sentimental would-be suicide, driven to the poison cup by the inadequacy of human knowledge and putting it down again because the Easter Bells happen to start ringing. Doctor Faustus knows perfectly well what he wants and, unlike Faust, understands the necessity of paying up at the end of it. He has bargained his immortal soul for a few crowded years of life, kissing Helen, a genuine Helen and no misty emanation of classical poetry, calling up blind Homer to sing, letting off squibs under the Pope's chair, all that is glorious, all that is vulgar—only life!

Marlow is but one member of a regular blood and thunder school which includes Kyd, the sportive Kyd as he was ironically called, Greene, who is supposed to have called Shakespeare an upstart crow, and Shakespeare himself, in that genial chapter of horrors, *Titus Andronicus*, though in this play there are already touches that reveal the pitiful and public-spirited bard to whose throne these others could never soar. There is a delicious plate to illustrate Kyd's tragedy of *Jeronimo* in which one character is hanging from a tree, a lady in the background, calling "Murder! Help!" is being restrained by a gallant with a drawn sword, who is calling "Stop her mouth!" while an elderly gentleman, with a sword in one hand and a lighted torch in the other, is saying, "Alas, it is my son Horatio!" The thrillingest cowboy film or Surrey-side melodrama is tame stuff compared with this!

10

The Awakening Muse

To understand the significance of the *Sturm und Drang* that preluded the full glory of Shakespeare and Spenser, we must not only look to national conditions. England was still in close enough touch with the Continent to be sensitive to those great outward spreading waves of thought and feeling that periodically renewed her spirit. We have seen how the Renaissance came to

England first and in part with Chaucer, how with the early Tudors Italian scholarship had captured the intelligentsia of the nation. It seemed as if the group that centred round Erasmus under the auspices of the young Henry VIII were destined to leaven the whole life of the nation. This promise was very imperfectly fulfilled, though the foundations of a subsequent revival were laid more truly than many at the time imagined. For if there was one thing that the men of the Tudor Renaissance did understand and concentrate upon, it was education. Such famous pedagogues as Dean Colet and Lily of St. Pauls, Elyot and Ascham, Cheke, and Udall, are sufficient to show how seriously the task of education, at least that of the upper class, was taken in hand, while such linguistic and learned prodigies as poor young Lady Jane Grey are sufficient evidence that their efforts were not in vain. The seeds of a national culture, when they were wafted across the sea, did not fall on an unprepared soil. The young gentleman of Sidney's day was as deft at turning a sonnet as his present-day successor at stopping an approach on the green.

One cause of the comparative failure of the early Tudor Renaissance we have noted in the depressing course of national affairs after Henry VIII's death. But there is another which, though we must assign it a secondary place, must have been efficient, at least to some extent. The source of inspiration was mainly Italian, and between Italy and England there was a long journey and often actively hostile territory. It was no easy matter to keep touch, even when the bond of unity still existed that was supplied by the Roman Church. When that bond was snapped, England and Italy were separated by a wider gulf than before. Either might have said to the other, like Dr. Watts to the atheists:

> "There's a wide difference in our race,
> And different are our goals."

The Renaissance in Italy had been declining in genius and vigour throughout the sixteenth century, and the deadly blight of the Counter Reformation was now to settle on the land. Italy never ceased to be fruitful of inspiration, of a sort, down to the declining days of the eighteenth century, but she ceased to be the main source. The soul of the Renaissance, like Leonardo da Vinci, crossed the Alps and found a home in France.

It was inevitable that it should be so, for the Renaissance was life, and where liberty is crushed out of a people, life runs cold. Michelangelo knew it; his Night, the night of Italy, flung herself at the

feet of her ideal Medici, the patriot hero who could never be, closing her eyes in uneasy slumber with a prayer to those who went by to tread softly that she might forget. But the last despairing cry had hardly been rent from the cold marble of the tomb when, out of distant Touraine, there awoke a burst of laughter whose reverberations have even now not died away. Rabelais had arisen, the child of earth, with a thirst never to be sated, not for righteousness, but for everything life had to give, here and now. "Drink!" was the last word of human wisdom. The spirit of medieval Christianity was never more whole-heartedly contradicted. Rabelais had his heaven, but it was a heaven on earth and of the earth.

"All their life was spent not in laws, statutes or rules, but according to their own free will and pleasure . . . in all their rule and strictest tie of their order there was but this one clause to be observed,

DO WHAT THOU WILT;

because men that are free, well-born, well-bred, and conversant in honest companies, have naturally an instinct and spur that prompts them unto virtuous actions, and withdraws them from vice, which is called honour."

With the coming of Rabelais, Italy ceases to be the leader of the Renaissance, and France for awhile takes up the running. She produced a line of classical scholars of even greater accomplishment than those who had adorned the Florentine Academy, partly, no doubt, because the way had been prepared for them; she gave birth to a school of poets who for lyric delicacy have never been surpassed; her long and doubtful contest of Catholic and Huguenot gave rise to political speculations of the most daring order. The culminating figure of the French Renaissance is, however, Montaigne. It was for him to demonstrate the supreme importance of personality. He made the discovery in practice that Descartes was afterwards to make in theory, that though everything else may be wrapped in doubt, one truth at least is certain—I exist. It is not what a man gets, nor the power that he wields, nor the figure he cuts in the world that matters, but what he is. "Thou hast business enough within thyself, therefore stray not abroad: men give themselves to hire . . . we should thriftily husband our mind's liberty." The Christian had said that the world counts for nothing in comparison with a man's prospects in the world to come; Montaigne thought that nothing counts much but what a man is here, in the only life we are sure of.

Such was the French Renaissance of the sixteenth century, and it was fortunate for England that she was, during the reign of Elizabeth, peculiarly open to French influence. Our humiliation at Calais had removed at once the temptation for English sovereigns to use it as a base for another Agincourt adventure, and the standing grievance from which France had suffered by the violation of her soil. The breaking of the old Burgundian alliance by the violence of Alva, and the ever-growing hostility between England and Spain, tended, in despite of religion, to make French policy gravitate towards an understanding with England. The capture of Leith removed one main source of contention in the shape of the Franco-Scottish alliance.

Elizabeth knew well how to turn such a situation to profit, and did not hesitate to use her own charms as a pawn in the diplomatic game. She carried on desperate flirtations with two successive French princes, which never quite ripened to marriage, but which helped to bring about a *rapprochement* between the two nations that was not confined to the political sphere. Frenchmen were about the court, French literary fashions came into vogue, French lines were even inserted, with charming effect, into English songs—"*Pardona moy je vous en prie*", "*N'oserez vous mon bel ami?*" to take the two happiest. So that instead of coarse abuse and shouts of "French dogue!" our neighbours were now greeted with the immortal compliment of Sidney to

"That sweet enemy, France".

There was also the powerful stimulus to understanding that came from the sympathy between English and French Protestants, and from the thousands of the latter who sought refuge from Guisian persecution on our shores. These men brought with them ideas by no means likely to be smiled upon by the powers that were in England. Theories were abroad about free German ancestors who governed themselves and whose children ought to be governing themselves now, revolutionary notions about the sovereign being the servant of the people and liable like other servants to dismissal. But the fruit of these notions was to be garnered by other hands than those of Elizabeth's generation.

The French Renaissance, therefore, came in full force to England at the very time when the country was surging with a wild and disordered individualism that sought any and every outlet. The result was a series of attempts on the part of our poets, dramatists and prose writers to carry Olympus by storm with as light-hearted

a confidence as impelled Grenville to attack, with his one ship, the whole Spanish fleet. One of the strangest literary extravagances on record is the movement known as "euphuism", which consisted in an exuberant experimentation in language, which is the very reverse of decadence, because, instead of using curious words to tickle a jaded palate, it is the sheer overflow of high spirits—"idle fino" as one song puts it. The manifesto of this school may be said to be John Lyly's *Euphues and his England*, from which we extract the following quite typical passage:

"She hath exiled the swallow that sought to spoil the grasshopper, and given bitter almonds to the ravenous wolves, that endeavoured to devour the silly lambs, burning even with the breath of her mouth like the princely stag the serpents that were engendered by the breath of the huge elephant, so that now all her enemies are as whist as the bird Attagen, who never singeth any time after she is taken, nor they being so overtaken."

The lady referred to is not, as might be supposed, the proprietress of a menagerie, but Elizabeth. This euphuism affected the early style of Shakespeare, it is rampant in *Love's Labour Lost* and is a blemish that occasionally mars the beauty of *Romeo and Juliet*.

We are now in a position to appreciate the strength and defect of the rapidly maturing Elizabethan literature. Its strength is in its abundance of life, in its perfect realization of what was to be Blake's motto, "Energy is an eternal delight." To them life was energy and energy joy. And life is, after all, the root of the matter. Their weakness was their absolute lack of discipline. Of that immense energy too large a part was wasted, dissipated, turned to trivial or impossible ends. Thus we find the greatness of their work in fairly direct proportion to the restraint imposed upon it by the conditions of its medium. It is stronger in poetry than in prose, because the strict conditions of the sonnet and other imported forms compelled the poets to some sort of restraint and concentration.

Elizabethan prose is no doubt magnificent, but it is so incoherent, both in the construction of its sentences and in the power to concentrate on the development of a main theme, that it is seldom very readable except in patches here and there. Almost any paragraph we may open upon in Sidney's *Arcadia* retains the fragrance of his personality, as of crushed roses, but to wade through the *Arcadia* from beginning to end is a task that few would care to undertake, and fewer still would carry through. The greatest of Elizabethan prose was in translations, because here the translator was never for

a moment left to his own devices; North's Plutarch was the translation of a translation, and the fact of the undisciplined English mind being brought into prolonged contact with French habits of order and restraint, as in this and in Florio's Montaigne, was of inestimable value. But Englishmen had already been bequeathed a treasure beyond price in the model affordedby the prose of the Prayer Book and the Bible.

Of a deeper-seated weakness, which is that of the whole Renaissance, its insensibility to the highest spiritual values, we have already spoken and shall have to speak again.

II

The Supreme Crisis

After the murder, by King Philip's instigation, of the patriot leader of the revolted Netherlands, William the Silent, events began to move with rapidity to a crisis. England and Holland both knew that the fall of the one would entail that of the other, and in 1585 the most consummate military commander of the age, the Prince of Parma, struck a resounding blow for Spain by the siege and capture of Antwerp. It was then that Elizabeth, though she wisely declined the sovereignty of the Netherlands, allowed Leicester to intervene with English troops. Philip was fast losing the remnants of his sorely tried patience. Drake was now El Draco, the Dragon, to Spaniards. No port or treasure ship in their vast overseas Empire was safe. That Empire was now vaster than ever, since Portugal, with all her colonies, had been absorbed into Spain, which was like a vast colossus, bestriding East and West. It was now that Elizabeth, though with some womanly hesitation, took the opportunity of severing the last thin thread by which the Spanish sword of Damocles was kept from falling. The morality of Mary Stuart's execution may be open to criticism, but as a stroke of policy nothing could have been timed with a nicer exactitude. Elizabeth, like a skilful trainer, had brought up England to the fighting pitch, she was as ready for the supreme test as thirty years before she was unprepared. The challenge of Fotheringay rang through Europe, and heavily but with ponderous decision Philip took it up.

The plan was simple; a fleet of overwhelming strength, embodying the whole gathered might of the Spanish Empire, was to hold the Channel in order to cover the landing of Parma with his army of

veterans. The Catholics in England, so Philip's intelligence ran, would flock to his standard. It was on this that Philip counted, not on the possibility of vanquishing a united England. Some historians have been misinformed enough to write as if on Parma's landing all would have been over but for the shouting. The Prince himself, cool-headed soldier that he was, knew better and said so. Certainly Leicester would have been a child in his hands, but a united England was not to be manoeuvred out of existence by twenty or thirty thousand men. In order to succeed it was necessary for Spain to have the command of the sea and an England divided against herself.

So far from attaining this latter end, Philip, by his open threat to our shores, had done the one thing needful to transform an unruly individualism into an ardent and conscious patriotism. The adventurers with one accord ceased playing for their own hands and fell into their places in the national team. The Catholics forgot the Pope's bull and the penal laws, and rallied to Elizabeth. The Northern lords, always the most promising element of a rebellion, vied with each other in proofs of loyalty. A Protestant member of the great Catholic family of Howard was at Plymouth in command of the grand fleet there assembled. The Catholic Lord Morley wrote offering troops to defend his "natural and sweet country". The all-important city of London, which had blazed with bonfires on the condemnation of Mary, Queen of Scots, when asked to furnish a quota of ships and men, had begged the Queen to accept double. When Elizabeth rode along the cheering ranks at Tilbury, with her "Let tyrants fear", Parma was already a beaten man.

Never before had patriotism burnt with such a pure and intense ardour. In every utterance of the time there is the same consciousness of national invincibility, no matter what the odds. The sea dogs speak with one voice, "it is not honourable"—the words those of Hawkins—"for the Queen of England to be in any fea of the King of Spain." Still more emphatic are the words of an old salt who had been in a Spanish prison and had succeeded in getting away: "they make much account of their beastly great ships, but any good English ship is able to combat them." The story of Drake's game of bowls on Plymouth Hoe may be unproved, but nothing is more probable in itself. The experienced seaman, who had crippled the Armada and might have destroyed it only a year before, knew well enough that the unwieldly galleons, spread in

a crescent of seven miles from end to end, were drifting to their doom—they stood not the ghost of a chance.

For war is in the long run not an affair of big battalions nor of strategical skill, but a clash of civilizations, and such a hidebound and heavy-witted civilization as that of Spain was certain to break against the living and glowing resistance of little England. The Spanish fleet was outwitted even before it set sail. It was years behind the times, designed for the needs of Mediterranean warfare where ships were manoeuvred in close order like companies of soldiers, and where ramming and boarding were relied upon for success. The commanders of these galleons were qualified not by seamanship but by rank; only a Duke or a Marquis was eligible, and the Admiral in Chief was a court favourite without even a pretence to competence. The Spaniards were as brave as lions and actuated by something of the crusading spirit that had shattered the Turks at Lepanto, but against the superior intelligence and seamanship of their adversary they were as helpless as a flock of sheep.

What happened was simple. For a week the handy and well-gunned ships of the Queen sailed round and through the Armada as it sailed up the Channel, "plucking their feathers" as Drake expressed it The Spaniards, harassed and damaged, but still substantially intact, found a somewhat insecure refuge in Calais roads, from which Howard succeeded in bolting them, in disgraceful panic, by the bluff of a few fireships. The English fleet, now freshly supplied with ammunition, dashed in for the decisive battle off Gravelines, and all day long they shot the galleons to pieces with hardly any possibility of retaliation. Poor Parma, himself safely bottled up by the Dutchmen, had the mortification of watching his convoying fleet driven past, to the great joy of Drake, by a Southerly wind to the Northward, and the Englishmen speeding their departure with their few remaining rounds. The Armada was hopelessly beaten; even when the pursuit relaxed it dared not return, choosing rather to brave the perils of a homeward voyage round the North of Scotland than the terrible English fleet. Only a fraction of the once proud galleons, infested with disease and in the last depth of human misery, crawled back to Spain. After thirty years of hesitation, Philip had put it to the touch, and lost all.

Had England been capable of a sustained and disciplined effort of national concentration, she might have followed up this success by the utter overthrow of Spain as a maritime and imperial power. But it was just this sort of effort of which she was incapable. The

indiscipline engendered by an age of private adventure was too deeply ingrained. Elizabeth, in spite of the meanness of which she is too often accused, followed up her victory with energy and sound strategical instinct by striking a blow for Portugal. But the Elizabethans were as incapable of sticking to the main object of a naval offensive as they were of ordering their prose. The expedition, which was meant for Lisbon, wasted itself at Corunna. Even in the defeat of the Armada, discipline had not been at too high a level; Drake himself had had a lapse from grace when he left the fleet to plunder a galleon, and Howard had been late at the decisive battle for a similar reason. An attempt to capture the Treasure Fleet was ruined by the gross indiscipline of one Baskerville, and when at last the feat was accomplished it was by a Dutchman. The immortal exploit of the Little Revenge in fighting a whole Spanish fleet was a wanton sacrifice of one of the Queen's ships to an indefensible even if an heroic piece of swagger. The storm of Cadiz is the one really satisfactory episode of the long drawn anticlimax of the naval war, and that was not free from blemish.

12

The Elizabethan Springtime

The defeat of the Armada, the most dramatic triumph in the whole of our history, ushers in the full glory that we know as Elizabethan. Its effect on the country of dissipating the last shades of the gloom with which the reign had opened, and removing the weight of anxiety which the consciousness of the Spanish menace had engendered, was incalculable. England, merry as she was never to be again, burst into the full consciousness of her greatness, her beauty, and the place that of right belonged to her, second to none among the nations. And this sense of the joy of being English overflowed spontaneously into music and song. It was, above all things, a lyric age.

It is more than a coincidence that the defeat of the Armada should coincide with the opening of a new era in English music, that of the madrigal. Hitherto, though throughout the Middle Ages England had been a nation joyous with song, our greatest composers had devoted their chief efforts to beautifying the service of the Church. Not that it was always easy to distinguish the religious from the secular, for we have Taverner, who was organist

to Wolsey's Cardinal or Christchurch College, composing a Mass to the refrain of "Western wynde, why dost thou blow?"

Religious music had, like all branches of art, been affected by the exuberant and worldly spirit of the Renaissance. More and more since the fourteenth century, the solemn Gregorians and plain chants had been superseded by polyphonic compositions that tended to become exercises in an elaborate technique, and to lose sight of their purpose as adjuncts to the service of God. Not only the Reformation, but even the Catholic Counter Reformation, witnessed an effort to purge religion of these harmonious vanities, just as the Cistercians had, to the great advantage of sound architecture, made a clean sweep of conscious ornamentation in their churches. In music, the results of the sixteenth century pruning were not to confine but to stimulate genius. In Rome itself, when it seemed likely that the reforming zeal of the Popes would have swept away the new music altogether, arose Palestrina, who showed that it was possible to wed polyphony to the most austere piety. In England we have a perfect galaxy of musical genius, of which the chief light, one of the brightest of all time, is that of Byrd.

If the Reformation had been pushed to its logical extreme, Church music might have been cut down to nasal and unaccompanied psalm-singing. Thomas Becon voices the spirit of the intransigent Reformers when he describes music, in a sermon somewhat euphemistically entitled *The Jewel of Joy*, as "a more vain and trifling science than it becometh a man, born and appointed to matters of gravity, to spend much time about it." Happily the two first reforming Archbishops were typical Anglicans in the sense of being typical Englishmen. A reasonable compromise, making the best of both worlds, was preferable in their eyes to consistency. Cranmer laid it down, as a working rule, that there should be a note for every syllable, and Parker, that Anglican of Anglicans, explained to some French Protestants that in our services "we use . . . reverent mediocrity [in the sense of a *via media*], and that we did not expel music out of our quires."

More than that, with our English instinct of taking the best where we could get it, we did not hesitate to get our music, as we got our prayer book, from Catholic sources. Neither Tallis, who had been organist to Harold's foundation at Waltham, nor his even greater pupil, Byrd, gave more than lip-service to the new faith. These two master composers were, like the greatest of their contemporaries in the religious sphere, putting into music the spirit of that Catholic

humanism that culminated in More and the group of Oxford Reformers—an instance of Nietzsche's law that musical expression tends to postdate the spirit it expresses. Perhaps the first purely Anglican music is that of Orlando Gibbons in the reign of James I.

But it was impossible, in an age so saturated with paganism as that of Elizabeth, that all the best tunes should be kept for God. It is Byrd who, more than anybody else, bridges the gulf between sacred and secular music, for his masses and anthems confer no surer title to immortality than the sweetness of *Wolsey's Wyld* and the ineffable dignity of *The Earl of Salisbury's Pavane.*

There is no reason that music should not have overflowed earlier into secular channels, except that until the great menace was lifted, England had not the heart to break forth into singing. Then, indeed, she stepped at one stride to a primacy she was never afterwards to renew. The whole nation became lyrical, and it was almost a breach of good manners for a lady or gentleman not to be able to read and render correctly at first sight his or her part in a song. The sweet part-songs that are characteristic of this time lent themselves with peculiar aptness to social intercourse. It is characteristic of what is known as "polyphonic" music that all the parts of a melody are of equal importance, and not, as obtains in modern music, with one chief part and all the rest subordinate. So that where two or three educated Elizabethans were gathered together, it was as natural for them to join in singing as it is for a modern house party to mitigate the tedium of each other's conversation by falling to bridge. The beauty of the Elizabethan lyric, the facility that it has for almost singing itself, arises from the fact that the lyric is not yet thought of apart from music. The old Saxons had been a singing people, and after a thousand years and more the tradition was alive. There is this noticeable about the Elizabethan as about the Saxon song—there is a note of wistfulness, almost of sadness, about its greatest joy. The melancholy of Jacques in Arden was not only the affectation of euphuism. It is the note which, out of the dark night of English song, surprised the French in *Tipperary.*

Next to music, colour is the characteristic of this great outpouring of life that we know as Elizabethan. If we must seek for any origin except the demands of exuberant nature, we should say that while the madrigal comes from Italy, the colour is imparted by the influence of Ronsard and that group of French poets known as the Pleiade. These men had a thirst for colour that was almost feverish, and

forms their very words—*émailler, blondelette, verdissant, vermeillette.* The whole work of Spenser and Shakespeare is steeped in colour from beginning to end. Spenser, in particular, luxuriates in deep and glowing hues that seem as if they were naturally the offspring of a southern climate. It is not merely the "store of vermeil roses" nor Duessa's scarlet robe purfled with gold and pearls that constitute Spenser's colour; it is implicit in his very metre, in the argus-tinted luxuriance of sound with which the wings of his muse are dyed.

The union of colour and sound leads to a third element of the Elizabethan spirit which is best described as pageantry, the delight in the mere richness and circumstance of life for its own sake. It is an element that has been misunderstood, or at any rate disliked, by critics of a later Puritan school. Shakespeare, it has been averred, was incapable of describing war because of his delight in its trappings. Such vaunts as

> "From thy burgonet I'll rend thy bear,"

contrast poorly with the grim matter-of-factness of Bunyan's pilgrim giant-killers. But it was just in this spirit of exuberant light-heartedness that the Elizabethans did fight—Sidney flinging away his armour on a point of punctilio, Essex pitching his hat into the sea for joy of coming into action against Cadiz, Grenville chewing up glasses when the excitement of battle was on him. It may have been as illogical in these men, as it was for Nelson to make himself a target by wearing all his stars at Trafalgar, or for Beatty to be enjoying himself under fire on the bridge of the Lion, instead of in the conning tower, but with such men life is not a canal but a torrent, and overflows its banks.

Nothing is more characteristic of this life of the Elizabethans than the manysidedness of its expression. Music and poetry were only two among many arts. English painting, which, previous to the time of Sir Joshua, our insular modesty has so strangely undervalued, was alive and in direct continuity with an already honourable past. From the time of the ancient Northumbrian supremacy, the gracious art of illuminating manuscripts had been one of which Englishmen had been masters, and now that the invention of printing had put this out of date, its spirit survived in the portrait miniature. There is no more delicate touch than that of Nicholas Hilliard, who modelled himself on Holbein in miniature, and who revelled in those details of ornament so dear to the Elizabethan heart. It is characteristic of his time that he should, in his invaluable little treatise on

limning, have lauded his own country and compatriots as presenting beauties for the artist not inferior to those of Italy.

The forms of Elizabethan art are legion. In architecture the Church, that expression of a people's soul, had indeed ceased to be conspicuous, but the Elizabethan dwellings, great and small, are among the glories of England. It is interesting to watch the stubborn resistance that the Gothic spirit continues to offer against the advancing classical tide from abroad. As we should expect, it lingers most obstinately in the dwellings of old-fashioned folk, such as the Catholic Treshams of Rushton Hall, in the buildings of Oxford, which was even then becoming a home of lost causes, and, above all, in the cottages of the poor. It is only when cottage building practically ceases, that Gothic dies out of the land, and that is towards the end of the seventeenth century.

The Renaissance combines with Gothic in all sorts of strange and beautiful ways. Luxuriance is everywhere, but not to the neglect of essentials. The quaint and massive chimneys, the stout carven bannisters, the oak furniture with its rectilinear honesty of construction and its richness of decorative detail, are but random examples of the way in which the Elizabethan joy of life seized upon everything to transform it into its own likeness. The new luxury that spread even into the houses of the yeomanry and softened the beds of servants, was for glory as well as for use.

The most significant and vital feature of all was the intense and glowing patriotism that the menace of the Armada had focussed and its defeat had kindled into flame. Even before that victory, Englishmen were discovering how fair a heritage was theirs. On every side were the evidences of an intense interest in the history and legends of the country, both general and local. Not the least among Archbishop Parker's many titles to gratitude is the interest he took and stimulated in his country's past. Camden and Holinshed, Stowe and Norden, are but a few of the most conspicuous among many historical and antiquarian luminaries, nor can we forbear to mention that most delightful and intimate of all county surveys, the *Perambulation of Kent*, written by Parker's friend and correspondent, Lambarde. Men are interested in what they love, and if minute interest be, as it surely is, a criterion, the love of England must have been very great in those days of enthusiastic and often surprisingly accurate research.

It was not only real history that took the Elizabethan fancy. The legend of the country's Trojan origin, handed down from Geoffrey

of Monmouth, was revived for just the same reason that Geoffrey had revived it, because Englishmen wanted to see their country's present greatness against the background of a glorious past. Englishmen were, to quote from the title of an early seventeenth century play, the " True Trojans ", as truly descended from Aeneas and the gods as Romulus and the Scipios. This is worked into the design of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, where not only is the Red Cross Knight the English patron saint, but the champion of all the virtues is Prince Arthur, the " British Prince "—so strange a course had the shade of the old British-Roman general, if such he was, taken through time. The stories of Lear, Sabrina, and the other patriarchal Britons are clothed with a new splendour in Spenserean melody, and the poet adjures us to remember how doubly dear ought the remembrance of this dear country be to her children :

> " how brutish is it not to understand
> How much we owe to her that all us gave,
> That gave unto us all whatever good we have."

English patriotic writers were in one respect more fortunate than Geoffrey of Monmouth in the fact of their having not only a legendary but a real history to fall back upon. The great traditions of the French wars were alive and in everybody's mind. Not one of the Kings of England since the Conquest but was a possible subject for epic, dramatic, or lyric treatment. It was the fashion to write enormous poems dealing with the whole or a part of England's history. There was *Albion's England*, by one William Warner, whom contemporary appreciation put on a level with Spenser and called the Homer and Virgil of his age, a production that superseded in popularity *The Mirroure for Magistrates*. It has at least the merit, if it has no other, of being more cheery. It is, in fact, a compendium of the whole of English history, from the Siege of Troy to the defeat of the Armada, and proceeds at a jog trot through a wilderness of rhymed quatrains with scarcely a pretence to poetry. Daniel, who was called the Phoebus of our land, and Drayton, each produced a tedious epic, popular enough in its day, dealing with the perennial subject of civil war in England and its moral of national unity. Drayton also produced, ten years after Elizabeth's death, a huge work called the *Polyolbion*, which is, in fact, a rhymed survey and panegyric of Britain, and whose purpose is rendered sufficiently clear by these words in the preface : " yea, and I fear . . . some that think themselves not meanly learned, being not rightly inspired by the Muses : such, I mean, as had rather read the fantasies of

foreign inventions, than to see the rarities and history of their own country delivered by a true native muse." Most people nowadays would gladly sacrifice all these well-meaning but pedestrian epics for the one superb and swinging song of Agincourt, by this same Drayton.

But incomparably the greatest Elizabethan epic of English history is supplied by Shakespeare's series of chronicle plays. These differ from Marlowe's *Edward II* and indeed from almost all historical plays, in being inspired by a reasoned patriotism. This is alone sufficient to establish the substantial genuineness of even the first part of the Henry VI trilogy, which despite the crudeness of metre commented on by Coleridge, and probably due to the fact that Shakespeare had literally hardly yet found his feet, is as alien in spirit from anything of the Marlowe-Greene school as Shakespeare is from—to take the most extreme contrast possible—Bacon.

The three Henry VI plays form, with *Richard III*, a closely knit tetralogy, starting with the first murmurings of civil strife round the bier of the patriot hero Henry V, and following the effects of national disunion through a culminating series of horrors, national defeat, a peasant rebellion (untuning the string of degree), civil war, and finally a tyrant in whose one person all these evils seem to culminate. Then, to round off the drama, we have another patriotic hero, for whom the first Tudor has to figure, restoring national unity and pointing the moral against public treason in unmistakable words.

Shakespeare develops his philosophy of history throughout the whole series of English and, we may add, of Roman plays. It is a philosophy that has been imperfectly understood, because to the ordinary critic the stage King or statesman is merely a man dressed up in gorgeous trappings to lend colour to a love affair or some other merely personal transaction. Henry V has, for instance, been almost universally condemned as a prig and a hypocrite because he answers a public insult, at the critical beginning of his reign, with a public snub. But the King of England cannot remain the Bohemian of Eastcheap, a blow to his prestige may spell ruin to the country, as even Falstaff, with his large heart breaking beneath his smile, must understand.

"Presume not that I am the thing I was."

With Shakespeare it is always the country first, and the individual, even when he is a Falstaff or a Richard II, has to be sacrificed.

In the supreme studies of personality, in *Hamlet*, in *Macbeth*, in

Othello,[1] the fact is never lost sight of that a man does not exist only for himself but also for his country. He is always a political and ought always to be a patriotic animal. Shakespeare has little enthusiasm for democracy, but—what is not always so much recognized—he is equally severe in his treatment of aristocratic egoists like Coriolanus, and of the Divine Right of Kings to put their own interests before those of the State, at least if we may judge from the characters of those monarchs who are allowed to give expression to this doctrine, Claudius of Denmark, and the second and third English Richards. His most obvious sympathy is for those who like the imaginary, though assuredly not the historical, John of Gaunt, and that typical Englishman, the Bastard Faulconbridge, are intoxicated with the love of their country, and to whom England is a mother and a bride, a goddess and a heaven.

Shakespeare's philosophy of life will provide food for dispute until the end of time, and yet as to his main position, nothing could be more simple. It is the same both as regards individuals and nations, and is curiously similar to, though more fully and richly developed than that of Montaigne. To Montaigne the personality, the essential man, was the only thing that counted; so long as a man held fast to himself, it little mattered what else he did or became. This is precisely the message of Shakespeare not only for men, but for those personalities compact of millions, living, dead, and yet to be. All that we see, towers, palaces, temples, the world itself, passes away like a dream, and beyond the experience, so infinitely rich, of this dream life, is silence. But to one truth we may hold fast, though it be through the lips of a Polonius that it is spoken:

"Above all, to thine own self be true!"

That is the conclusion of the whole matter for the individual, and for the nation the Bastard takes up the message:

"Nought shall make us rue,
So England to itself do rest but true."

13

The Tragedy of Ireland

We wish that it were possible to close here our survey of this chequered yet magnificent period of our history. Unhappily there was, after the defeat of the Armada as after the march to the Rhine

[1] The Moor is a patriot by adoption. His last words are not of Desdemona's honour, but that of Venice.

in 1918, one of our British Islands whose past was a tragedy almost unrelieved, pregnant with hatred and disaster. Englishmen who wish to cure themselves of any undue tendency to national arrogance, can hardly devise for themselves a better penance than a perusal of the history, the real history, of England's dealings with Ireland.

And yet, even in these days of research and specialism, this is not so easy a task as it might appear. Of this tragedy there are two versions so different, that they might be told about two different nations, so little in common have they. One is that inspired by the sensitive patriotism and bitter memories of Irishmen, who have discovered how rich and gracious was the Celtic civilization of Ireland, and written with burning indignation of the tyranny, the greed, and the ruthlessness with which England in her strength applied herself to root it out. Then there is the more orthodox type of English historian who, though he certainly sees much to deplore in English methods of conquest, is nevertheless convinced that the Irish were intractable barbarians, uncouth, immoral, nomadic, and so wasted by never-ending feuds as to make some sort of firm government from the outside an absolute necessity.

These considerations have an important historical bearing. For if scholars, seeking for the truth about what happened centuries ago and sitting in the calm of their own studies, can so woefully disagree about the very existence of an Irish civilization, what could rough soldiers fighting for their lives on the spot, or statesmen, faced with the constant menace of rebellion aided by the foreigner, have been expected to understand? A deep spiritual gulf was fixed between England and Ireland. There is scarcely a sign of any Englishman of importance having seen anything better than "rude" or "wild" Irishmen, with a "damnable" law and barbarous language. Even poets and scholars like Spenser could speak of the Irish with the same sort of contemptuous dislike as you may hear expressed in an Anglo-Indian club to-day about the "natives".

It is to the honour of Irishmen and lovers of Ireland that the fair fame of Irish civilization has been rescued, after many years, from these aspersions. We now know that there was a tradition of Irish culture that had endured continuously since the prehistoric tales of Deirdre and Cuchulain, that there were schools and assemblies of bards, art and science, manufactures, and a flourishing commerce, for England to destroy. But like all reactions against injustice, this one has gone too far. To depict Ireland as a hero-martyr among nations and England as a blackhearted and calculating villain is

ridiculously to travesty the facts. The men who stood for England in a time of desperate peril, men like St. Leger and the elder Sidney, Mountjoy and Grey of Wilton, were, to put it very mildly, in no whit the moral inferiors of the Geraldines and Fitzmaurices and O'Neills: Spenser himself was neither a fool nor a liar. The immense body of first-hand evidence as to the slovenliness and unreliability of the ordinary Irishman is not all to be brushed aside as part of a sinister conspiracy to take away a nation's character. We have only to read of the impression made in London by the unkempt and disgusting state of Shane O'Neill's retinue, of ploughs tied to the tails of horses, or such descriptions as Andrew Trollope's of a typical Irish family, "Mr., or Mrs., or dame, men-servants, maid-servants—women servants I should have said, for I think there be no maids—guests, strangers and all," sleeping together in a room not so good as an English pigsty, to realize certain grave and obvious defects in Irish civilization. It is this same complacent slovenliness that even now is often the first thing to strike the English visitor about Irish life.

It has been the curse of Irish history that their fundamental indiscipline, whose origin we have already traced to the long isolation of Ireland from Roman influence as well as to certain defects of the Celtic temperament, has made Irishmen not only the most difficult of people to deal with, but has also contributed to their fatal incapacity for combining among themselves. Certainly England had done all she could to aggravate the constant and meaningless feuds between clan and clan; the temptation to simplify the problem of government by allowing, in De Ufford's words, one knave to cut off another, was too obvious to be resisted. But the success that attended this policy was due to the fact that with an Irish chieftain, despite a real and abiding consciousness of nationality, it was his family that came first. Add to this that the typical Irish leader was a man with whom it was hard to come to a permanent understanding, because of his unreliability. The English record of foul play is bad enough in all conscience, but English treachery was a crude and amateur thing beside the elaborate falsity of James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, who pressed the sword point of the English governor to his bosom in token of a submission which was only meant to gain time, or the Earl of Tyrone, who had the magnificent effrontery to submit to the council at Dublin, as a token of good faith, the offer of Philip of Spain to help in a rebellion, an offer of which Tyrone had every intention of availing himself.

As in so many of our dealings with Ireland, the English govern-

ment appears to have started with really beneficent intentions, according to its own lights. The cautious Henry VII had pursued a policy not dissimilar to that often advocated nowadays for dealing with the Irish trouble. He left the greater part of the island to itself, and concentrated his forces and government on the "bridge-head" or Pale round Dublin. Henry VIII had, for some time, proceeded on these lines, and adopted what seemed the sensible expedient of governing Ireland by means of the great Anglo-Irish house of Fitzgerald. This had a modified success, despite the tendency of the Fitzgeralds to use their power to the disadvantage of rival families. But it became impossible when, at the crisis of the Reformation, the Fitzgerald Earl of Desmond was found to be carrying on a promising intrigue with the Emperor to transfer his allegiance, all of which was as much a part of the family game as had been Dermot's calling in of Strongbow. This was followed by the detention of the Lord Deputy, and a desperate rebellion of his son on the report, ingeniously concocted by the rival family of Butler, of the father's execution. It was evident that Henry must, for his own safety, bring Ireland under some sort of government.

His intentions appear to have been of the best. If monasteries were confiscated, it was no more than was done in England, and the Irish Church at this time showed even less signs of life than the English. A commission was appointed to make careful enquiry into the facts before proceeding to action, and the man whom Henry appointed to carry out the policy finally decided upon, Sir Anthony St. Leger, was a tolerant and, for that age, broad-minded man. Henry accepted from the Irish Parliament the title of King of Ireland, and proceeded to inaugurate the new regime by a carefully thought out scheme of conciliation. Nothing could have been more plausible than his intention of confirming the ruling houses in possession of their lands by sound feudal titles, and making them loyal subjects by conferring honours upon them. Nothing, we say, could have been more plausible and nothing more successful in appearance, for the chiefs submitted themselves, renounced the Pope and gave their allegiance to Henry and his policy with all the apparent goodwill in the world.

Unfortunately this scheme fell under the curse of all English schemes to conciliate Ireland. England meant well, but she did not understand Ireland, she never even dreamed of the necessity of understanding her. She meant to be kind and just, but it was kindness and justice towards a people whom she regarded it as her

mission to redeem from their native savagery. That the forcing of feudal tenure on the chiefs was flying in the face of the ancient tribal law was not likely to be appreciated by men to whom that law was "a damnable law that is no law, hateful to God and man." The policy of conciliating the Irish went along with a foolish attempt to civilize the Irish, which meant turning Irishmen into Englishmen. The chief of the O'Neills, for instance, when he was made Earl of Tyrone, was expected to renounce his family name and to enforce the English language upon his dependents. Vexatious and utterly ineffective legislation was passed insulting the Irish by proscribing their language, customs and dress.

We shall not attempt to follow in detail the results of this policy, how first one and then another chieftain was in revolt, and how the English government, never knowing whom to trust nor where the next rebellion might start, gradually lost its patience and temper and passed from conciliation to the extremity of violence and cruelty. It is a story on which neither Englishmen nor Irishmen can look back with pride. Not even patriotism can make anything but a thorough-paced scoundrel of such a leader as Shane O'Neill, or can find so much to admire in the disconnected efforts of men who were fighting more for their own hands than their country's cause, and who, if they had succeeded in driving out the English, would certainly have been at each other's throats with an equal ferocity. Mrs. Green, whose work in revealing the true greatness of Irish civilization cannot be overpraised, but who is frankly a partisan, quotes an Irish poem of this time that reveals only too sadly what was the real cause of Ireland's undoing, the fact that Ireland to herself did not rest true :

> "The race of the O'Briens of Banba under Morrough,
> Their covenant is with the King of England,
> They have turned, and sad is the deed,
> Their back on the inheritance of their fathers,"

and so on through the mournful catalogue of the faithlessness of Irishmen to Ireland. A terrible discipline was needed, the most terrible, almost, a people has ever had to undergo, to bring Ireland into effective unity as a nation.

As if it were not enough for the English government to be faced with unceasing tribal rebellion, a new menace was imported from abroad. The Counter Reformation put out its tentacles as far as what was henceforth, and for the first time, to be in a true sense the Pope's Green Island. Jesuit missionaries, who took their lives in their hands, began to arrive at the very time when the contempt

for Irish susceptibilities displayed by the official Protestant Church made the Roman faith a symbol of the resistance to the foreigner. Irishmen were united, in a way they never had been before, by the religious bond. It is significant that when the "Tower" or "Queen's" Earl of Desmond was, in 1600, taken out of the captivity in which he had been reared, and presented to his people, all went well until he went to the Protestant Church, when the acclamations turned to hooting. The faith of Rome had become the symbol of loyalty in Ireland.

It must be remembered that England was, at this time, a small nation standing alone not only against a vast empire, but against the whole force of the Counter Reformation that threatened to sweep Europe. She was fighting desperately for her life, and it seemed as if the chances must be against her—there is, among the Cecil papers, a document written two or three years after the Armada by an English Catholic in which the opinion is expressed that England must be beaten in the long run by the mere vastness of Philip's resources. Philip was behind the Jesuit attempts to convert Ireland, he was in league with every rebel. More than once Spanish troops were actually landed in Ireland. The Irish were glad enough of such assistance, though when the Spaniards were bottom dog, and driven ashore by the storms that scattered the Armada, they displayed not the slightest hesitation in murdering and plundering all they could catch. Ireland was certainly the most vulnerable point in England's defences, and if Philip had only displayed a little more energy or insight, might have been the grave of her independence.

This may go far to explain, though not to justify, the desperate severity of England's methods. Conciliation, so it must have seemed, had been tried and failed. No one, from Spenser downwards, doubted that we were dealing with heretics and savages, for whom firm government, and the firmer the better, was the only cure. The war that blazed out, now in this part of the land, now in that, assumed a more and more horrible character. Irish civilization was treated, in the best of conscience, as an evil thing to be rooted out by any means. War was waged on Irish commerce, on Irish education, on Irish speech, and on Irish minstrelsy. The wearing of the native frieze shirt constituted a crime. In harmony with Spenser's cold-blooded advice, the method was adopted of starving the "wild Irish" out of existence; dreadful pictures have been drawn of the poor wretches crawling forth on their hands and knees,

and flocking to any clump of watercress as to a feast. The English commanders were men who did not know mercy; even the Spaniards of the Armada who fell into English hands were butchered without remorse. What is worse, these representatives of England were more than once ready so far to compromise the honour of their country as to resort to deliberate lying and treachery in order to get rid of inconvenient opponents.

A new element was introduced into the struggle that is symptomatic not only of the individualism that marked Elizabeth's reign, but also of the progress made by the capitalist spirit. The system of plantations was started, by which confiscated Irish land was conferred on English adventurers, who therefore assumed an interest in defending it. A new and unhappily lasting element was now introduced into the distressful history of Ireland, that of the alien landlord. Whenever the tide of rebellion swept over any part of the land, the people naturally murdered the intruders and gutted their houses. Such a fate overtook Spenser's house, and though the poet himself escaped, part of the *Faerie Queene* was destroyed.

On the whole, the English conducted the struggle with ability and courage. There were certainly mistakes and blunders, and there were times when the Irish, if they had only been capable of proper combination, might have won. Had, for instance, the Ulster chiefs came promptly to the aid of Desmond's rebellion, or Tyrone marched on Dublin after his victory over Sir Henry Bagenal near Armagh, the tale of Robert Bruce might have been repeated in Ireland. But the Irish were not like the Lowland Scots, with their Northumbrian leaven, who made Bruce's efforts effective. The end came when Elizabeth appointed, as the successor to the incompetent Earl of Essex, an able and ruthless soldier in the person of Lord Mountjoy, who, by a system of fortified posts similar in principle to Kitchener's blockhouses in South Africa, at length made the conquest of Ireland a reality it had never been before. But the hatred of England was now deeply planted, along with the love of Rome, in the hearts of Irishmen. With these unconquered, England's task was yet to be performed.

CHAPTER IV

DIVINE RIGHT

1

What the Elizabethans Lacked

So complete was the success of the Elizabethans in what they set out to do, so dazzling their triumph over the leagued forces of the Counter Reformation, so harmoniously did they celebrate the joy, the variety and the splendour of living, that we are apt to forget the heights to which they never even aspired to soar, the depths of character that they had no plummet to sound. And without abating one jot of thankfulness or praise for these our fathers of a sweet and victorious England, it behoves us, who would understand the meaning and even the necessity of what followed, to realize just in what this incompleteness consisted.

It is said that it was Elizabeth who induced Shakespeare to violate his artistic conscience by depicting Falstaff in love. Critics may prove to their repeated satisfaction the Philistine nature of this request, but the result was an immortally funny play, and if Her Majesty had any hand in providing us with the spectacle of Sir John in the buck-basket, we ought to be duly grateful. But can we imagine Shakespeare being set the task of depicting St. Francis, or Elijah, or Prometheus? It is hard to imagine him depicting a saint or even a very convincing fanatic, and when he has to present a hero, it is on his weakness and not on his strength that he prefers to dwell. His Caesar is, contrary to the almost universal opinion of modern critics, a subtle and sympathetic study, but it is the study of a hero who has come to take his own heroism for granted, to trust in his star and, in undergraduate parlance, get above himself. The nearest approach to a hero in his strength is Henry V, and, great as he is, he is not altogether so convincing as Macbeth or Hamlet or his old friend Falstaff. The glory of Shakespeare is in his tender and all-embracing humanity; his weakness consists in his being all too human.

In Spenser, who was mildly inclined towards Puritanism and whose masterpiece was as deliberately a moral allegory as Bunyan's, we certainly find an advance upon the frivolous and cynical Ariosto, the child of an Italy already politically and spiritually enslaved, and who, in point of technique, provided Spenser with much of his inspiration. Una with her lamb, the angels like flying pursuivants hastening to our succour, the temperate Guyon, the courteous Calidore, all these are the lovely and pleasant creations of a noble mind, but they miss the deadly earnestness of the tinker's dream. Making every allowance for the pageantry and *joie de vivre* with which Elizabethan thought naturally clothed itself, there is a profound difference of spiritual quality between

"A gentle knight was pricking on the plain"

and "I dreamed and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hands and a great burden on his back. I looked and saw him open the book and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, what shall I do?"

Elizabethan love, even when clothed with strange forms and conceits, is at heart as simple and as little introspective as the spring songs of birds. In this, as in every other human concern, it is dangerous to generalize absolutely, and some of Shakespeare's sonnets may be cited as conspicuous exceptions to the rule, but it is seldom that Elizabethan poets attain such a concentrated passion or one so charged with thought as, for instance, Browning's invocation to his dead wife or the best of Shelley's lyrics. So it is, too, in Elizabethan painting; Hilliard is graceful and decorative to the highest degree, but he does not tear the very soul out of his sitter, as Rembrandt was to do. Nor, even allowing for the difference of instrumental resources, can it be claimed that Elizabethan music, for all its interlaced sweetness, has quite the height or the depth of Bach and Beethoven. Life was, to the Elizabethan, like the ocean on which he was beginning to assert his mastery; he knew all the changing hues of her face, all the storms that roused her to madness, she had borne him to Eldorados in the West and to spice and coral islands in the East, but he neither cared nor dreamed of the dark and stormless depths far beneath the keel.

Elizabeth was no goddess nor the Elizabethans supermen; it is only to admit them human to say that with so much done they left much yet to do. It was enough for Elizabeth to unite the nation

in the face of the enemy, to give it a wise and efficient government, and to get that government obeyed. It was no time for ideal solutions. The religious compromise on which she took her stand may not have been logical, but it worked. To produce a union of hearts and conviction was beyond the power even of a Gloriana, but it was at least possible to insist upon a standard of external conformity, and to strike down anyone who embarrassed the nation so far as to call that standard in question.

Though it was religion that set Europe ablaze, few governments have been swayed to so small an extent by religious motives as that of which Burleigh and Walsingham were the guiding spirits, few Churches have been so respectably Laodicean as that presided over by the worthy Archbishop Parker. It concerned them far less that wine could not be changed to blood than that raw English wool could be made into fine cloth without going to Flanders. Elizabeth's own views on the Sacrament are contained in that famous hedging rhyme:

> "He was the Word that spake it,
> He took the bread and brake it,
> And what that Word did make it,
> I do believe and take it."

To set their Church agog with spiritual excitement and fervour was the last thing that either Elizabeth or Parker wanted to do. Any tendency to exuberant and possibly subversive eloquence on the part of the clergy was damped effectually enough by providing them with a selection of official homilies of formidable length and unexceptionable dullness, and when a controversy rose about wearing surplices, the Archbishop procured a reverend gentleman kindly to stand as mannequin, in order that there might be no doubt at all what was the correct uniform for a parson to wear during service.

This policy of external conformity was defensible, and in fact succeeded as a temporary expedient in a time of crisis, but in the long run it was doomed to failure. The Reformation had let loose spirits that the royal authority could not bind. Men had not escaped from the Egyptian bondage of Rome to make their abode in the wilderness; nothing less than the Promised Land would satisfy them, nothing less than the glorious liberty of the sons of God. They wished the soul to stand naked in the presence of its Saviour, without any intermediary When they saw the old hierarchy and the old vestments of Rome retained in a modified form by the Church of England, devout Protestants began to think that the work of Reformation was only half completed. This was a state of mind

of which Elizabeth and Burleigh realized little and cared less. For their part they had other things to think about than getting right with God. And while the Spanish menace lasted, they had behind them the enthusiastic loyalty of most Englishmen.

The first stirrings of Puritanism, as we may call the whole movement to carry the Reformation to a more logical conclusion than that inculcated by the Church of England, were of somewhat divergent and uncertain tendency. Englishmen, even when they are trying to be logical, do not take to it readily. The first considerable Protestant murmuring was against the wearing of surplices, the filthy garments of Antichrist, as it seemed to the zealots, the harmless courtesy, as it must have seemed to Parker, that God's minister owes to God on coming into His house. Then there was the movement backed by Archbishop Grindal at the cost of his suspension, for quickening spiritual life among the clergy by "prophesyings", or meetings for the purpose of practising the art of preaching. This was a breach of discipline, a way round the Book of Homilies, and it was better that parsons should be as dull as their sermons than they should get out of hand by becoming dangerously interesting.

It was about the time of the Armada that the revolt against the Church took formidable shape in a series of coarse and slashing attacks on the Bishops by an author who took the significant *nom de plume* of Martin Marprelate. This had the not unnatural, if unchristian effect of imparting a vindictive tinge to the already stern determination of these prelates to uphold their authority. This, it must be noted, was a political and not primarily a religious attitude. At this time the Church had by no means made up her own mind how far she meant to go with Calvin in matters of faith and doctrine. Grindal's successor, Archbishop Whitgift, an able but narrow martinet, was, to put it in modern terms, an extreme Low Churchman as regards doctrine and an equally extreme High Churchman as regards discipline. The authorities were determined to stand no nonsense; legislation was stiffened up; Puritans as well as Catholics made acquaintance with the rope and quartering block.

This repression had some effect in masking the symptoms of revolt, but it was worse than useless as a means for eradicating it. Its effect was to make it more irreconcilable. Hitherto there had been nothing like a fixed and definite Puritan movement, or even any general determination to break with the Church. Most Puritans hoped, up to the time of the Hampton Court Conference on the

accession of James I, to carry the Church along with them. But already at the end of Elizabeth's reign two definite streams of tendency had begun to show themselves, the Presbyterian, under Cartwright, who so far abated his vehemence as to be allowed to end his days in peace and honour at Warwick, and the Independent or Congregational, at this time called Brownist, after a leader who finally gave up kicking against the Anglican pricks and accepted an Anglican benefice. The point of difference was that the Presbyterians wished to substitute for the sovereignty of a despotically organized Church that of a democratically elected Kirk, organized in a hierarchy of assemblies or ecclesiastical soviets, as in Scotland, but the Independents went further still in accepting the absolute spiritual sovereignty of each congregation, much in accordance with the practice of the Primitive Church.

These differences are, after all, comparatively unimportant. What the Puritans were really aiming at was a change of spirit, affecting the whole of national life. Instinctively they felt that the Elizabethan compromise had failed to convert or discipline the heart of the nation, however splendid its effects might be to the outward eye. They were aiming, though they did not realize it, at that defect which too often blurred the distinction between a patriot and a pirate, which paralysed our counter-offensive against Spain, which caused our prose to sprawl and lose itself in the maze of its own conceits, which limited the genius even of a Shakespeare and made Bacon, the brightest philosopher of his age, also the meanest of mankind. What should it profit England to gain, if it might be, the whole world and lose her own soul? It was to the soul that the Puritans addressed their message.

There was a feature of the Puritan movement that made its progress of ominous import to the government. It was, in theory and spirit, Radical, it harked back to Calvin and not to Luther in its attitude to constituted authority. Every religion, even the despotically organized Roman Catholicism, will find excellent reasons for opposing heretic or persecuting rulers, but it is the very nature of Protestantism to protest, it is a short cry from democracy in the Church to democracy in the State. Nor was example wanting to confirm theory. Only across the Tweed, Englishmen had the spectacle of the Calvinist system in full working order and the King treated as the slave of the Kirk by men like Melville and Buchanan. Of even greater importance was coming to be the influence of Calvinist Holland, that loose federation of burgher oligarchies with the

Stadtholder the mere official of the States. It was thither that the Puritan leaders and flocks retired when things became too hot at home; there grew up English Non-conforming communities, and thence set forth the Pilgrim Fathers. Add to this the training in the extreme forms of Protestantism that exiles from our shores had acquired in Mary's day, and the influence of swarms of Huguenots and Netherlanders who found refuge and a permanent home in England throughout the reign of Elizabeth.

Already in the full blaze of Elizabeth's glory, might have been heard the first murmurs of the storm that was to burst upon the monarchy and overwhelm the next but one of her successors. One preacher, fired by the example of kindred spirits in Scotland, had the audacity to denounce the Queen to her face from the pulpit, as "an untamed heifer, that would not be ruled by God's people, but obstructed His discipline." Despite every effort to preserve her independence of Parliament by a rigid economy, Elizabeth's relations with her Commons were marked by increasing friction, which was only prevented from culminating in an explosion by her extraordinary tact over the grievance of monopolies. Audacious speech was heard within the precincts of Westminster Palace, one member, called Peter Wentworth, a sturdy gospeller, bluntly asserting that the law is above the Queen, and that it is dangerous for her to oppose herself to her people. "Nay! I will discharge my conscience and my duties to God, my prince and country. So certain it is, Mr. Speaker, that none is without fault, no, not our noble Queen, sith her Majesty hath committed great fault, yea, dangerous faults to herself."

The very hour of Elizabeth's triumph, when God blew with his winds and scattered the Armada, struck, if she had only known it, the knell of her system. The danger from the Counter Reformation had called that system into being, the threat of invasion and slavery had united the nation in its support; now that it had succeeded so far beyond expectation the need for it was withdrawn. The preservation of the State was no longer the absorbing interest; men had time to look about them and think a little of their souls, and of harvesting the full fruit of the Reformation. They no longer only asked whether the government would be able to preserve their liberties against Spain, but also whether Englishmen could maintain their liberties against the government. And to make matters worse, Elizabeth was now committed to what she had bent all her Tudor ingenuity to avoid, a national war, for which some money, at any rate,

would be required. It is a pathetic sight to watch the splendid old Queen gradually losing touch with her subjects, finding herself lonely and a stranger in the midst of a people that had grown up around her, without sympathy or understanding for the worldly ideal she had inherited from the Renaissance. There were some—such is human gratitude—who actually welcomed her death.

2

The Kingcraft of Solomon

The peaceful accession of James, the sixth of Scotland and first of England, on Elizabeth's death, to the rule of the whole British Isles, was the greatest triumph of policy ever achieved by an English statesman, but the brain in which it had been conceived had been lifeless for nearly a century. What Henry VIII and Somerset, no less than the first and third Edwards, and before them the Emperor Severus and the Governor Agricola, had wasted blood and treasure untold in attempting, had been achieved by the far-seeing diplomacy of Henry VII, who predicted that even if the effect of his daughter's marriage were to give the English throne to a Scottish King, the greater must inevitably draw the less. Nothing, however, could have more assuaged the intense Scottish patriotism than the fact that it was their own Stuart Dynasty that had made a peaceful conquest of England. The English union with Scotland, which was to wait another century for its full consummation, was, in fact, as classic an instance of how nations should come together, as the conquest of Ireland is an instance to the contrary.

Once she was in her grave, the system of life and polity for which Elizabeth had stood began to show unmistakable signs of having outlived its usefulness. It is doubtful whether even she could have maintained its glory undimmed, and her successor was a sovereign immeasurably her inferior for all practical purposes. James was, indeed, far from being the fool he is sometimes depicted. He was not only a scholar and man of letters, but had shown a capacity for preserving his life and interests upon that *siege perilous*, the Scottish throne, which might have aroused the envy of his mother and his five namesakes who had gone before him. To understand the man, his ability and his failures, it is necessary to regard him not as if he had dropped from the Northern clouds on the death of Elizabeth, but as a hard-bitten and experienced King who must

have considered that what he did not know of the technique and seamy side of his business was not worth knowing.

Few men, who were not Kings of Scotland, have been confronted with a task so thankless and so difficult as that to which James grew up, and which he accomplished with so large a measure of temporary success. The Scottish nobles were as disloyal as they had been in the time of Sir Robert Graeme, and instead of the disreputable but subservient Church of the earlier Stuarts, there was now the terrible democracy of the Kirk to be reckoned with. Between this Scylla and Charybdis the unfortunate King had to steer the best course he could. The best possible was a series of violent zigzags. Seldom had a King been treated with so little respect for his office. If he accepted the hospitality of one of his nobles, there was a fair chance that his host might turn out to be his jailer or even his murderer. Twice he was held a prisoner, and the country seethed with plots to get hold of him in order to use, banish, or make away with him.

As for the preachers, nothing less than tyranny over the bodies and souls of the King and his subjects would satisfy them. They went to the utmost lengths of revolutionary theory and practice. Any minister who liked to get up into the pulpit and pour out his venom against the civil authority constituted himself the speaking trumpet of the Holy Ghost, and to take exception to him was the unforgivable sin. Even when the King's mother was lying under sentence of death at Fotheringay, one of these inspired saints dared force his way into the pulpit in order to denounce to James's face his very modest request that prayer should be offered for her safety as well as her conversion. On another occasion, when James was so far provoked as to tell the preacher either to talk sense or sit down, "I tell thee man," was the answer, "I will neither talk sense nor sit down." Andrew Melville, the successor of Knox in the Kirk's fighting leadership, on one famous occasion caught hold of his sovereign's sleeve and called him God's silly vassal. George Buchanan, James's tutor, published a book on the relations of the King with his subjects, which not only reduced the King to practical impotence, but gave his subjects the right to kill him if he misbehaved.

The result of this severe apprenticeship in the art of governing is easily discernible in James's career and disposition. He became one of the most cunning and skilful of practitioners in the art of playing off men against each other. Neither preachers nor nobles were able to get the better of him in the long run. He would agree

with anybody or yield to anything, but he generally succeeded, by crooked ways or straight, in making his will prevail. At the time he came to the English throne, he was as firm in the saddle as any King of Scotland could aspire to be. He had even succeeded in saddling the Kirk with a hierarchy of bishops, and he was generally sensible enough to see that the strength of Calvinism was in its lowest units, the congregations and presbyteries, and that it was safest to attack it at the top and in its central organization. It was easier to muzzle a general assembly than to force insignificant changes of ceremonial on a parish kirk. The Articles of Perth which in his old age he tried to impose on the Kirk were a lapse from this wise policy, a lapse in which he was fatally imitated by his son.

Unfortunately, this genius for self-preservation was not the only result of James's early troubles. It is only too probable that the lack of respect and even the violence that he everywhere encountered were the cause of his own lack of respect for himself. Never was a King so grotesquely unkingly. He was a buffoon in purple. He once publicly enjoined his subjects not to think of him as an irresolute ass; at one critical moment in his dealings with the English Parliament, he likened them to a cow trying to cut off her own tail, the cow's tail being his own Sacred Majesty. The Spanish ambassador bullied him and the Duke of Buckingham patronized him in a way that might have made Elizabeth rise from her grave. In his court he was as ridiculous a figure as any old buffer of the lowest comedy. The fact that he had never known either of his parents, and the unsympathetic atmosphere of his upbringing, gave him an almost pathetic craving to be mothered, or rather fathered, that accounts for the ascendancy that a certain virile and confident type of man was able to gain over him, a weakness readily understandable in the light of modern psychology.

But the iron that had entered into his soul gave him a hatred almost physical of the things that had embittered his adolescence. His dislike of the whole atmosphere of Elizabethan adventure, his persecution of Raleigh, were no doubt due to unconscious memories of the proud and full-blooded nobles who had made his life wretched in old days, the Gowries and Bothwells. The benediction on peacemakers was one that he echoed from his heart; he had a dislike of rough men and rough ways, he leaned to finesse, and may almost be styled the father of modern political corruption. Above all things he hated those stern and austere men who were in the habit of comparing him to Ahab, Herod, and Jeroboam, his consort to

Herodias, and his favourites to Haman. Try as he would to be fair, he destested the whole atmosphere of Calvinism, except in so far as it acknowledged the royal supremacy in Church matters. It is thus that he professed to arbitrate between Churchman and Puritan at the conference, on the opening of his reign, at Hampton Court: "How they (the Scottish Presbyterians) used the poor lady my mother is well known, and how they dealt with me in my minority. . . . If once you were out and they in, I know what would become of my supremacy; for, 'No bishop, no king.'"

He had been so snubbed and his power so belittled that he had come, by a natural reaction, to exalt his office in theory as much as he demeaned it in practice. Even when he was maundering about the cow and her tail, he exalted himself to nothing less than godhead. "The state of monarchy," he wrote for his son's benefit, "is the supremest thing on earth; for Kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth and sit upon God's throne, but even by God Himself they are called gods." Despite all the inconveniences of Scottish monarchy, this was in perfect harmony with the principles of that Roman law that Scotland had adopted for her own. James was, in his own eyes, the divine Caesar; it was treason, he held, to suggest that he was subject to the law. The English Common Law, whose spirit is that of the English Constitution, he did not understand and could not sympathize with. When he left his turbulent Northern realm, with its sermons and mutinies, for the safe and splendid court and the loyal Church of England, he must have thought he had found a veritable King's paradise. It never occurred to him that he was entering an atmosphere less favourable, in some respects, to monarchial pretensions than that which he had left. On his way to London he did a very simple and natural thing, but one which Elizabeth, at the height of her glory, would not have dared to do. At Newark, a common thief was caught among the crowd of sightseers. James had that thief strung up out of hand, and thereby started the monarchy on an inclined plane that led to another execution in front of the palace at Whitehall.

His theory and consequent practice of government followed from his upbringing and limitations. The art of governing a people was a matter mainly of technique and finesse; it was, to use James's own expression, "Kingcraft." Foreign powers as well as one's own subjects were like pawns on a chessboard or pieces to be fitted into a puzzle. The divine monarch was, or ought to be, a specialist in his business, and as such, allowed a free hand, reasonable funds,

and the appointment of his own staff. And of kingcraft, thus conceived, James was no contemptible exponent. If, on the subject of witches, his views were as detestable as those of the Kirk itself, in other ways he was even in advance of his age. He pressed on the beneficent project of a union between his two kingdoms. He was naturally tolerant and preferred argument to force, though when he was crossed he could display a donnish partisanship which once even extended to the kicking of a recalcitrant Anabaptist. He had also the honourable ambition of being a Prince of Peace. The Elizabethan jingoes who, on grounds partly religious and partly acquisitive, wanted to continue *à outrance* what was now an unnecessary and demoralizing war with Spain, were given to understand that the days of licensed freebooting were over, except for those of them who found the Barbary Deys more congenial masters than the King of England. That James had grasped at least one secret of the Tudors is shown by a passage in Hacket's *Life of Archbishop Williams*, in which his reason for refusing to be drawn into a war with Spain is given as the very shrewd one that it would make him dependent on Parliament, who would want to change the Church, the laws, the court, and the ministers.

However insufficient James's idea of a King's duties may have been, he could at least claim to be supported in it by the wisest statesman of his time, and one of the wisest men of all time, Francis Bacon. For Bacon and his master were at one with Machiavelli in regarding kingcraft as the technique of managing men, according to principles applicable to all civilized communities, and capable of being discovered by induction from history. It is only because Bacon's intellect was more considerable than that of James that the observations of his essays are of abiding interest, while those of the King's *Basilicon Doron*, though the best exposition of the political art written by any English sovereign except Alfred, are practically forgotten. And yet, in certain directions, James shows the more enlightened spirit of the two. For where the King was peaceful, the minister was a very Bernhardi for militarism. "For Empire and greatness," says Bacon, in discoursing of the true greatness of kingdoms, "it importeth most that a nation do possess arms as their principal honour, study, and occupation." Nietzsche himself could have said no more for the good war, that sanctifies every cause, than Bacon, who compares civil war to the heat of a fever, but foreign war to the heat of exercise, that keeps the body politic in good condition. He counsels states to have "laws and customs,

which may reach forth unto them just occasions, *as may be pretended*, for war."

As far as the technique of kingcraft was concerned, Bacon must be acknowledged a past master. He was wise enough to see that increase in territory can just as easily do harm as good, and that its advisability depends on the circumstances of each particular case. But as for England, he shows, with prophetic intuition, how every circumstance combines to render her ripe for expansion; geographically, the sea safeguards her from invasion—and Bacon was never tired of impressing upon Englishmen the importance of its command—the prowess of her people renders them capable of holding far more territory than they at present possess, the nucleus of her prospective Empire is larger than either Macedon or Rome, in short, "here is potentially body enough for Nabuchodonosor's tree, if God shou'd have so ordained."

And yet, for all his vision of her Empire, Bacon had hardly any at all of England herself, what she stood for, what was in her heart and trying to find expression. His idea of statesmanship was not organic but mechanical; he regarded men as if they were calculable units, capable of being managed by experts. His New Atlantis, his ideal commonwealth, though we do not know the details of its government, had not arisen, like a Gothic cathedral, to express the people's will, but by the contrivance of one wise legislator, a super-craftsman in politics.

To deny to a man like Bacon, who not only served England as faithfully as his own petty selfishness allowed him, but foresaw with startling accuracy the possibility of her world empire, the title of patriot, might seem paradoxical. And yet nothing can be more certain than that he was never a patriot in the sense of Shakespeare or even of Elizabeth. His was a measured and calculating love, and therefore a love without vision. He utterly failed to understand what England was and therefore how she was to be managed. He was a lawyer, and yet at variance with the spirit of English law, which it was his constant effort to bend to the exaltation of the prerogative. What idea he had of liberty or of the rights of the individual is shown by the way in which he personally supervised the torture of a poor old clergyman called Peacham, whose sole offence was that he had written an unpublished sermon supposed to be of a disloyal tendency. It is not surprising that in domestic politics he could descend from the methods of the statesman to those of the wirepuller. He flattered his master into a false security, because

he himself could not discern the signs of the time. On the eve of James's second and most mutinous Parliament, he complacently informed him that the opposition would be much weaker than in the first, on account of various leaders, whom he specified, having been nobbled in one way or another. In 1618 he celebrated New Year's Day by a fulsome panegyric of James's government, which might almost have been written of the New Atlantis itself. And Bacon was right about the country advancing in material prosperity, but wrong in failing to perceive that the life is more than meat.

He may in a sense be called a statesman of the Tudor tradition. He believed in a state with a strong monarchy and a prosperous people, each observing his due place and fulfilling his duty therein. His ideal monarch was the cool-headed and cold-hearted Henry VII. But he missed the practical and implied democracy or, to put it more accurately, Englishry, which tempered the most autocratic proceedings of Henry VIII and Elizabeth. He leaned towards the Continental theories of sovereignty which had found an exponent of genius in the Frenchman, Jean Bodin, and which subordinated all rights and liberties to the authority of a strong central government. Elizabeth and her father may have been autocratic in many of their proceedings, but they were English enough not to be very logical or consistent about it. James and Bacon were fatally logical, James because he was a Scot, and Bacon because he was a philosopher, or because the kingdom on which his heart was set was one of mankind armed with reason and establishing an empire, such as the world had never yet seen, over recalcitrant nature. In his soul he was a citizen of a New Atlantis become world-wide, and only the baser part of his strangely complex nature was at the service of his natural country. That may partly explain the paradox of his greatness as a philosopher and his comparative failure to appreciate the political problems of his own day. His mind's eye, if we may so put it, was long-sighted.

3

The Liberation of Science

We look back over the years when James I was King, and think of them as a period of constitutional struggle or, if we enlarge our view, we see the curtain rung up on the most terrible of all European wars, or perhaps we are attracted by such coloured and tragic spectacles as that of Guy Fawkes standing to his post in the cellar,

knowing, almost to a certainty, that the game was up, or of Raleigh's little squadron seen like specks upon the waste of the Atlantic, that sea whiff, between dungeon and death, of the old buccaneering freedom. And doubtless these things, as the song says of gunpowder treason, should never be forgot, but deeper than all of them was a process so silent and intangible that it made no noise in the controversies of the time and has scarcely found its way into history. This was nothing less than the gradual entering of man into his lordship over nature, which, whether it lead to paradise on earth or universal suicide, is a fact of incomparable significance.

The Renaissance had started mankind on a new quest for freedom and power, which was paid for by a continual lowering of man's dignity in the sense that from imagining himself the centre and his mind the arbiter of the universe, he came, with every fresh conquest, to a fresh discovery of the insignificance of himself and his planet in the scheme of things. "I stoop to conquer," might be the watchword of advancing humanity. But this conquest of nature through humility was to be slow beyond the imagining of the first humanists. They talked of bursting bonds when it was frequently a question of exchanging one bondage for another, or as if a prisoner should burst the door of his cell only to find himself in the locked corridor of the prison. So it was with those who invoked the classics as an escape from the dogmas of the Church.

When the main interest of life shifted from heaven to the temporal universe and men began to look about them, they were, in every direction, hampered by authority. Though Plato had come to rival Aristotle in esteem, Aristotle still exercised such an authority, both as a thinker and a scientist, that investigators of the Renaissance were more inclined to study "the Philosopher" than nature. This was doubly unfortunate, because Aristotle, though he had been an indefatigable collector of facts, considered it incumbent on him to fit these into the prepared framework of his philosophy, and instead of letting nature speak for herself had applied to her works a standard of value born in his own mind. In medicine the common assumption was that Galen and Hippocrates had spoken the last word, and all that remained to do was to interpret them. Similarly astronomy was painfully strugging to free herself from the shackles forged by the Alexandrian Ptolemy, who had made the Earth the centre of the universe.

Two tasks, therefore, had to be performed by the scientists of the dawning age. The first was negative and consisted in releasing

inquiry from the bias imparted by authority of any sort, the second was positive, and consisted in going constantly, impartially and, as we might say, innocently to the facts. This was, in the very nature of things, the work of no one nation, but it was obvious that some nations were better situated by temperament and polity than others for being in the van of progress. Wherever the Counter Reformation extended its sway, a blight descended upon scientific freedom. Now that Rome had once again become pious and combative, her natural tendency to assert and enforce authority came into play. What was new was probably heretical and certainly unsettling. When Copernicus made the earth go round the sun he was showing the same tactless disregard for the account of creation in Genesis that Darwin was to do later. The Church was only displaying a motherly care for her children's faith by putting the sun and Copernicus into their places. When Galileo added to Copernicus's indiscretion the further enormity of constructing a telescope to discover things that the Church had forbidden to exist, it was only natural that before dealing with him by the methods of the Holy Office, a sermon should be preached to the punning text, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into heaven?" Why indeed? Whatever there was worth knowing about Heaven was known to the Church; the rest was not Christian. It is no wonder that the great order of the Jesuits was strict in its cult of Thomas Aquinas, "who taught everything and knew nothing."

England, on the other hand, was in an exceptionally favourable position for the liberation of thought. Her victory over the Counter Reformation had confirmed the work of her best medieval scholars, and there was no danger of a scholastic tyranny at her centres of learning. During Elizabeth's reign, religious motives had been less to the fore than in other countries, and, in consequence, thought was comparatively free to follow temporal things. A spirit of adventure was abroad which sent forth Englishmen on journeys to the uttermost parts of the earth, a spirit in which the desire for fabulous gain was blended with the sheer longing to penetrate into the unknown. But the unknown was not confined to the shores of distant oceans; it was all around, it was in every man's body and mind, and the spirit that hammered at the icy doors of the North West Passage could be turned, more profitably, to the mastery of commonplace and everyday things. We must think of our scientific pioneers, not as cloistered pedants, but as adventurers bound on quests as thrilling as ever excited the ardour of a Drake or a Raleigh.

Of these knights of mankind, the first English name is that of Gilbert, a physician, and son of a prosperous Colchester burgess. By years of indefatigable experiment he established on a firm basis the science of magnetism and adumbrated that of electricity. His task was simplified by his operating in a practically virgin field, and he had not like William Harvey, in the science of physiology, only to discover the truth, but to disencumber it of a weight of time-honoured error. Harvey, of Kentish yeoman stock, was, like Darwin after him, the very pattern of a scientist, and so great was his love of truth that for ten years he refrained from publishing his discovery of the circulation of the blood, in order that he might patiently test and consider it in all its bearings, surely a remarkable application of the text, " prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." It was characteristic of the English mind that its first scientific efforts should be by way of induction and experiment. It is equally characteristic of Scotland that she should have given to the world John Napier, a gentleman of good family born in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and an active member of the General Assembly of the Kirk, who marks an epoch in mathematical development by the invention of logarithms. It is a curious fact about this Napier that he may be said to be the inventor of the Tank, for he is reported to have experimented with a metal chariot, the occupants of which could destroy their enemy by firing through loopholes.

It may perhaps seem remarkable that more of invention, in the usually accepted sense, was not the outcome of this great mental activity. The more closely we examine the records of the time, the more evidences do we see of the spirit which was to bring about the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, and yet no Watt nor Arkwright succeeds in " making good " in the early seventeenth. The conditions were, in fact, not ripe. Machine production on a large scale demands such backing of capital and accessibility of markets as that age could not supply. This idea of the tank was only one of several striking but barren anticipations of modern achievement. In Elizabeth's State Papers we find an inventor submitting the design of an arquebus which, like the modern Lee Enfield, would fire ten shots without reloading. No details are given [1] and it is evident that the Council turned it down with as little remorse as the War Office displayed in rejecting the first offer of the Lewis

[1] There is such an arquebus, together with a very efficient-looking anticipation of the pom-pom, dating from about this period, in the Doge's Palace at Venice.

Gun. But the most remarkable of all Elizabethan inventors was the Reverend William Lee, who invented a stocking frame of which all modern machinery of this kind is only a development. His fate throws much light on the ideas of the time with regard to industrial progress. Elizabeth first refused to grant a patent for his machine because the stockings were too coarsely made for her liking, and then, when Lee succeeded in presenting her with a pair of satisfactory silk ones, it was refused again in the interests of workers in the hosiery trade. Henry IV of France, perceiving what an opportunity Elizabeth had missed, invited Lee and his workers to Rouen, but Henry was murdered and none of his promises were kept to Lee, who died of a broken heart.

We are now in a position to appreciate the decisive importance of Francis Bacon as a liberator of thought. In the work of research and discovery he did, indeed, accomplish nothing that will entitle him to rank as the equal of Gilbert or of Harvey. As a practical scientist it is easy to demonstrate his limitations. His extraordinary fertility of association frequently led him to jump at hasty and unwarrantable conclusions, as when he attributed the greater heat of the summer sun in part to his passing at that time through the neighbourhood of the brighter fixed stars. Liberator as he was, he had by no means shaken himself free from arbitrary and fallacious methods of thought similar to those which he himself criticized in Aristotle; his search for the spirit or tangible essence of bodies is, for example, thoroughly medieval. The very method that he enjoins so eloquently in his *Novum Organum* for the attainment of scientific truth is fundamentally defective, and if carried out consistently would reduce all science to a task of standardized routine, and leave no scope whatever for the imagination. Bacon's idea of an organized division of scientific labour, with some men collecting facts and experimenting, and others abstracting general principles from the results, reads like a nightmare of some employee in Mr. Ford's motor works. Science was to transform the world, in his vision, in a far shorter time and by much simpler methods than the event was to verify. For indeed the progress of science has been on very different lines from those visioned by Bacon. So far from eliminating the imagination, it has shown again and again that the greatest scientist is the greatest poet, in the old, broad Greek sense of the word which is, literally, "maker," and that where there is no vision, science perishes.

It is the most striking refutation of his own theory that Bacon

himself is remembered and honoured not for his edifice of theory, but for the poetry that was in him. "Lord Bacon," says Shelley, surely no mean judge, "was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect. . . . All the authors of revolutions in opinion are . . . necessarily poets as they are inventors." After all, Bacon himself has furnished the best reply to criticisms of his method. "Certainly," he says, "everything will be more ready and better fixed by our precepts. Yet," he hastens to add, "do we not affirm that no addition can be made to them; on the contrary . . . we ought to be persuaded that the art of invention can be made to grow with the inventions themselves."

Bacon may have added little to the store of any particular science; his glory was to have been the prophet and liberator of all science. Those who believe in reincarnation can plausibly conjecture that he was the first great Bacon, the Franciscan Roger, come back to earth to repeat his message to humanity in a happier time. Both of them had the same vision of a world perfected through knowledge; both of them suffered from the same limitation of hasty and improvised methods, from the ambition to compress the task of ages into the span of a lifetime. To both also was attributed, by the instinctive compliment that small minds pay to great ones, the possession of occult and magic powers. Friar Bacon's bronze head, that would tell him whatever he wanted to know, is less incredible than Francis Bacon's supposed feat of writing Hamlet, and in circles where such things are believed he is not only attributed the authorship of Marlowe and Spenser into the bargain, but the foundation of a college of initiates, which he continues to supervise from "the other side".

But in truth there was no hocus-pocus about Bacon's achievement. What he did was to demolish, with a mighty hand, the whole weight of authority that was keeping back the scientific impulse. He did for Aristotle what medieval Oxford and the Reformation had done for the schoolmen, and he sent men from the old masters to study at the feet of the mistress Nature. In contradiction to Aristotle's habit of (so Bacon put it) "dictating to nature", he enjoined the utmost humility, patience, and impartiality in the study of her works. He exposed the fallacies or "idols" of thought that stand between mankind and the truth, and if he was premature in mapping out the route, no man has ever more unerringly given voice to the spirit of the quest. While Calvinists and Catholics and Arminians were clawing and disputing with each other over the precise results of

Adam's fall, Bacon, with calm wisdom, made the whole struggle seem but as one of frogs and mice. "Man," he says, "lost at once his State of Innocence and his Empire over Creation, both of which can be partially recovered even in this life, the first by religion and faith, the second by the arts and sciences."

To sum up his whole message in the space of one short paragraph, there are, he tells us, three species or degrees of ambition. "First, that of men who are anxious to enlarge their power over their country, which is a vulgar and degenerate kind; next, that of men who strive to enlarge the power and empire of their country over mankind, which is more dignified but not less covetous; but if we were to endeavour to renew and enlarge the power and empire of mankind in general over the universe, such ambition (if it may be so termed) is both more sound and more noble than the other two. Now the empire of man over things is founded on the arts and sciences alone, for nature is only to be commanded by obeying her."

4

The Revival of the Common Law

Bacon was, at heart, a citizen of the world and of an Empire that was yet to come, and it is not surprising that he should have failed to comprehend, so well as lesser intellects, the domestic issues at stake in England. His spirit had nothing in common with that of the English Law, with its tangle of illogicalities and its obstinate insistence upon the letter of individual rights. Bacon's instinct was to bring such order as he could into this chaos by codifying it. But it was the very disorder of English Common Law that made it so impenetrable a defence of liberty, or, to put it in the more accurate medieval phrase, liberties, for the Common Law had no conception of liberty in the abstract.

Had those at the head of the government formed on the Tudor model possessed an insight exceeding our own, they would have augured ominously from the revival or resurrection of the Common Law. It had been at its lowest when Cardinal Pole was urging Henry VIII to get rid of it altogether and substitute the perfect system of Rome, when the stream of Law Reports dried up, and when the prerogative courts absorbed more and more of the business of maintaining justice. But Elizabeth's reign had seen a notable revival in this as in other things English. The burning love of England, that had impelled men to search every record of her history and to

revive every legend tending to her glory, was not likely to pass by the most distinctively English thing of all, what more than anything else had made England what she was and was to be. Thomas Smith had found most cause for patriotic pride in the superiority of English to foreign law, and his name is among the first of an unbroken succession of legal luminaries. The search for records and precedents recommenced with more ardour than ever, and, in fact, the first half of the seventeenth century may be said to be the golden age of legal research. The classics of English law, Littleton, Fortescue, Bracton, even the Anglo-Saxon Dooms, were revived and, as Maitland has said, words that rightly or wrongly were ascribed to Bracton rang in Charles's ear when he went to the scaffold.

A reverence for the letter and precedent of the law gives its colour to all the controversy between Crown and Parliament during the reigns of the first two Stuarts, and it was the most fatal weakness of James I that the Roman ideas he had imbibed in his Northern kingdom made him less than most of his English subjects fitted to appreciate the points at issue. He had, indeed, enough native canniness to realize, in a manner that his son never could, when he was up against a tough enough proposition to necessitate his giving way, but prudence is not the same thing as conviction, and James was constantly blundering into some tactless assertion of his real opinions, though he was equally capable of taking a constitutional line when it was pointed out to him by a sufficiently trustworthy authority. A book called *The Interpreter*, which asserted the absolute monarchy of the King over the laws, he caused to be suppressed, under the influence of that inheritor of the Burleigh tradition, the Cecil Earl of Salisbury. But just before this, the King had interfered on behalf of the Church courts against the civil jurisdiction, and as not infrequently happened with him, had lost his temper, and let out his real opinions with the violence of a self-willed monarch putting down his foot. Unfortunately for himself, he had come up against a man in whom, to quote Maitland again, the Common Law had taken flesh, one whom Carlyle had characterized, in one of those phrases that reveal more than a volume by Dryasdust, as " tough old Coke on Littleton ", Edward Coke, then Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.

The duel between King and judge was historic; each was worthy of his cause, which was, in fact, that of Rome against England, of abstract reason against concrete rights, of conscious logic against the stubborn growth of ages. The King protested that he thought

the law was founded on reason, and that the judges were not the only people who possessed it. Coke bluntly replied that the law was the " golden mete-wand and means " for trying the causes of his subjects, and that the King was not learned in the laws of England. This last insinuation was too much for the patience of the royal Solomon, and he blurted out that this was to put him under the law, which it was treason to affirm. Coke, who knew more than James about the English law of treason, was prompt to counter not with argument but with Bracton—the King was under God and the law. It was a vulgar anticlimax when a month or two afterwards the same discussion was resumed with James clenching his fists and apparently about to use them, and the Lord Chief Justice flinging himself, grovelling, on the floor at his sovereign's feet, forgetting perhaps that James could, on occasion, be as ready in controversy with these as with his hands.

It is strange that the man who stood forth as the foremost champion of English constitutional principles, should have been one so unamiable and narrow-minded as this " tough old Coke upon Littleton ". Envious, mercenary, tyrannical, in his domestic relations odious, his life proves him to have been. Even as a lawyer his mind had not the sweep and grasp of Bacon's. As an advocate, he had suffered from the defect of not being able to stick to the main point, nor to keep his temper when crossed. His conduct of the case against Raleigh is a disgusting exhibition of bullying abuse. His famous commentary upon Littleton is almost unintelligible in its lack of arrangement and of guiding principle. Coke's mind luxuriated in a jungle of uncoordinated detail. Under these circumstances it seems almost too daring a paradox to assert that this narrow intelligence and not Bacon's majestic intellect had grasped the root of the matter at issue between the King and his Kingdom. And yet Coke knew what he was about when he wrote in the copy that Bacon sent him of his masterpiece the *Novum Organum* a Latin couplet which, translated, runs, " You propose to restore the documents of the wise men of old, first restore the laws and justice."

Coke appears to be one of those instances in which an institution or profession occupies in the affections that pre-eminence which usually falls to the lot of family or friends. The law was his father and Magna Charta his mother; if he hated his wife and was heartless to his daughter, it was because he was wedded to precedent and because the only children he cared much about were his Institutes. It was the perfect sincerity and single-mindedness of his love that

accounted for the decisive influence which he exercised in shaping the course of events, and for such love as he ever excited, for it is told how, when he left the Court of Common Pleas, not only the bench, but the officers of the court and he himself were in tears. In the eyes of his countrymen he was the law, and everywhere James, in his efforts to get the country governed with rational efficiency, found him in the way. He must have been the most irritating of opponents, for he had no apparent sense of right or wrong, but only of what was or was not the law. The equity jurisdiction of Chancery had been formed to remedy some of the notorious delays and injustices of the Common Law Courts, but this did not matter to Coke; in his eyes the Common Law was the law, no matter how unjust it might be, and the Chancellor might mind his own business, which in Coke's eyes was small enough. He had already in the dramatic controversy we have recorded been at loggerheads with the Church Courts, and thus he led the counter offensive of the reviving Common Law against the prerogative jurisdiction which, in the days of its abeyance, had probably saved it from extinction by taking over its most important functions.

James found Coke as hard to get rid of as the law itself. He might clench his fists till the judge grovelled, but it was not in Coke to give over the championship of his only love. Coke might be kicked upstairs into the King's Bench, but he was soon as much of a nuisance as ever, and when the King, with a great display of anger, reduced his eleven fellow judges to obedience over a case of appointment to livings, all that he could get out of Coke was what Lord Campbell justly describes as the simple and sublime answer that he would do that which an honest and just judge ought to do. Nothing remained for it but to turn Coke off the Bench altogether, but this was no improvement, for he reappeared, more obstinate than ever, as a member of Parliament, in which his great prestige made him the most formidable leader of opposition to the government, and though the Crown could once jockey him out of a seat by pricking him for a sheriff, this was but a temporary expedient. Coke lived on into the reign of the next King, Charles, who had once thought him a charming and witty old gentleman, but who must have revised his judgment when he found Coke the very soul of that opposition which was driving him to the choice between absolute government and surrender. It was he who was mainly responsible for formulating and forcing on the King the definition of the Parliamentary case embodied in the Petition of Right. "Magna Charta," he said in

debate on this subject, "is such a fellow that he will have no sovereign."

To understand Coke's position is, then, to have the key to the great constitutional struggle that culminated in the Civil War. He was the living embodiment of the Common Law and, up to the meeting of the Long Parliament, it was to the law that both parties appealed. The Petition of Right did not set out to be new legislation, but, as Coke plainly saw, an affirmation of the principles of Magna Charta, which itself had been no more than a statement, partial enough, of an already established law. Even the most subservient of the King's judges merely sought to establish a weight of precedent on the royal side, and the King himself, Charles especially, was scrupulous to keep within the letter of the law. Perhaps Maitland is too harsh in his opinion that the fact of the Stuarts uniting against themselves such legal authorities as Coke, Selden, and Prynne is a measure of their folly and failure. It is certainly a measure of their failure, but whether, short of the actual surrender of the royal prerogative, sovereignty and the Common Law could have agreed together, must remain a matter of doubtful speculation. But certain it is that if this reconciliation had been by any means possible, the Stuarts had neither the tact nor the sympathy with their subjects to accomplish it.

The Common Law took no account of national efficiency nor of the ordinary necessities of government. It interfered in 1613 to obstruct a royal commission to enquire into and reform the corrupt administration of the navy—the country might suffer, but that was no matter for a lawyer; the King might, in a time of acute national crisis, be unable to pay or billet his soldiers—they might starve so long as the letter of the law was not infringed; Parliament might reduce government to a standstill by refusing supplies, but the King must not raise a farthing even if his faithful Commons refused to give him one. And yet these men, for all their impracticable formality, were standing for England, in the sense that the Law, with all that was good and bad in it, represented what was deepest rooted in the heart of the nation. But that need not prevent our sympathy from going out to the champions of a different ideal, men who thought that the object of government was to get the nation governed as rationally and efficiently as possible and who, in any case, were set to grapple with a task of almost superhuman difficulty.

5

The Decadence of Elizabethanism

There was the less hope of preserving the Tudor system of society, since it was evident that the governing class, which had crowned its social hierarchy, was going to pieces through sheer lack of discipline. This had been its besetting sin even in its most glorious days, but the ever pressing menace from abroad had kept it together. Now that menace was withdrawn, the Elizabethan ideal began to show unmistakable signs of having outlived its usefulness. The sea-dogs and chivalrous knights, the Drakes and Sidneys, gave place to the picturesque but ineffective Cavaliers who lost Charles I his Kingdom and his head. The Puritan movement, with its discipline of the soul, was beginning to attract to itself what was best in the nation, and the irreligiousness of the Renaissance spirit, now that the terror of the Counter Reformation no longer gave a keenness to its official Protestantism, could no longer be disguised. Something of it is wafted to us by the remarkable inscription, in the little church of Harford, on the edge of Dartmoor, which informs us that Speaker Williams "now in Heaven with mighty Jove doth reign". The same message is unmistakably conveyed by monumental sculpture. The great men of Catholic England may have cumbered God's house with their monuments and insignia, but they did at least preserve the show of Christian humility. From their recumbent effigies the very stones cry "Jesu mercy!"

But the tomb of Sir Francis Vere, in Westminster Abbey, is more in the spirit of the sagas than the Gospels, with the four fierce-looking officers holding up the enormous slab that bears his armour and weapons. And on the tomb of Francis Halles, which is by Nicholas Stone, the contemporary in sculpture of Inigo Jones in building, we see the young gentleman sitting in the pose and armour of an Achilles, above the most boastful piece of verse that money could buy.

If we examine the literature of the time, we shall see unmistakable signs of the Elizabethan spirit having become decadent; the divine fire is cold, and all that remains is to elaborate its forms without comprehending its spirit. The drama, which had been the crowning glory of Elizabeth's reign, begins to run unmistakably to seed in that of her successor, and the crabbed killjoy Prynne, who lost his ears for a book in which he denounced all drama as wholly corrupt and vicious, might have obtained, if not justification, at least a

plausible case if he had stuck to the court drama of Charles I's reign. The successors of Shakespeare and the popular dramatists of James I's court were Beaumont and Fletcher, and the drop is steep from supreme genius to consummate technique. Throughout the seventeenth century these men held a higher position in popular esteem than Shakespeare, for the same reason that made Pinero more popular than Ibsen at the end of the nineteenth. It would be too sweeping a generalization to say that Beaumont and Fletcher thought of nothing but their audience, an audience that was becoming less and less democratic; they were capable of rising to the heroic level, as in that scene which excited the admiration of Emerson, in which Sophocles disarms his conquerors by the nobility with which he accepts death. These are flashes of the right Elizabethan spirit, but their very contrast with the general tone of the plays only serves to mark their extreme degeneracy from the Elizabethan standard.

What in Shakespeare had been a manly Toryism becomes in Beaumont and Fletcher the most abject flunkeydom. A partial explanation of this may be that Fletcher was the son of a Bishop, but the main reason certainly was that this sort of thing was expected and went down at the court of James. Shakespeare had never been blinded by the divinity that hedges a King, but the heroes of Beaumont and Fletcher find a positive delight in grovelling, like Coke on one celebrated occasion, at the feet of Royalty. The King is a god, and it is as blasphemous to resist tyranny as it would be to question the morality of eternal punishment. The lowest depth of abjection is touched in *The Loyal Subject*, the scene of which is appropriately laid in Russia, and whose hero, the Governor of Moscow, is a masculine and more patient edition of the Patient Griselda, with no sort of hesitation in sacrificing his son's life or his daughter's honour upon the altar of his extraordinary devotion. The best of which these authors are capable is when an old officer, in *Valentinian*, under the direct orders of his sovereign, reports to him the mutinous criticisms of the troops, though he expects nothing less than a meekly accepted death as a reward for what his creators evidently consider almost superhuman audacity of speech:

> "Majesty is made to be obeyed
> And not enquired into."

We can imagine the approving smile which James condescended to bestow on sentiments so perfectly in harmony with his own.

One can see how, in Beaumont and Fletcher, the drama was ceasing to be a vehicle of national sentiment and becoming the

pastime of an aristocratic c'ique. These authors frankly despised and disliked the populace, and they brought upon themselves the wrath of the groundlings by guying a typical prentice lad, in a witty play which, unlike most of their others, acts well before a modern audience. These prentice lads were to have their revenge on the courtiers when they lined the hedges at Newbury and not Rupert could break them. But if Beaumont and Fletcher do not reflect England, they do reflect, with nauseating fidelity, the court of James, with its lewdness, its corruption, and its crime. Of public spirit they show not the faintest sense; a court to them is not the centre from which a nation is ruled, but a mere forcing house of dirty intrigue. Loyalty to tyrants and degenerates is a virtue; loyalty to a country or a cause is a thing that either the playwrights have never heard of, or which they know will bore the audience. The vice in which they luxuriate is the more disgusting from being the refined beastliness of a court, and not the mere coarseness of animal spirits. And their virtue, such as it is, is often more disgusting than their vice.

Such plays reveal, only too faithfully, to what an extent those who governed the nation were losing touch with reality, and the fall of the Tudor ideal is only too plainly prefigured in the decadence of the drama with which it was linked. The censorship, then as ever the bane of truth, was at work to see that the actors spoke smooth things, and the principle was adopted, then as now, that a play was an official act, and that anything offensive to foreign nations was to be suppressed by force of law. When the country was seething with anti-Catholic sentiment at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War, a play of Middleton's was actually suppressed because it voiced the popular feeling against Spain. Nobody, except the people themselves, had any objection to a play which voiced the feeling of the courtiers against the people.

The drama did not decline without an effort to retrieve its honour. Both Middleton and the unfortunate, struggling Massinger at least made an attempt to maintain its position as a mirror of truth, and not merely the idle amusement of an evening. Massinger, whom Coleridge ingeniously characterizes as a decided Whig, does his best to make the drama a means of satirizing the vices of the time, and he is not above aiming a covert shaft at Royalty. But unless the dramatist has the spirit of the time to fill out his sails, his ship rots becalmed, and so it befell with Massinger. His morals are no vital part of the plays, they are tacked on more or less obviously to the

same tale of vice and triviality that had been told, to weariness, by Fletcher, with whom Massinger had sometimes collaborated. The very virtues are of a rather formal and copybook order; of an enlightened patriotism, like Shakespeare's, Massinger is almost innocent.

The decline of the drama reaches a further stage in the works of Ford, sweet and musical though these be. Ford almost drops the pretence of caring about right and wrong, and writes with all the sympathy of a decadent about such unlawful love as that of a brother and a sister. In his *Perkin Warbeck* he does indeed make a brave effort to revive the English historical play, but his spirit is that of Bacon, who helped him to his conception of the business King, Henry VII, and the moral of it all is that states thrive best when purged of corrupted blood. It is, in fact, not a history in the sense of being a criticism of national life, but a mere dynastic romance. The stage was rapidly ceasing to express anything but the corruption of a dead ideal; tragedy had lost its seriousness and comedy its *joie de vivre*, and except for its cutting short the career of Shirley, it may fairly be questioned whether the suppression of the drama under Puritan auspices was not a blessing in disguise.

Poetry was losing more and more of the joyous freshness of the Elizabethan songtide. Those who tried to carry on the tradition endeavoured to make up for the lack of inspiration by far-fetched intellectual "conceits", as they were called. John Donne, the future Dean of St. Paul's, in his very undecanal youth as Jack Donne, was able to luxuriate in these fancies with a sufficiency of native genius to turn them into glorious poetry, though frequently the result was merely grotesque. Elizabethan poetry died hard, and enjoyed a St. Martin's summer in Herrick. Above all, it persisted with sufficient tenacity to allow the old spirit to be married to the new one of Puritan earnestness in the early work of Milton. But though slower than the decline of the drama, the tendency is for the spontaneous glow of the secular lyric to be sicklied over with the pale cast of uninspired thought, a process which, despite its arrest by the fact that Puritanism could avail itself of the lyre but not of the stage, culminated in the mere artificiality of the Restoration. The most inspired poetry was flowing into religious channels, for religion was coming to be the most serious concern of the time.

This cult of an unbridled fancy was even more prevalent in prose than in poetry. Men would display an industry and a miscellaneous knowledge almost passing belief; of Archbishop Williams, one of

these prodigies, his biographer says that all his life he never required more than three hours nightly sleep, " it was ordinary with him to begin his studies at six of the clock and continue them till three in the morning, and be ready again by seven to walk in the circle of his indefatigable labours." One wonders how such a man as Burton could have found time in the course of an ordinary life to dip into all the authors he quotes with such inexhaustible fecundity in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*. And yet one's wonder is hardly less at the sheer waste of so much of this learning by lack of intellectual discipline. Burton's treatise must remain forever quaint and delightful, in sufficiently small instalments, by reason of its very diffuseness, and it is hard to wish of Sir Thomas Browne that he were in any way different from his leisurely and lovable self, but one cannot help regretting that he was not able to turn his erudition to more profitable themes than that of " The Quincunciall Lozenge or network plantations of the ancients, artificially, naturally, mystically considered ", or to the leisurely discussion of such profound questions as whether or not Jews stink.

The prose of such masters as Burton, Browne, Jeremy Taylor and even Milton is gorgeous, in its inspired passages, beyond anything else in our literature, but the lack of discipline which was the fault of Elizabeth's time rendered it diffuse and wasteful of its resources to a lamentable degree. Thought, emancipated from the discipline of the schoolmen, wanted pulling together; it lacked pruning and direction; it had need of that austere discipline which the Puritan spirit, with all its faults, was able to supply. And the fruits of that discipline were first fully apparent when John Bunyan dreamed a dream in Bedford Prison, and told it, in plain English, to the world.

There were, however, signs of a new order of things moulded by a sterner discipline than the Elizabethan. This is particularly manifest in architecture, which now comes to be dominated by the genius of Inigo Jones, the first of our architect designers whose names have become household words. Jones was a consummate craftsman—perhaps the most attractive of all the works attributed to him is the lovely bridge that springs so lightly across the Conway at Llanrwst—but he was something more than a craftsman, for he had served a Venetian apprenticeship, and had so far imbibed the theories of Palladio, that stately but frigid revivalist of the old Roman style, that he annotated an English edition of that master's statement of principles.

By Inigo Jones the free spirit of Elizabethan architecture was

put into the bonds of law. Buildings were thought out in a way they never had been in Elizabethan times, when they had sprung up with something of the untamed exuberance of hedgerows in June. We do not ask who were the architects of those lavishly ornamented brick and timber structures. At Cobham Hall, in Kent, you talk of the Elizabethan wings, but of the Inigo Jones front, and when Charles I walked out to his death, it was beneath the frigid regard of the Banqueting Hall that his master architect had put up for him by strict Palladian rule, and after the model of the Grimani and Vendramin Calergi Palaces on the Grand Canal.

6

The Beauty of Holiness

By Elizabeth the Church of Rome, from which that of England had broken loose, was visualized as a temporal power threatening the independence of her kingdom, and the Church of England was, in consequence, primarily a department of the State. Discipline and not saintliness nor truth of dogma, was her aim. But when the whole of Europe was seething with spiritual enthusiasm at murderous pitch, it was impossible that England should rest content with a merely secular ideal. Some attempt had to be made to provide a spiritual substitute for what Rome had been, and the question at issue was whether this task could be accomplished by the Church that the civil power had set up, and over which the Sovereigns of England ruled with the authority of Popes.

Right up to the appointment by Charles I of Laud as Archbishop of Canterbury, the position of the Church is one extremely hard to define in matters of doctrine and ceremonial, for the sufficient reason that Churchmen were imperfectly agreed among themselves even as to the nature of the points at issue. To such a man as Elizabeth's last Archbishop, Whitgift, there was no inconsistency between the extreme doctrinal tenets of Calvinism and the most uncompromising assertion of episcopal claims. "Members of this family," remarked Lord Monmouth to Coningsby, "may think as they like, but they must act as I please," and this fairly accurately sums up the Elizabethan idea of Church discipline. But it is impossible to prevent dogma from reinforcing discipline. Any body of men placed, as the bishops were, in a position of temporal and spiritual authority, naturally tends to make the most of it, and, Calvin or no Calvin, to retain such useful beliefs of their predecessors as that of the magic

potency conferred by the laying on of hands at their ordination. It is probable that this, in the long run, will be followed by some attempt to recover the prestige conferred by the priestly miracle of the Sacrament. For a priesthood is a vested interest that naturally tends to its own augmentation.

With the accession of James, the religious nature of the Church rises into greater prominence. The King himself had come to England with a truly Scottish turn for theological disputation; he was much in earnest about points of doctrine and his own divine and intellectual power to fix them. This was unfortunate, because at the beginning of his reign he had to face a crisis that a cool and tactful man of the world might have handled so as to have avoided the bitterness and bloodshed of coming years. The dispute between the official heads of the Church and its intransigent left wing had come to a head; a monster petition was presented by the Puritans, and James promptly summoned a conference to meet at Hampton Court, a wise and statesmanlike move if he had been bent on a comprehensive settlement, for few, as yet, of the Puritans wanted to secede from the Church altogether.

No doubt the King came to this conference with a genuine desire to see fair play in his capacity of moderator, and indeed, on more than one occasion, he raised his voice on the Puritan side. But he could not long keep out of the arena, nor could he get his experience of the Kirk out of his head, and the mere thought of it was enough to make him lose his temper—"If you aim at a Scottish presbytery," he blustered, "it agreeth as well with monarchy as God with the devil. Then Jack, and Tom, and Will, and Dick shall meet and censure me and my Council." He harped monotonously on his formula of "No bishop, no king", and finally throwing temper and discretion to the winds, burst out with, "If this be all your party hath to say, I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harry them out of the land, or else do worse."

This Hampton Court Conference had at least the advantage of stimulating the Church to greater activity, for it was henceforth apparent that she would no longer be a comprehensive fold including all good Protestants, but that she now formed a party midway between the Catholics and the extreme Calvinists. Old Whitgift was sinking into the grave, and the real leadership of the Church was in the hands of Bancroft, his right-hand man and eventual successor. Bancroft, as Bishop of London, had displayed a furious intolerance at the Conference that had shocked even James, and had

gone so far as to protest against his opponents being heard against their Bishops. In the year after the Armada he had preached a sermon at Paul's Cross that had defined, with uncompromising directness, the divine prerogative of Bishops. He may fairly be entitled the first of our great High Churchmen, and Clarendon thought that if he had lived he would have altogether quenched, in England, the fire kindled at Geneva.

After the triumph of his views at the Conference, Bancroft's first care was to set the Church in order and to close up her ranks. Hundreds of non-conforming clergy were deprived of their livings, and though Bancroft could be personally generous to individual opponents, his zeal for what he imagined to be the Church's interests made him ruthless in enforcing conformity. But for those who remained he was diligent both in bettering their condition and in raising their standard of learning, a thing much neglected in the reign of Elizabeth. He is credited with a scheme, which never matured, of establishing a school of controversial divinity. It was under his auspices that the noblest work of any accomplished by the Anglican Church was brought to a successful conclusion, the translation of the Hebrew and Christian classics that goes under the name of the Authorized Version of the Bible. The Prayer Book was at the same time rounded off by the addition to the Catechism of the part dealing with the Sacraments. A series of ecclesiastical canons was also promulgated in which the Church's attitude was at once defined and made more severe; to attack or secede from her was an offence punishable by excommunication, and the thin end of the ritualistic wedge was introduced by the careful defence and injunction of the sign of the Cross in Baptism.

Bancroft died before he had time to complete his work, and his successor was a Calvinist martinet of the narrowest school, George Abbot, son of a humble clothworker, and whose parents had undergone and survived the rigours of Marian persecution. He combined the bitter and self-assertive disposition that is sometimes found in self-made men, with a furious hatred of Rome and all her works. Though a martinet in discipline, he was an extreme Calvinist in doctrine, and the effect of his primacy was to check the process which Bancroft had started, of making the Church of England a *via media* between the extremes of Rome and Geneva.

But a movement of thought had started in Holland, a country with which England was at this time in close spiritual touch, calculated to supply the Church with the very doctrinal basis she

most needed. One of the most amiable characters in this time of bitter and brutal religious controversy was a professor at Leyden University called Arminius, who died in 1609. He appears to have had a singularly tolerant disposition, and was even able to pay an appreciative visit to Rome. The tenets of fighting Calvinism, that God had damned the majority of his creatures before he made them and that no effort on their part was of the least avail for their deliverance from so horrible a fate, struck him as too extreme, and he put forward a view more complimentary to the divine nature. He asserted that Christ had died for all, and not only for the predestined elect, and that it rested with each man whether he were to receive or reject so great a salvation.

This modification of Calvinism was anathema to the stern enthusiasts to whom predestination was not a theory but a weapon. In times of severe conflict it is always the moderate who goes to the wall. Arminianism came to be identified with the burghal and provincial party in the Low Countries, and only a few years after its founder's death that hard-bitten soldier, Prince Maurice of Nassau, representing the extreme Calvinists, turned suddenly on their rivals, judicially murdered their leader, Oldenbarnveldt, and condemned to life-long imprisonment the enlightened Grotius, founder of the modern Law of Nations. A packed synod was held at Dort, to which English representatives were invited, not to examine the truth of the matter but to condemn the Arminians, and assert once and for all the doctrine of divine unreason and human impotence.

Arminianism, however badly it may have thriven in the country of its origin, fell on fruitful soil within the Church of England. It was well adapted for men who did not want to go the whole way with the Calvinists and yet had no desire to make terms with Rome. Logical extremes have seldom found permanent favour with Englishmen, and the Arminian solution was eminently suited to the national instinct for kindliness and compromise.

Unfortunately compromise was wholly alien from the Puritans. With them it was all or nothing, and an Arminian was about as bad, if not the same thing in disguise as a Papist. Thus it was that their hatred fastened with peculiar virulence upon Abbot's successor, Archbishop Laud, one of those men who, if predestination were indeed true, might seem foreordained to tragic issues. His was a type of mind more akin to the Latin than to the English, one of uncompromising directness and with a passion for uniformity. He, at least, had a clear vision of what the Church of England ought

to be, and he bent his whole energy to its realization. The term "bigot" which Macaulay, with the obtuse injustice he sometimes displayed towards men he could not understand, applied to Laud, is singularly inept, because in dogma he was, for his time, remarkably tolerant. His own belief was Arminian in so far as he desired to tone down the severity of Calvinism, but he was as firm and active in his opposition to Rome as the most zealous reformer among them all.

Had Laud been cast in a smaller mould, his failure might have been less dramatic. There is at least some element of truth in Newman's estimate of him as of stature akin to the elder days of the Church, perhaps even more than Newman realized, for, in truth, the Archbishop seems as one born into the wrong age. Transparently sincere and disinterested, he found himself committed to the leadership of what was, in fact, a forlorn hope. He wanted to transfer to the Church of England all the authority and prestige that had once invested the cosmopolitan power of Rome within our shores. Himself a man of learning and refinement, the crudity and uncouthness of Puritanism in its more grotesque forms jarred on him painfully. The phrase that was constantly on his lips and in his heart was "the beauty of holiness"; the worship of God was, in his eyes, worthy of all the reverence and loveliness that man could bestow. And this noble enthusiasm was mingled with a positively old-maidish love of order and symmetry. Laud, we suspect, must have been one of those people who, in private life, cannot bear to see anything out of its place.

Herein lay his error, an error fatal in an Englishman. Uniformity was with him a necessity of existence, and he pursued it regardless of prudence or possibility. We can sympathize with him in his expressed indignation against those who come into God's house with no more reverence "than a tinker and his bitch come into an ale house"; he was doing his bare duty when he stopped the main aisle of St. Paul's from being used as a place of merchandise and conversation, nor was it so terrible a thing when he had the Communion Table decently railed off at the East end of the Church; but to force the English Liturgy upon the Scottish congregations was an act of stark insanity. The unpardonable offence of Laud, that which more than anything else brought him to his martyrdom, was that the Church of which he dreamed was no respecter of persons. Anglicanism has, as a rule, shown an admirable tact in discriminating between those who may or may not be considered fit subjects for

spiritual censure, but when the shafts of Laud's sarcastic wit flew at the highest in the land, and when the Church's disciplinary rod descended not only on the poor and ignorant, but on the backs of great lords whose fortunes had been founded on her plunder, the situation was plainly intolerable.

"He did court persons too little," says Clarendon, "and did not consider what men said or were like to say of him. If the faults and vices were fit to be looked into and discovered, let the persons be who they would that were guilty of them, they were sure to find no connivance or favour from him. He intended that the discipline of the Church should be felt, as well as spoken of, and that it should be applied to the greatest and most splendid transgressors, as well as to the punishment of smaller offences and meaner offenders; and thereupon called for or cherished the discovery of those who were not careful to cover their own iniquities, thinking they were above the reach of other men's, or their power or will to chastise. Persons of honour and great quality of the court and of the country were every day cited into the High-Commission Court, upon the fame of their incontinence, or other scandal in their lives, and were there prosecuted to their shame and punishment: and as the shame (which they called an insolent triumph upon their degree and quality, and levelling them with the common people) was never forgotten but watched for revenge; so the fines imposed were the more questioned and repined against, because they were assigned to the rebuilding and repairing of St. Paul's church, and thought therefore, to be the more severely imposed, and the less compassionately reduced and excused; which likewise made the jurisdiction and rigour of the Star-chamber more felt and murmured against, and sharpened many men's humours against the Bishops, before they had any ill-intention towards the Church."

This passage throws upon the growth of popular feeling against the Church and Laud, a light which the once fashionable school of Whig historians consistently shut out, and it is the easier to misunderstand what the Church stood for then, because after the fall of Laud she never reverted to his ideals. There is no doubt that he hoped to see her an independent and even democratic power in the sense that she was so high and holy as to be above making distinctions between the sheep of Christ's flock, who in His eyes and that of His Bride were equal one with another. That had been the ideal also of Hildebrand and Becket, of the Papacy at its best. Laud was an unflinching opponent of corruption in high places,

and even dared to remonstrate with his sovereign, when Charles had condescended to land-grabbing in Richmond Park.

Laud's attempt to realize his ideal ended in failure, to be followed, after the Restoration, by what was worse than failure, the kind of success that is purchased at the price of a Church's soul. For this, no doubt, he must bear his share of the blame; he was a tactless, impatient man, a bundle of nerves, with too little sense of what could or could not be done. His zeal made him overstep the bounds not only of discretion, but even, at times, of humanity, though the sentences that he was instrumental in passing on the authors of what, judged by the standards of any time, were scurrilous libels, were, judged by the standards of his own, not severe, and of how much sympathy the most notable of his victims, Prynne, was deserving, is shown by the fiendish revenge that he took upon Laud, then a friendless old man in the hands of his enemies. But when all is said, and however much we may disagree with Laud's aims and methods, every generous man must admit that he stood nobly for a noble cause, and that where he failed it is doubtful whether any man could have succeeded. When Henry VIII knocked the keystone out of the arch, he made it impossible for the Church to carry such a weight of authority as Laud would have had it support.

¶ Nevertheless the first half of the seventeenth century was the golden age of the Church of England. The mere formalism engendered by the Elizabethan compromise rapidly wore off when men had more time to think about their spiritual than their temporal salvation. The Church may have chosen a middle way, but that way was spacious and sweet to tread. The distinctively Anglican spirit may have lacked the burning singleness of purpose, the "all or nothing" determination that was the strength of the Puritans, but it had a graciousness and charm that are best comprehended in Laud's scripturally borrowed phrase, "the beauty of holiness." This beauty never was more tenderly set forth than in the life and writings of George Herbert, who contrived to be, in the best sense of both words, a gentleman and a minister of God. His writings display none of the stormy ardours of Gothic Christianity, nor the white hot zeal of Calvinism; his very metre is quiet; his model parson is no hot gospeller, but a courteous and affectionate father to his flock, guiding his life by that charity which suffereth long and is kind. Even his rebukes will be couched in some such form as—"this was not so well said as it might have been forborne", or "Your meaning is not thus but thus." Herbert perfectly expresses the ideal of the Church of

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The Constitutional Impasse

We shall make no attempt to follow in detail the course of the great constitutional struggle that could be decided in no other way than by civil war and regicide. We have tried to show what influences were working to bring about the downfall of the Tudor system of government, whose whole success had depended upon a conjunction of circumstances that could by no means be regarded as permanent: the paramount necessity for a strong central government, the impotence of the nobility, the subordination of religious fervour to political necessity, and, most important of all, the inability of the government to carry on its essential functions without making itself dependent on Parliament for constant supplies. Nobody realized better than the shrewd and cool-headed sovereigns of the Tudor line how far they were from emulating the despotism of a Caesar, or even of a Most Christian King. When Henry VIII broke the connection with Rome but dared not lay hands on the Common Law nor form a standing army, he tacitly resigned himself to the position of a constitutional monarch, one who governs the kingdom on conditions. The Tudors understood these conditions but the Stuarts did not, and therefore failed to play the constitutional game.

And yet the Scottish House found itself face to face with a problem that might have taxed the utmost ingenuity of its predecessors. Its Kings found all their resources steadily shrinking on account of the universal rise in prices that followed the discovery of the New World. They were in the position of a man of fixed income, who in 1914 was just able to make both ends meet, and after the war finds his position desperate. The one bright feature was supplied by the customs revenues, which, as trade steadily increased, tended to go up with it, and it was to these that the Crown clung most desperately, as to the last resource between it and ruin. But it was obvious that the only way in which the King could avoid being at the mercy of his Parliaments would be by the strictest economy. In peace, he might just manage to hold his own, but let the country become involved in war or any policy involving extraordinary expense, and there was no way out of it but for the King to scrap the Constitution and provide for himself, or else for him to accept whatever Parliament chose to dole out to him on whatever conditions it liked to impose.

The Tudor system, however well it may have worked for a time, involved a division of sovereignty that could by no means be permanent. The King was supposed to be responsible for carrying on, within the limits of the laws, the business of government, but this task might be rendered impossible should Parliament choose to deny him the bare means of so doing. It might even, and once did, call for an expensive policy and then leave the Sovereign in the lurch. So far there had been no question of denying the King's right to appoint his own staff of ministers and officials, but Parliament reserved the right to object to anything they did and even to knock them down like ninepins by the method of impeachment. Government was becoming a business demanding high technical ability, and it is not easy to see how any business could be carried on successfully under such a handicap. The one chance was for a Sovereign to combine such extraordinary tact and ability as to be able to convince Parliament that his policy was also theirs, and that if they would unloose their constituents' purse strings there was some reasonable chance of getting it efficiently executed on the lowest terms. This had, indeed, been more or less the case in the great days of Elizabeth.

Stated thus, it would seem that the Sovereign had an almost irresistible case against niggardly or encroaching Parliaments. To expect a King to manage a Kingdom without the means of doing so is to drive the poor man to desperate expedients, and for Parliament to use a constitutional power as a means of levying blackmail is to invite unconstitutional reprisals. But if the Sovereign's position was impossible, not less so was that of Parliament. To revert to our simile of the manager, it is pretty evident that any business would sooner or later be ruined if entrusted to an hereditary and irremovable chief who might be incompetent, corrupt or indolent to an indefinite degree, and appoint a staff to match. It might be said that this system had succeeded well enough in the Middle Ages, but then the sovereign, unless he had all his wits about him, was soon or later put out of the way. With the advance of civilization and the growth of order, the remedies of regicide and deposition became harder to apply, though time was to prove that both were capable of revival. But it had become more difficult to lay sacrilegious hands on a King now that, thanks to the Reformation, he had become something of a Pope as well, and that the Church, instead of looking to a rival sovereign power, was united in her allegiance to his Divine Right. So that what had, in fact,

been one of its most important checks was removed from the Constitution.

Granting, therefore, that there was no means of replacing an unsatisfactory monarch, what was Parliament to do with him? It could hardly be expected to bleed the country white in order to supply him with the means of ruining her, nor could it tamely allow him to overturn all the laws of the land in order to make provision for himself. Things must sooner or later come to an impasse that could only end in the complete surrender of one of the parties, or civil war. Either the King must take over the functions of Parliament and put enough money into his purse to make receipts balance expenses, or Parliament must take over the King's functions and itself appoint the staff of ministers by whom the nation was to be governed.

It is not irrelevant to ask, in this connection, what we are to understand by Parliament. The Whig school of historians are in the habit of talking about the struggle between the King and his people, whereas in one sense the King might have been said to be more representative of the whole of his subjects than Parliament, which after all only represented a minority of them. Selden's idea that non-voters of under forty shillings a year are somehow "involved" in the more fortunate voters, just as the women are "involved" in the men, must appear to the disfranchised as little more than a convenient sophistry. The greater part of the people, the country labourers who were descended from the old villeins, the townsmen who stood outside the circle of the ruling oligarchy, hardly dreamed of being represented, nor did Parliament dream of taking any special thought for their interests.

It can be said for Parliament that a more democratic assembly was then hardly possible. From time to time it did manage to stand unmistakably for what the nation was feeling. It faithfully reflected such popular prejudices as the hatred of Spain and the suspicion of Rome. It had the steady backing of the all-powerful London mob, that, being on the spot, stood to Crown and Parliament alike for the proletariat, and, in the absence of a standing army, was able to terrorize the Crown at the crisis of its fortunes. Just as the fear of Spain had held together Crown and people under Elizabeth, so did hostility to the Crown, and to a government in Church and State that had lost touch with the nation, hold the various classes of the people together under the first two Stuarts, and postpone the development of the subsequent great and successful attempt on the part of an

oligarchy to impose its rule on Crown and nation alike. And yet all this time oligarchy was quietly consolidating its power, and compassing the destruction of the only rivals that stood between it and its yet unformulated ambition,

The fatal tilt which Henry VIII had given to the social system by his victory over the Pope and the monks was now threatening to overturn the throne itself. Had he succeeded in keeping the plunder in his own hands, all might have been well for his successors, but in letting it stick to the hands of his instruments he had engineered disaster. The descendants of these men were now a rich and prosperous landed class, controlling the whole machinery of local government, and intolerant of any check upon their power. The Church was no longer a rival, and if she attempted to assert her authority, might become a victim. It was from this class that the Commons of the first two Stuarts were recruited, and it was this class that they represented. As if to point the moral of the tragedy, the ominous name of Cromwell came to be again on every man's tongue, but this time it was not some poor old abbot who had to be let blood, but the King himself.

That more democratic elements came into prominence during the turmoil of civil war was due to the fact that Parliament had loosed forces that it was unable to bind. But Parliament itself, from the accession of James I to Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump, was an assembly of wealthy and mostly well-born men, however sincerely they might hold to their faith and constitutional principles, and who though they might enter into temporary alliance with peasantry or mob, had a keen class consciousness and sense of their own interests. And it was not only over the Lower House that the Crown was losing control. The Upper House had long been changing its character from that of the old feudal council of tenants-in-chief to that of a house of magnates, holding their seats by hereditary privilege.

Even at the accession of the Tudors, the Upper Chamber did not contain a majority of hereditary members; the magnates, secular and regular, of the Church contributed to make it what Professor Pollard has happily termed a House of Experts rather than a mere House of Lords. But the showy and decadent feudalism of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance led to a strict and formal cult of hereditary privilege. Heraldry became an exact and complicated science; it was a part of every gentleman's education to be skilled in chevrons and quarterings and differences. The

Duke or "leader" of Blankshire might never have been near the county in question, and might require to be led about by a keeper, but that would not in the least affect his position as Duke. The important thing for him was to get born in the correct way. This was a very different conception of nobility from that of the days when the Earl, or Folk's Elder, would rush down to the coast, as did Brihtnoth, to stem a Danish invasion, with his personal following and such shire levies as he could collect at short notice. The transition from one ideal to the other was very gradual, and we have seen how, in Henry VIII's reign, the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk were chosen to put down rebellion in their own counties. It was in Richard III's reign that the College of Heralds was incorporated, and it was the policy of the Tudors to keep questions of precedence in their own hands and discourage the maintenance of heralds by baronial Houses.

The Tudors had had little trouble with their Upper Chamber and probably little idea how dangerous this strengthening of the hereditary principle might become. The Reformation had reduced the non-hereditary majority of Churchmen to the Bench of Bishops who, though a minority, could almost be regarded as an official vote in favour of the Crown. Elizabeth had kept her Lords easily in hand, creating sufficient new Peers to form a majority when added to the Bishops. However a Peer once made cannot be unmade, and he or his descendants will sooner or later drift into independence of the Crown, so Elizabeth's policy could only be carried on by perpetually doubling the dose of new peerages. Her successor, who was glad enough to provide for his own needs without too much regard for the future and to fill his gaping pockets by fair means or foul, not only created peers right and left, but invented the vile expedient, too faithfully copied by modern governments, of poisoning the Fount of Honour and putting up the Peerage to sale. His crime was visited upon his children, for when his son came to the throne, the Upper House had passed the limits of practicable control by new creation.

The part played in the downfall of Charles I by his peerage is somewhat obscured by the fact that the most prominent of his disloyal magnates ceased to play an important part in public affairs after the first year or two of civil war. This is not surprising when we remember that however much it might be in their interests to turn the King into a puppet, the very last thing that any of them wanted to do was to unchain the people. These nobles were mostly descended from those who had grown fat by the plunder of the

Church, and they were the spiritual and often the lineal ancestors of the great Whig Houses who did, for a time, succeed in imposing their yoke upon King and people alike. Some of them had more in common with the modern capitalist than the old, rough feudal baron. The great and greedy House of Russell was still busily engaged in raking in money. Its representative under Charles I was, as might have been expected, an ardent Protestant, and among the most prominent figures of the opposition. One of his enterprises, out of which he stood to reap enormous profits but which he did not live to complete, was the draining of the Eastern Fen country, and his building operations in London brought him into trouble with the Star Chamber, a court much disliked by the rich. "A wise man," says Clarendon, "but of too great and plentiful a fortune to wish a subversion of the government; and it quickly appeared that he only intended to make himself and his friends great at court not at all to lessen the court itself." A typical Whig!

There were the two Parliamentary generals, the Earls of Essex and Manchester, the former of whom justified the killing of Strafford by the cynical plea "stone dead hath no fellow", and both of whom carried on the war against their Sovereign with an apathy that bordered on treason, even from a rebel's point of view. Then there were the two brothers, the Earls of Warwick and Holland, descended from the most hateful of all Henry VIII's tools, Richard Rich. Of Warwick we again give one of those inimitable sketches from Clarendon's portfolio: "A man of no grace in court, and looked upon as the greatest patron of the puritans, because of much the greatest estate of all who favoured them . . . though he was of a life very licentious and unconformable to their professed rigour, which they rather dispensed with than to withdraw from a house where they received so eminent a protection and such notable bounty." As for Holland, he piled treason on treason, deserting the King for the Parliament and the Parliament for the King twice over, getting well snubbed by both parties for his pains, and being finally brought to rest by the headsman. He "did think poverty the most insupportable evil that could befall any man in this world."

Of the older families there was the Howard Earl of Arundel, who had precedence, after the officers of State, of the rest of the Council, an aristocratic snob, who, though a distinguished patron of the arts, "was never suspected to love anybody, nor to have the least propensity to justice, charity or compassion," and who retired to Italy rather than be mixed up with anything so much beneath

his dignity as the contention of King and Parliament.[1] Finally there was the representative of the old marcher Earls of Northumberland, a man of immense dignity who scarcely considered himself inferior to the King, and having been loaded by the King with benefits, failed him both as Admiral and General, and finally followed the time-honoured Percy tradition of rebellion.

We have devoted what may at first sight seem a disproportionate amount of attention to these men, because, though they early drop out of the struggle into temporary insignificance, it was the party for which they stood that eventually reaped the fruits of it all. Ostensibly the contest was between the Crown and the Puritans, but the Puritans toppled from the height of victory to the depths of persecution, and though a new King might enjoy his own again for awhile, it was only that the crown itself might become the plaything of an all-powerful oligarchy.

8

The Crown Loses Prestige

One evil result of the division of sovereignty between Crown and Parliament was that while the control of policy was vested in the King, Parliament, to use Professor Pollard's singularly happy phrase, played the part of a perpetual opposition. This, as might have been expected, led to both indifference and ignorance with regard to national policy on the part of an assembly whose main idea was to develop its own privileges and keep down the income of the Crown to a bare minimum. When it did take up a policy, its judgment was swayed by its emotions or prejudices.

Now James I and the ablest of his advisers, Salisbury and Bacon, regarded the art of government from what we may best call a professional standpoint. It was, in their view, the business of experts in kingcraft. This was sound enough in so far as it demanded experience and study, but the expert in human affairs is apt to blunder as woefully as the man of mere feeling, though in a different way. Nations are after all generally swayed by their feelings, and the man who suppresses his own is apt to leave those of others out of his reckoning. It was to their incapacity to appreciate spiritual forces that, more than anything else, was the ruin of the Stuarts.

[1] He did, however, assist the King's cause to an estimated extent of £84,000.

James I had some claim to be regarded as above the average in his craft. He was for anticipating by a century the union of the English and Scottish Parliaments, thereby running counter to the as yet invincible nationalist prejudices of both nations, as well as the covetousness of merchants who feared Scottish competition. He saw that it might pay more to be friends than enemies with the now declining power of Spain; his Parliament, like the mass of his subjects, could not get beyond the Elizabethan point of view, from which Spain was the arch-enemy and supreme danger, besides offering opportunities for unlimited loot. The Spanish Ambassador, Gondomar, a hidalgo of the finest type, by sheer ascendancy of character soon had the King under his thumb, and this fact was thoroughly appreciated by the nation, whose indignation rose to boiling point when it became known that Gondomar's influence had determined the fate of the Elizabethan hero, Raleigh. Satire and abuse were showered on the imperturbable ambassador; the ghosts of Essex and Raleigh were conjured up from Elysium to denounce him; Middleton's banned play represented the Spaniards as the black pieces at a game of chess, Sir Edward Coke denounced them in Parliament as the origin of all evil from the sheep-rot to the pox. James filled up the cup of his unpopularity by trying to arrange a Spanish marriage for his son, a scheme which was not even good kingcraft, as he was thoroughly fooled for his pains, and reaped nothing except unpopularity from the courtship.

The power chiefly to be reckoned with was, in fact, not Spain but Holland. She was as much on the rise as Spain was on the decline, and the higher she rose, the more did her interests clash with those of England. The Dutch were frankly out for business; they thought it no indignity to kow-tow to mandarins, no treason to trade with Spain when they were fighting her. In the East Indies they were aiming at a monopoly similar to that of Spain in the West, and they asserted their privileges by a massacre of English traders at Amboyna, an outrage for which our government could never get proper compensation. In the North Sea they were in perpetual conflict with our claim to take a toll of the herring fisheries in what we called "British waters". Their great international jurist, Grotius, published a historic treatise in which he advocated the doctrine of the seas being free to all nations, and in the reign of Charles I the ablest of our legal historians, Selden, put our case for closing all seas which were inside of an imaginary line passing from any one point to any other point of the English coast. The

Dutch were so strong on the sea—an admiral of theirs even captured the Plate fleet—that it was hopeless to think of asserting our claims until we could back them with an adequate navy. The ministers believed in keeping the peace with Spain and strengthening the navy to the point of effective persuasion.

But the nation did not regard the question from this eminently practical standpoint. To them Holland was something more than a piece in the diplomatic game. Englishmen and Dutchmen had fought side by side and the Dutch were regarded as the arch champions of the Protestant faith against the power of Antichrist, now gathering its forces for a supreme effort to undo the work of Wittenburg and Geneva. The Low Countries were usurping that influence that France had hitherto exercised over the faith and intellect of the nation. Those communities of the elect, whose zeal was too extreme for the official governors of the Church, could find a home among their more uncompromising brethren at the Hague or Amsterdam. Dutch scholarship was now unsurpassed; the University of Leyden, founded to commemorate deliverance from Spanish tyranny, might almost claim to be the intellectual centre of Europe. Not only did the Protestant left wing take comfort from the Synod of Dort, and inspiration from the Calvinist divines of Holland, but the Laudian party, when it arose, was largely influenced by Arminius. Even in art Dutch as well as Flemish influence was, as we shall presently see, giving birth to a new ideal in England.

Thus while our sovereigns played the correct diplomatic moves and the Dutchmen plodded on with a steady eye to the main chance, Parliament and popular opinion in England only thought of advancing the cause of the true religion in alliance with Holland against our old enemy Spain. There is a remarkable rhymed pamphlet written in 1622 called *The Interpreter*, which contrasts three types of men, the Catholic who is of course an unmitigated scoundrel and potential regicide; the honest, uncompromising Puritan who would "a subject be, no slave"; and the "indifferent man" who calls himself a Protestant, who makes a God of the King, who deserves a pension from Spain, and who is so atrociously mean that he will quarrel with the Dutch on such absurd points as those of honour, because they happened to beat our ships away from the Indies and Greenland, and of profit, because they presume to be our "herring-tasters" in the North Sea. It is evidently enough, in the pamphleteer's view, to brand the wretched Protestant with such opinions to convict him of the direst villainy.

James managed, by keeping the peace, to carry on his government with constant friction and difficulty, but without serious mishap, until the religious issue forced him, very unwillingly, to give his Parliament a winning advantage by allowing himself to take sides in a European war. The supreme thirty years' struggle between Rome and her revolted provinces began with the acceptance of the Bohemian crown by the Calvinist Elector Palatine. It was a clever idea to seize as a Protestant outpost the fatherland of Huss and Ziska, but the task was one beyond the Elector's strength. The Imperial army chased him in hopeless confusion from Prague and Spanish forces from the Netherlands made short work of his Electorate on the Rhine. Now not only was the Palsgrave, as he was called, the Protestant champion, but James's son-in-law. Parliament made it a point of honour that he should not be left to his fate against the Austrian-Spanish dynastic combination. They had some childish notion in their minds that the progress of the Catholic armies in Germany could be arrested by a diversion against Spanish commerce.

James was at least shrewd enough to know that, however glibly Parliament might talk about subsidies, his resources could not stand the strain of a considerable war. He clung desperately to the scheme of restoring his son-in-law by acquiring the Infanta as a daughter-in-law. He got rid of a by no means disloyal Parliament when they pressed their anti-Spanish views to the extent of annoying Gondomar. He at last allowed his son, the ill-fated Charles I, to go on a wild goose chase after the Infanta with the Duke of Buckingham to Madrid. This Duke of Buckingham was the man who more than anybody else sealed the doom of effective monarchy in England. Poor James was one of those unfortunate men who, owing to some mental kink acquired in infancy, are drawn by an attraction that need not be more than sentimental to persons of their own sex. Buckingham's face had proved his fortune, and he had had to compete for his master's slobbering affections with a candidate of the Howards, whose face had been carefully doctored for the purpose. The influence that he acquired over James and his son proves him to have possessed some considerable attractiveness and force of will, but there is nothing in history more nauseating than the grovelling adulation he received from Bacon.

Buckingham had all the appearance of a splendid and generous young hero, he had all the reality of a mischievous fool. Whatever he put his hand to failed, for intellectually and morally he was sparkle without depth. When he came back with the young Charles

from Madrid, the London crowd, delighted at their escape, greeted them with tumultuous demonstrations of joy. James was now powerless, his son was the hero of the hour, and both were the puppets of Buckingham. Buckingham, delighted at being the darling of the nation, joyously rushed, where James and the Tudors had feared to tread, into the paths of a dashing foreign policy. A Parliament was summoned, war resolved on, and an inadequate sum voted with much enthusiasm. An untrained and undisciplined mob, calling itself an army, had already been sent to Holland, which did not want it, to place itself under the orders of a blackguard German freebooter called Mansfeld, and perished miserably for lack of supplies. Then James died, having practically ceased to reign. How bitter was the feeling he had aroused against him can best be studied in a terrific invective published, three years before his death, by someone calling himself Tom Tell-Troath. Here the last rags of respect for royalty are stripped off. Tom was a jingo who was patriotically scandalized by the King's pacifism and subservience to Gondomar, and did not hesitate to inform him, in the roundest terms, what his subjects were saying about him. Such language nobody, except an open traitor, would have dreamed of using about Elizabeth, but Tom is a patriot and voicing an increasingly articulate public opinion. The days of the Tudor system were drawing to their tragic close.

9

"THOROUGH"

When Buckingham's first puppet achieved the solace, unprecedented in a Sovereign of his House, of a peaceful death, and another puppet sat in his place, the position of royalty was already desperate, but it was soon to be rendered almost hopeless. Untaught by the lessons of one abortive Catholic marriage, the Duke's next move in the dashing foreign policy was to rush through a match between Charles and a French princess, Henrietta Maria, before Parliament could meet, a piece of sharp practice that destroyed the last hope of trustful co-operation between the two powers that divided British sovereignty. It soon became evident that Parliament both would and could make the King's position impossible as a Constitutional sovereign. They refused to finance the war to which they themselves had committed him, and they struck at his last resource by denying his time-honoured right to levy customs duties.

The unhappy King was thus from the outset placed in the position

of being expected to run the nation's business, of being denied the means of doing so, and being accounted a tyrant if he attempted to provide for himself. In this case of Parliament versus Crown, a skilful enough counsel could put an almost overwhelming case for either side. If Charles was in an impossible position, so equally was his Parliament. It might be the theory of the constitution that the King should govern and Parliament foot the bill, but it was too much to ask an assembly of English gentlemen that they should provide the egregious Buckingham with the means of driving the nation to ruin. The weakness of effective kingship is that it supposes a competent King, and Charles was one of those men who bring a revolution in their train almost as surely as night follows day. Modern times have seen three conspicuous instances of Kings being done to death by their people, and in every instance the King has been one of the same and an exceedingly worthy type. Wasters like Louis Quinze, worldings like the Merry Monarch, tyrants like the Iron Tsar, die quietly in their beds, it is the fish-blooded, unimaginative, conscientious sovereigns, Charles I, Louis XVI, Nicholas II, who get done to death by subjects who have not even their vices with which to sympathize.

Of these three ill-fated and strangely similar men, Charles I is, in his life and his death, the most estimable. A more well-meaning man has never sat on the throne of England. But from his birth, fate had spun her toils around him. He was a sickly boy with a weakness in his limbs that was probably rickets, and a defect of speech which he never quite lost. This had the effect of giving him an extreme shyness and reserve, which in after years developed into an icy and defensive dignity. It also conferred on him a pathetic readiness to surrender utterly to the affection and influence of some one person possessed of those qualities of exuberance and self-confidence which he so painfully lacked. Such a man was Buckingham, and, after his death, such a woman was Henrietta Maria, the two most fatal counsellors any King could have chosen. He clung to Buckingham with a dog-like devotion that the nation could see and resented, and when Buckingham was murdered the iron entered into his soul, and he would give his trust to no other man, not to Strafford nor Laud nor Rupert. James had suffered from too little dignity, but Charles suffered, more fatally, from too much. "Take not this as a threatening," he said to his third Parliament after intimating the delicate truth that if they positively refused him supplies he would have to provide them for himself,

"for I scorn to threaten any but my equals." Men who use such language are asking for trouble.

Four strenuous years saw the utter breakdown of co-operation between King and Parliament. Buckingham urged the King from bad to worse in the spirit of a gambler who tries to recoup his losses by constantly doubling the stakes. Having sacrificed to a French alliance the support of Parliament, he threw this overboard and added war with France to war with Spain. Against both Powers he failed ignominiously; an attempt of Buckingham himself to relieve the Huguenot stronghold, La Rochelle, ended in disaster; Parliament would not concede to the King the means of paying, disciplining, or housing his troops. Driven desperate, the King resorted to illegal ways of providing for his needs. The whole wrath of Parliament was now concentrated upon Buckingham and the King dissolved it for a second time in order to save his beloved favourite. Then a third Parliament met, and the King tried to come to a settlement with them by agreeing to the fresh statement of Constitutional or Common Law principles known as the Petition of Right. But the Commons were just as capable of sharp practice as the King, for no sooner did the Petition become law than they twisted it into including the denial of the right to customs duties, which would have left the King worse off than before. The attack on Buckingham was taken up with renewed vigour, and the wretched man was murdered, as a direct result, when at Portsmouth on his way to head another military and naval folly at La Rochelle.

The breaking point had been reached, and it became evident to Charles that his only chance was to govern as best he could without Parliamentary help. The Houses were fiercely intolerant, and one of their chief grievances against the King was his unwillingness to persecute Catholics and even Arminians. Charles was no lawless despot; it was his intention, from which he never swerved, to abide by the Petition of Right, but there was nothing in the law to make him summon a Parliament if he could live lawfully of his own. And there was just a chance of his being able to do this, if he played his cards correctly. He had never foregone his claim to the customs, and with the nation's trade steadily increasing, these formed a source of revenue sufficient to stave off bankruptcy so long as expenses were kept at a minimum. Peace was concluded with France and Spain, and for eleven years of personal government the nation was seething with discontent in a time of rich, material prosperity.

It is well that Charles was neither a genius himself nor capable of profiting by the genius of others. It was better that he should die than that the whole current of our history should be turned back and made to flow down the well-walled channel of an efficient absolutism. He had in his service two able and single-hearted men, acting in complete harmony and devotion to his interests, Thomas Wentworth and William Laud. He gave his full trust to neither. It is pathetic to read their correspondence, when Wentworth, or the Earl of Strafford as he subsequently became, was Lord Deputy of Ireland and Laud was Archbishop of Canterbury. Elizabeth would have known how to value and profit by such ministers. They were exponents of the Tudor system, born out of due time, trying to prop up an edifice whose foundations were already undermined. Strafford was no Continental bureaucrat. The lawless and incompetent regime of Charles and Buckingham had gone against the deepest instincts in his nature; he opposed it and manfully supported the Constitutional settlement embodied in the Petition of Right. But when he saw that Parliament intended to stop nowhere short of seizing the executive and reducing the King to a puppet, he ranged himself on the side of Constitutional precedent and came over to the King's service.

Laud and Strafford had no illusions as to the desperate nature of the task before them. If the King was to govern the country, it must be in the spirit and after the example of the Tudors, and not with the blundering ineptitude of Charles Stuart. Elizabeth and her father had known how to keep favourites in their places and, on due occasion, bring them to the block, the Stuarts were more inclined to fawn on a Buckingham than be advised by a Bacon; the Tudors had taken care to maintain a competent staff of ministers, Charles had an incurable preference for mediocrities; the Tudors had invariably an eye to facts and knew intuitively where to stop. Charles took himself quite seriously as a god on earth and lived in a world of his own illusions. All this, in the view of Strafford and Laud, must be changed; if the King's government was to be maintained it must be made efficient—"thorough" was the word they used to designate their policy.

But neither the King nor the court by which he was surrounded was capable of any sort of thoroughness. Everywhere the two friends found themselves confronted by a dull and dead weight of resistance, for which their code word was "Lady Mora", or delay. Her ladyship had not been an unknown character in past periods

of English history; Piers Plowman had known her as Lady Meed, and this side of her character was only too apparent to the Archbishop, who wrote, in 1634, "the Lady Mora commends her to you, and tells you she would make more haste did she not stay to accommodate private ends." Laud with his friend Bishop Juxon was striving to get the King's finances in order, while Strafford was endeavouring to make the Irish revenue meet expenses, but they were thwarted at every turn by the dishonesty and favouritism that the King would not check and sometimes openly abetted, as when he roused his Lord Deputy to indignant protest by squandering part of his much-needed Irish money on a free gift to a nobleman.

Ever since the accession of the Stuarts, the crumbling of the Tudor system had been marked by an ever-increasing corruption in high places. The rich men who surrounded the King had not even to wait for his power to be paralysed, before putting into practice the methods of diverting public money into their own purses, that their descendants were to perfect when the whole of political power had been gathered into their hands. It was their consistent struggle against these corrupt influences that was the real cause of the murders, which we cannot honour by the name of judicial, of Strafford and Laud, and of the obloquy which has followed them down the ages. "He crushed and ruined," we read in *Social England* about Strafford, "without adequate cause, many of the highest people in the land." In other words, the Lord Deputy's hand was heavy upon the corrupt and unruly magnates who would have reduced government to a farce. In the most celebrated case of all, he court-martialled a Lord Mountnorris, whom he had reason to suspect of peculation, whose relatives had been openly insubordinate even to the extent of dropping a stool on the Deputy's gouty toe, and who had himself uttered threats of dire revenge on the King's representative and his own military superior. One is astonished at Strafford's moderation in contemptuously reprieving the death sentence of the court martial, contenting himself with putting Mountnorris, for the time, out of the way of doing further mischief. But in "crushing the highest in the land" he had committed the unforgivable sin, nor has he ever been forgiven for his writing, in a moment of anger, of the rich politicians who were determined to make all government impossible, that they deserved to be whipped into their senses.

He saw clearly enough that the King's only chance of success

lay in his keeping out of foreign troubles. He had a clear premonition of what fate would be his master's and his own should bankruptcy put the King at the Parliament's mercy. "Good my Lord," he wrote to the Archbishop when the King was contemplating the madness of plunging into the Thirty Years' War on the Continent, "if it be not too late, use your best to divert us from this war . . . it will necessarily put the King into all the highways possible, else will he not be able to subsist under the charge of it: and if these fail, the next will be the sacrificing those who have been his ministers therein. I profess I would readily lay down my life to serve my master, my heart should give him that very freely; but it would something trouble me to find even those, that drew and engaged him in all these mischiefs, busy about me themselves in fitting the halter to my neck."

Strafford and Laud were no doubt in the wrong with their strenuous cult of efficiency, and however little either of them may have desired to violate the Constitution, they could only have succeeded by substituting centralization and bureaucracy for the liberties sanctified by English law. But they failed nobly in a hopeless cause and in the service of a hopeless master. On the whole they impress us as being the two most considerable men of affairs in the years between the fall of Bacon and the rise of Cromwell. While they were cleansing the Augean stables of corruption and chafing at Lady Mora, Charles was drifting blindly and heedlessly to his doom. Each of that unfortunate trio to whom we have already alluded, Charles I, Louis XVI, and Nicholas II, had a wife to whom he was deeply attached, whose will-power was in excess of his own, and whose one notion of governing a Kingdom was by petty intrigue for the maximum of power. Marie, as her husband called her, was ever at hand to confirm his worst impulses, and though anything but a religious woman, she became the centre of Catholic plots that seemed the more formidable because they were only vaguely known. It was bad enough that the court swarmed with Catholics, and that these included at least one of the King's ministers.

Meanwhile England, with her record of failures behind her and her sword-arm paralysed from lack of funds, had almost ceased to count in the affairs of Europe. This, under the circumstances, was no bad thing; no power threatened her with invasion, and while Europe was torn asunder by murderous contention between Christians about Christ's religion, England was growing rapidly and peacefully in prosperity; trade was flourishing, taxation was light. But those

patriots who would have liked to see England play the same sensational role in defence of Protestantism as that by which the Swedish King, Gustavus Adolphus, lost his own life and overstrained the resources of his country, were patriotically humiliated. Despite the fears of Strafford, Charles managed to avoid this crowning madness, and it is to his credit that he determined, at all costs, to provide England with what was vital to her safety and welfare, an efficient navy. He strained the spirit though not, apparently, the letter of the law, by requiring the ports to contribute to the provision of ships, and presently extended this obligation to the whole Kingdom on the logical ground that all men were equally concerned in maintaining the fleet. The money was honestly devoted to the purpose for which it was asked, and the fleet was able to take the sea strong enough to perform the very necessary service of keeping in check the Moorish pirates, who had taken to preying on our commerce in the Channel itself, and carrying off poor coast-dwellers from their beds to indescribable horrors of slavery.

This, however, was not enough to excuse the levy of any sort of contribution in the eyes of men who were more concerned in paralyzing the King than in securing the safety of the country. A rich Buckingham squire called Hampden refused to pay a penny unless it was sanctioned by Parliament, fearing to violate the principles of Magna Charta. He was following upon the lines laid down by Sir Edward Coke, and his disinterestedness is not in question, since the sum asked for was trifling. The judges decided, by a majority, against him, though their decision loses some weight by the fact that the King had made it clear that a judge's tenure of office depended more on his subservience than his impartiality. On this occasion, however, there seems no reason to doubt that they went exhaustively into the case, and gave the correct legal decision. But nice balancing of legal precedent was unlikely to convince either side. To Strafford it seemed that the King's government must be carried on in despite of such factious obstruction as that of Hampden, to Hampden any evil that could befall the nation would be more tolerable than the successful establishment of a power whose triumph would mean the death of Magna Charta and the ancient liberties of England.

The most decisive condemnation of Charles's personal government is not that he was a tyrant or cruel, for he was nothing of the sort, nor that he was lawless—for after Buckingham's death he was generally on the right side of the law—but in the fact that his govern-

ment utterly failed to commend itself to his people. It was, in fact, notoriously unpopular. Even through Oxford, the headquarters of loyalty, he could go in state amidst cold looks and almost without applause. Englishmen could not understand the icy, enigmatical figure of one who was every inch a King; they would have preferred the good, round oaths of Elizabeth or even the shambling garrulity of James—anything to this. The worst judgments were passed, the wildest scandals flew, the atmosphere had that oppressive calm that forbodes the thunder. And soon, in the north, clouds began to gather and the first rumblings broke the stillness.

10

The Collapse of the Tudor System

The Tudor system, as worked by the Stuarts, was to receive its death blow not from foreign war, as Strafford had foreboded, but from the revolt of Calvinist Scotland. If Charles had not been utterly blind to the spiritual forces around him and to the lessons of recent history, he would have seen that his greatest danger lay in some spark from the terrible Kirk of Knox and Melville setting ablaze the suppressed Puritanism of England, and he would at least have had the sense to leave that Kirk severely alone. But only a man fatally bent on his own destruction would have had the madness not only to wound the Kirk in her tenderest point, which was the independence of her congregations, but also to wound the nobles, who had robbed her, in theirs, which was their pockets. For Charles commenced his reign by an act which, in anybody who had the least sense of the risks he was running would have been heroic. He revoked the grants of Church lands and tithes by which, as Knox had put it, so much of the Church's property had been given to the Devil. The fury of the nobles knew no bounds, and even though the matter was compromised on very fair terms to themselves, they were perpetually apprehensive of some new attempt on the part of the Crown to curb their pretensions, perhaps even to take away their hereditary jurisdictions.

Having thus made an enemy of "the Devil" it only remained for Charles to do the same by "God". In this he was aided and abetted by Laud, who appears to have been completely ignorant of Scottish affairs, and to have imagined that it would be a simple matter of ecclesiastical administration to force upon the Kirk the

abomination of the English liturgy, made even less palatable by some ritualistic additions invented for the occasion. The result was immediate and overwhelming; the whole of Scotland rose in revolt, God and the Devil now in whole-hearted alliance. A covenant was taken, an army was raised, and Charles found himself not only at war, but at war with the elect in one of his own Kingdoms, with scarcely anybody willing to fight for him, and with no means of raising funds short of summoning a Parliament. And he might have known that after eleven years of "Thorough", Parliament would grant him money on no terms consistent with his prerogative. The Tudor system was, in fact, doomed.

Strafford, now recognized too late as the strong man among the King's advisers, made heroic efforts to stem the tide; he had plans for bringing over an army from Ireland, but it was in vain. The King tried to mobilize an army; many of the troops never arrived, those that did ran away from an enemy they wanted to see win. A Parliament came and went; it was evident that even a temporary dole could only be obtained at the price of crippled monarchy. The Scots now took the offensive, marched into Yorkshire threatening London, sat quietly down and demanded a substantial indemnity as the price of their withdrawal. It was checkmate; if the Scots were not paid, nothing stood between them and the capital, and the King had no money to pay them with. He therefore took a step which was equivalent to capitulation when he summoned another Parliament—the most famous of all Parliaments. He was utterly at their mercy and they were in no mood to show mercy.

This Long Parliament, in its opening phase, was one of the most representative and united that ever sat. A wave of national and Protestant enthusiasm had swept it to Westminster. It had a foreign army, for the Scots were still foreigners, encamped in England, and was in no hurry to get rid of them, for they were a pistol to hold at the King's head. The Parliamentary leaders had an understanding which, whether it was justifiable or not, was certainly treasonable, with the enemy. To make the King's position doubly hopeless they had the London mob on their side, which could be whipped up by the Puritan preachers, and which they did not hesitate to use in order to blackmail the King. Under these circumstances their course was easy, and it only rested with them to decide how far they should drive home their advantage.

They were men of outstanding ability, rather than genius. Pym, King Pym as he came to be called when at the height of his influence,

impresses us as having been a masterly politician, a great Parliament man, but hardly a statesman. His chief idea was to play the game against the King to the bitter end. As for Hampden, he was a respectable county magnate, but, like the other Parliamentary leaders of the left wing, he showed few signs of constructive statesmanship. To go on striking knock-down blows at a defenceless opponent was easy, to find a substitute for the Tudor system of government was a different matter. The strength of these Parliament men was in their attachment to the principles of English Common Law and the liberties of the subject, though it is characteristic that Pym's most memorable defence of these latter occurs in his plea, in 1628, for the severe punishment of a clergyman with the too royalist sentiments of whose sermons Pym and his associates disagreed. It is significant that Pym was known, in the Long Parliament, as the close confederate of the Russell Earl of Bedford. It was the as yet unformed party of which the Russells were the most prominent representatives, whose interests he was in truth supporting. It was probably his plan to exclude both King and Church from any effective power in the State, in order to make way for the dominance of men of good family and substantial means like himself and the majority of his fellow members, and he would have been gravely scandalized at the democratic theories that were, after his death, bandied about at the headquarters of the New Model Army.

In a rapid series of measures the whole edifice of royal authority was shattered. Parliaments were made triennial; the prerogative jurisdiction was swept away; the Crown was deprived of the right to levy Customs or Ship Money; all disputed constitutional questions were decided in favour of Parliament; Laud went to the Tower; Strafford was done to death; Parliament placed itself beyond the reach of its constituents by a bill forbidding it to be dissolved without its own consent. These last two measures were forced upon the King by the mob, which surrounded the palace and made him afraid not so much for his own safety as that of the Queen. It must be said, on the other side, that the Queen had helped to bring this about by promoting an ill-advised plot to get Strafford out of the Tower, and that her constant petty intrigue had the worst effects in keeping the sore open. None the less, if the King had known how to accept defeat in a generous spirit or the Parliamentary leaders had known when to stop, a working settlement might have been arrived at which would have left the King with all the dignity and

something more than the power of his successors of the Whig regime, and would have carried the revolution about as far as and no further than the majority of members desired to see it carried.

Unfortunately neither side was in the mood at which a compromise might have been arrived at. The King was as blind to facts as ever and his opponents had some excuse for not trusting him. He was down and they did not mean to let him get up again. Forces stronger than they could control were beginning to sweep them along. The dams of authority that had kept back Puritanism were broken, and the black tide threatened to flood the whole country. The attack now began to concentrate upon the Church, and for the first time the King found himself supported by a considerable body of opinion among his subjects. The Church of England at this, her brightest period, was a living force fitted to cope even with Puritanism. Besides, the characteristically English instinct of moderation and fair play began to be enlisted on the King's side. Some of the victorious faction began to break away, and, though the names were not invented, a Whig and a Tory party confronted each other in the Commons. Charles even began to choose his ministers from among the Parliamentary ranks, and Pym himself is said to have been offered the Exchequer. But Pym's position was like that of a modern Labour leader, who dares not accept office with a capitalist government for fear of losing his influence with his party.

He and his party friends were determined to ruffle up the waning opposition to the King. They prepared a long and partial statement of the case against him, which they were only able to carry through the House by a few votes, and hardly without bloodshed. They were said to be preparing an impeachment against the Queen. And then, to save his beloved Marie, and partly at her instigation, the King took the human and honourable, but fatally foolish course of trying to get in his own blow first, and to bring up the most prominent of the Parliamentary leaders to take their trial before the Lords for the treason of which they had been at least technically guilty in their dealings with the Scots. He even made a clumsy attempt to arrest the members in the House by coming down from Whitehall at a snail's pace followed by a rabble of soldiers. Of course the accused members did not wait to be seized, and the King found himself branded at once with the odium of tyranny and the contempt that follows a clumsy fiasco.

11

The Beginnings of Expansion

The impulse to expansion overseas was the property of no government nor sect, but arose naturally and spontaneously in the heart of the nation. By no other colonizing power was there so little attempt either to force or direct it during the first half of the sixteenth century. England lagged woefully behind in the race and, in fact, came in for little more than the leavings of her more splendid or pushing rivals. The Spaniard came looking for gold and silver, the Portuguese and the Dutchman for spices and other tropical products, and the riches of the Indies were at their disposal. It was not the will but the power that was lacking to Englishmen of following in their footsteps. The first attempts to attain a footing on the American Continent, in the reign of Elizabeth, had failed, despite the energy of Sir Humphrey Gilbert and the genius of Raleigh, partly because the object sought was Eldorado and quick returns, and partly because the indiscipline of the Elizabethans was such that they had no stomach for the patient labour of a pioneer settlement, and were too much addicted to piracy and mutiny beyond the line to admit of their making a fair start with the task of colonizing.

Neither failure nor delay could baulk, in the long run, the mighty but gradual urge of the English people to expand beyond the borders of their homeland. One such epoch of expansion there had already been, following on the consciousness of national unity in the thirteenth century. But the effort had died away, and the attempt of England to become a Continental power had proved too much for her strength. By the end of the sixteenth century, England, under the greatest of her royal Houses, had found herself again. Her repulse of Spain and the Counter Reformation had united her as never before, and the union of crowns under James I removed the Scottish menace. Peace with Spain diverted her superfluous energy from adventure to business. The new order of society, founded on the plunder of the monasteries and the employment of capital, entailed a considerable unemployed surplus of population. Civil and religious differences made England a sad place of abode for those who happened to be on the oppressed side. Moreover, to the adventurous minds of our ancestors, a halo of romance clung about these distant and new-discovered lands, with all their unknown possibilities.

" O, my America, my New-found-land ! " writes Jack, afterwards Dean Donne, in a far from reputable poem to one of his lady loves. Finally, a genuine love of and pride in England inspired some of the best of our pioneers, Raleigh, Courthope, Captain John Smith, and many another hero of days when men bulked almost superhuman upon the out trail.

In colonial adventure it would be less true to say that England chose the better part than that she had it thrust upon her in her own despite. The glittering prizes of adventure were too often in climates unsuited to be a home for Europeans. To bring back gold and to sell cloves and nutmegs at several hundred per cent profit was one thing, but for the parent stock to strike out branches and take root beyond the seas was another and nobler. This was far from obvious to the men of the Renaissance, though it would have seemed the most natural thing in the world to a Greek city, where a portion of the inhabitants might at any time be moved to depart, with all they had, amid the lamentations of their fellows, to plant another and independent city somewhere on the shores of the wine-dark Mediterranean. England took the Greek way in North America, though it was long before the new settlements were moved to the Greek extreme of breaking connection altogether with the place of their origin.

With various motives and with ever-varying legal status little groups of Englishmen made good their footing upon what is now the Eastern seaboard of the United States. Having come last, the Englishman had to take what the Spaniard had left, and even this was begrudged him ; not the least among the perils to be faced by the first settlers was lest the Spaniards should come and wipe out these intruders upon their monopoly west of Pope Borgia's line. It was soon enough discovered that gold mines and quick returns were an empty dream, that it was as much as our pioneers could hope for to secure a bare existence by hardship and the sweat of their brows. For the majority, even existence was not to be secured ; half the Pilgrim Fathers died off in the first winter, and in Virginia some four-fifths of the inhabitants succumbed during the " starving time ".

Compared with those of other powers, our efforts at colonization were to the last degree haphazard and uncoordinated. Before the middle of the sixteenth century it would be stretching language to talk of an English colonial policy, and to trace the broad outlines of development is a task of no small difficulty. However divergent

the fortunes of the different settlements, they had at least these two prime requisites in common, a sufficiency of men who, for one reason or another, would prefer to take their chance overseas to remaining at home, and enough disposable capital for getting these men across the sea and providing them with the means of making a start. Neither of these conditions would have existed in the Middle Ages. Then every man had his niche in a society relatively stable, and whose resources were not so far in excess of its immediate needs as to permit of their being saved and invested in the hope of distant returns. The changes brought about by the Renaissance and the Reformation had thrown both ideas and the social system into the melting pot, and by the time that James I ascended the throne, the conditions were ripe for capitalist enterprise on a scale sufficient for effective colonization.

Even the advance in prosperity under Elizabeth and the wise measures of her Council could not avail to end the pauperism that had followed in the wake of capitalist enterprise. A fair surplus of unplaced and unemployed men might always be counted upon for any venture that offered the prospect of a living and the offchance of wealth. There were not only the economically but also the spiritually unplaced. The efforts of Church and Crown after uniformity were enough to render almost intolerable the lives of those who valued above meat and raiment their freedom to worship God in their own way. Finally, peace with Spain, and the curmudgeonly attitude of the authorities towards the more or less patriotic service of the Jolly Roger, turned the minds of many an adventurer towards a more regular and profitable sphere of activity.

So much for the men—for the wealth the increasing prosperity of the nation would provide. Elizabeth's regular war with Spain had resulted in a temporary check to the advance of wealth ; it was impossible even for her to indulge in the luxury of war without having to foot the bill out of the taxpayers' pockets. Bad harvests and the plague had supplemented man's efforts for his own destruction. But with the peace and the union of the two Kingdoms the tide of prosperity began to swell and continued fairly steady until, with the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, England was drawn into the fringe of a religious struggle. And just as the sweet showers of April had formerly impelled men to go on pilgrimages, so now did the springtide of worldly success lead to the formation of joint stock companies for every sort of adventure. Money was cheap, amazingly so, in those days of risks, if we may accept Dr. Scott's estimate of

the rate of interest on loans as 8 or 9 per cent. Meanwhile the progress of invention was as yet barely perceptible, and the prospects of big returns from foreign enterprise were sure to attract investors or, as they were called in those days, adventurers.

The most dazzling prospects of all, for those who were prepared to take risks, were presented by voyages to the tropics and particularly to the East Indies. The great East India Company was formed in 1600, at first as a regulated company on the model of the Merchant Adventurers, in which every voyage was a separate venture, financed by its own particular group of adventurers. Gradually, however, the old loose medieval type of association was superseded; men put their money not into the voyage but the company, and shares came to be disposed of in the market quite after the modern fashion. But in the East India Islands, with their almost priceless spices and sandalwood, our merchants had now to face rivals of a more formidable nature than the Portuguese. The Calvinist Dutch were, in matters of business, quite insensitive to the sentimental considerations of friendship that swayed some English Protestants. Their East India Company had many times more capital than our own, and was consequently able to maintain an overwhelming superiority in ships and fortified posts. They regarded the Englishmen as interlopers, and even when a sort of understanding was patched up between the governments at home, they continued to harass and even massacre Englishmen who poached upon what they considered to be their preserves.

Just as the Spaniards and Portuguese, by establishing themselves in the most coveted parts of the West, caused Englishmen to gravitate to the temperate coast of North America, so the Dutch, by edging them out of the Islands, directed their efforts towards the mainland of India, to do business with the Empire of the Great Moguls, then at its height. A factory at Surat was the insignificant beginning of a vaster Empire that was to stretch from Peshawar to Cape Comorin. No dream of such an eventuality could have crossed the minds of these early traders. They were out to make such profits as they could by favour of a potentate whose power and splendour outshone that of any European monarch. We have the memoirs of an able and observant Englishman, Sir Thomas Roe, who was sent by James I at the expense of the East India Company, as ambassador to the court at Agra, then under the hard-drinking, cruel, but by no means incompetent Jehangir, who would bastinado a courtier in the morning for remembering the convivialities of the

night before, who disciplined an intriguing son by conducting him down a mile-long avenue of that son's impaled yet living supporters, but who was nevertheless, in his way, a man of taste and letters, for whose favour our handful of traders were respectfully solicitous.

In the West, the unsuccessful experiments in colonization of Gilbert and Raleigh did not deter those who calculated that with proper backing and management a very different result might be secured. The commercial booms of James I's reign caused capital to flow freely into Western as well as Eastern colonial enterprise. The settlement of Virginia was taken up in good earnest, and though the colony passed through severe vicissitudes and only escaped a fresh destruction by the skin of its teeth, matters gradually righted themselves on the development of a lucrative trade in tobacco. The Bermudas and various of the West India Islands were occupied less as conquests than as speculations. On Newfoundland we had established a footing as early as Elizabeth's reign. A haphazard and straggling empire was beginning to form itself on no more exalted principle than that of securing profit wherever it could be obtained.

Meanwhile a development of even greater importance had been taking place, North of where the English colonies were cut into two by the Dutch and Swedish settlements round the mouth of the Hudson. A congregation of Puritans, whom persecution had driven from England to Holland, resolved to brave the perils of the Atlantic in order to found a settlement where the godly could worship God in their own way and, as it turned out, exchange the role of the persecuted for that of the persecutor. These were the famous Pilgrim Fathers, and by the mis-direction of the voyage and something like a strike on the part of the crew they were compelled to shift for themselves as best they might on an inhospitable shore far to the Northward of their proposed landing place. They were soon followed by the numerous and powerful settlement of Massachusetts, a community of Puritans who thought it better to reign in America than to serve in England, and who were constantly reinforced from home. The process was repeated when certain earnest believers were, in their turn, driven out of Massachusetts and became the Pilgrim Fathers of yet another settlement.

Thus, to the North, were growing up a little cluster of Puritan communities known as New England, whose unit of government was the township and whose principles were fiercely democratic. To the South was the Colony of Virginia, aristocratic, and tending to consist

of a number of large plantations or big estates, each a self-contained proprietary unit, with its own wharf and ultimately its complement of slaves. To the North of Virginia sprung up the colony of Maryland, founded by Lord Baltimore as a refuge for the intolerably oppressed English Catholics, and which developed, in subsequent time, into a debatable land between the North and South of the American colonies. On the other side of New England, to the North of all, was Sir Ferdinando Gorges's proprietary colony of Maine and Mason's of New Hampshire.

Thus, at first sight, the English colonies seem only to agree in being all different from each other. In contrast to the deliberate and not always unenlightened control of Spain and the scientific financial policy of Holland, informed by the Jews of Amsterdam, is the series of experiments by which England blundered into the beginnings of her Empire. Despite the writings of Bacon, Raleigh and others, no very clear or consistent idea seems to have been entertained as to the functions or nature of a colony nor of its relations with the government at home. Perhaps it was better that the government should learn by its own mistakes than that it should start with a cut and dried system which it was determined to enforce at all costs. On the whole the first two Stuarts were both tolerant and reasonable in their treatment of the colonies, and allowed them to develop on their own lines without too much attempt at interference. They were more inclined to bargain than to command.

For the unique and vital feature that distinguished these first attempts at colonization was that where Englishmen established themselves, the Common Law went with them, and with the Common Law that stubborn clinging to established right that is its spirit. The King was no administrative despot; once he had conceded a privilege it was not his to take back. The Charter of a colony could only be revoked if it could be proved before a judge that it was legally invalid, but that was for the court and not the Crown to decide. True to the spirit of this Common Law, the rights by which colonies were established were of the most arbitrary and seemingly irrational nature. The hoary principles of feudalism were resurrected, and the Earl of Carlisle would be allowed to hold an island or Lord Baltimore a strip of the mainland on precisely the same tenure as Fitzosborne had received Chester and Odo of Bayeux Kent from the Conqueror. The proprietor or the proprietary company was theoretically owner of every inch of land in the colony and entitled not only to a quit rent but to an oath of fealty from every

landholder. The governor was his steward and the executive his servants.

Such a state of things might have been expected to produce the most arbitary tyranny, but for the fact that there was not only a letter of the Common Law, but also a spirit that was very much alive at this time. Both at home and overseas Englishmen were possessed of an uncritical but none the less practical sense of their personal liberties. Magna Charta was on every man's lips, and even such unhistorical fictions as a legal principle of *De Tallagio Non Concedendo* were used as weapons to ward off encroaching authority. The long and short of it was that neither from a King nor a proprietor nor anybody else was the freeborn Englishman going to accept tyranny, and above all things, he was not going to be taxed nor governed without his consent. Thus, even in the aristocratic and cavalier Virginia, not a score of years have passed before a representative assembly springs almost spontaneously into existence. The usual course of affairs in a proprietary or Crown colony is a struggle between a nominated executive and a representative legislature, with the scales heavily weighted in favour of the latter by the power of the purse and, in the last resort, of resistance.

In the new England colonies democracy was more logical and uncompromising in its expression. The Massachusetts company took the decisive step of transferring their charter to the colony, and thus of becoming their own proprietors. Henceforward the ties that bound them to the motherland were of the slenderest, and an injudicious attempt to assert the authority of the Crown came within an ace of anticipating the revolution of the next century. For Archbishop Laud, with his uncompromising tactlessness, had seen the danger that lay in this nest of Puritanism, and would have brought the colony to heel by placing it under the governance of that fine old Elizabethan veteran, Sir Ferdinando Gorges. The ancestors of the men who were to throw the tea into Boston harbour were arming and fortifying in order to resist to the death this infringement of their liberties, but the troubles that were overwhelming King and Archbishop at home gave them something else to think of than applying "Thorough" to Massachusetts. So independent had these new England colonies grown, that four of them actually entered into an alliance for purposes of mutual defence and support.

Even in New England, however, there was no very serious thought, as yet, of formal independence. The infant colonies were not strong enough to hold their own, without support, against powerful and

ambitious rivals. Both for military and economic reasons, England and her colonies had need of each other, and there was, on the whole, a fair give and take between the two. If Virginia was under the protection of the British navy it was but fair that she should send her tobacco to England at least to pay revenue before reshipment for abroad, but then it was also fair that attempts to start tobacco planting at home should be put down, as they were, with a strong hand. Charles I, whatever his other faults, was a good friend to the colonies; under his auspices a strong and able committee was appointed to advise the Crown in its dealings with them, and a policy of political and economic union, to the partial or total exclusion of other nations, began slowly to take shape.

CHAPTER V

THE QUINTESSENCE OF PROTESTANTISM

1

The Case of Ulster

If it was Scotland that brought about the fall of the King's attempt to carry on the Tudor system in spite of his Parliament, it was the rebellion in Ireland that precipitated the English civil war. That most unhappy country had been reduced, by the merciless energy of Mountjoy, to at least the semblance of submission on the death of Elizabeth. The chances of breaking the English yoke by open resistance or by the intervention of Spain were faint indeed. But Irish civilization was still alive and carrying on an heroic struggle to preserve its continuity. There was even something of a revival of native literature, now becoming more than ever tinged with that wistful melancholy which is partly, no doubt, the result of climate and temperament, but which has been intensified out of measure by humiliation and stupid tyranny. This forlorn hope of continuing the true glories of Ireland is none the less of importance because it fills so small a space in ordinary history. If it failed to maintain the line of bards and scholars, it at least succeeded in keeping alive the spirit of Irish patriotism. Ireland may have lost freedom, wealth, happiness, language, the best of her children, all in the world that she possessed, but she has fought hard to keep her soul.

The Catholic Church, whose dominance she had once resisted with more independence than any other province, and which had all over the world stood for the negation of patriotism, had now become the very symbol and strength of Irish nationality. When the English were brutally putting down all facilities for Irish education, it was being kept alive abroad at such centres as the Franciscan colleges at Rome and Douai, where the Irish language could be spoken and an Irish culture maintained without incurring the penalties of the law. Meanwhile Catholicism continued to be proscribed in Ireland; James I was horrified at the imputation that he might be disposed to tolerance. It is probable that weakness had more part than

fanaticism in hardening the English attitude. The first two Stuarts were perpetually out at elbows and could not afford to maintain a strong garrison. Tentative experiments in relaxation were not encouraging; the nation was so whole-heartedly Catholic that priests and monasteries seemed ready to spring from the soil, and the governors of Ireland were afraid to give the people their heads lest they should get altogether out of control.

It was in the reign of James I that the most enduring if not the greatest of Ireland's wrongs was perpetrated in the plantation of Ulster. The system of plantation, which was nothing more nor less than that of robbing the Irish of their own lands in order to make way for British adventurers, had been started in the time of Elizabeth and continued to that of Cromwell. Though this iniquity was perpetrated throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, the extraordinary assimilative capacity of the Irish nation was capable, sooner or later, of absorbing the new settlers as it had absorbed the Normans, with the exception of the colony in the Northern province, which developed into a separate nation, fiercely hostile to Irish tradition and complicating any effort to bring about a satisfactory settlement of an age-long grievance. Why this should have been so in Ulster and nowhere else will be fairly evident from a glance at the map, especially when it is observed that the Protestant nucleus has tended to shift from its original location, and to concentrate in the corner nearest of all to Great Britain. It is as if the population of the larger island had overflowed its limits to just such an extent as to submerge that corner of Ireland nearest to it. That this overflow was no new thing is evident from the very name of O'Donnell, which is of course the same as that of the great Highland and Hebridean clan Macdonald.

This sept, and that of O'Neill, had been foremost in keeping alive Irish resistance in the North. By the accession of James I things had at least nominally quieted down; the two chiefs had been received into favour, to the no small indignation of English commanders who had fought against them, and they were now Earls and supposed to be peaceful subjects. It was too much to expect this to endure, and as has nearly always happened in Irish history, any prospect of a peaceful settlement was wrecked by a quarrel between Irishmen. The O'Neill chief, the Earl of Tyrone, fell foul of a vassal of his, Sir Donnell O'Cahan, and the Earl was summoned to London to have the case determined. The English record of bad faith in the past perhaps made him unduly suspicious, for, without

any proof that has yet come to light, he leapt to the conclusion that this was a plot to get hold of his person. He, therefore, and the O'Donnell chief, took ship and fled from the country, thereby, in the eyes of the government, branding themselves as open rebels.

The Lord Deputy at this time was Sir Arthur Chichester, of a gentleness and enlightenment remarkable for one in his position, and he conceived the idea of taking advantage of the situation to initiate a reform that should make the North into the garden of Ireland without injuring anybody. The flight of the two Earls had thrown everything into the melting pot. Under Irish law, the whole of a tribe's land belonged to that tribe and not to the chief, but to English notions this law was "damnable", the lands belonged to the chief and nobody else. When, therefore, the chief's lands were forfeited for open treason, the whole of them reverted to the Crown, and by this iniquitous legal fiction the real owners, the poor Irishmen, had no title in them whatever. Had Chichester's advice been followed, however, little harm need have been done. There was land enough to spare, after satisfying all the requirements of the natives, and it was this land that Chichester proposed to allot to the new settlers, men who should introduce the most advanced agricultural methods, instead of the miserable scratching of the soil by light wooden ploughs tied to the tails of ponies.

Not for the first nor the last time, the government at home disdained to tread the path of moderation, and made their will their counsellor. Chichester's wise advice was rejected, and the settlement was carried through with all the brutal injustice that could be devised. The rights and feelings of the inhabitants were alike ignored; their lands were thrown to any capitalist adventurer who could promise a sufficient rent. From the business point of view, the enterprise was well organized; pushing cultivators and handicraftsmen thronged into the province, which soon began greatly to increase in visible prosperity. Not only was the soil made to yield far more under the new methods, but during the deputyship of Strafford the cultivation of flax was stimulated and a powerful economic bond established between Ulster and Lancashire, for the growing industry of Manchester had need of Irish linen yarn to work into fustians with cotton and also to re-export as finished linen to Ireland.

Thus was a community planted and established in Ireland, where it was in closest touch of all with Great Britain, of a quality and religion diametrically opposite to that of their fellow Irishmen.

All sorts of settlers emigrated there, but in time the Scottish Calvinist element came to predominate, partly because Ulster was at the very door of the Lowlands, partly because the ecclesiastical policy of the Stuarts caused many good Presbyterians to emigrate, and partly because the Scots took more kindly to the country, and even roused the wrath of the home government by daring to intermarry with the Irish. But the rightful owners of the land, who had been reduced to being hewers of wood and drawers of water, nursed bitterness in their hearts, and dreamed of the time when the great O'Neill Earl would return to deliver them. There were not wanting English observers who foresaw that, at the first convenient opportunity, they would rise and cut the throats of the scattered settlers. The curse of Columcille might yet fall on the violators of his Derry.

Meanwhile the native Irish culture was suffusing the clouds that darkened over the land, with a rich and pathetic sunset glory. The bards now began to forsake the elaborate measures that had appealed to the cultivated taste of well-to-do patrons, and sang to the people in simple and appealing strains. The last great contest of the bards took place early in the seventeenth century and lasted for years. The subject of contention was that of the ancient glories of Munster as compared with those of the rest of Ireland. Every branch of scholarship was kept alive, and it was in the fourth decade of the century that one of the most famous of Irish histories, the *Annals of the Four Masters*, was being written. But the shadow of night was fast climbing the sky, the long night of Ireland's silence and misery. "I am wasting and perishing with grief," wrote Hugh Bourke [1] "to see how insensibly nigher and nigher draws the catastrophe which must inflict mortal wounds on our country."

The weak tyranny of the Stuart regime was continued by two deputies after Chichester, the second of whom, Viscount Falkland, attempted to make way for another plantation by deliberately fastening a false charge of treason on the Irish clan of the O'Byrnes. Then came Wentworth, the strongest and ablest Englishman of his time, and started a furiously efficient pro-consulship. The Irish Parliament was overawed into voting supplies; corruption and insubordination were put down with a high hand; the finances were put in order, the seas cleared of pirates, the Ulster linen industry put on a firm basis. Unfortunately Wentworth, like the Elizabethan he was, had no care for Irish liberty; he had that fatal notion, unhappily too familiar, that the Irish were an inferior race who only

[1] *Irish Nationality* by Mrs. J. R. Green, p. 147.

wanted a few years of firm government to reduce them to a contented obedience. If he founded the prosperity of Ulster by encouraging the linen trade, he did much to establish the poverty of Southern Ireland by suppressing its woollen industry in the interests of England. And he was about to crown the long series of land robberies by extending the policy of Naboth's vineyard to the hitherto untouched province of Connaught.

When he was withdrawn and England's hands were tied by her own domestic differences, the inevitable catastrophe happened. Embittered by the past and despairing as to the future, the Irish broke into desperate rebellion. This was worst of all in Ulster, whence lurid and exaggerated accounts of horrors reached England. It will never be known, even approximately, how many of the settlers were murdered outright, or were turned out of their homes to perish of hardship in the endeavour to reach Dublin. At the lowest computation it must have been terrible enough; no people who have been robbed of land and liberty, least of all Irishmen, are apt to be too gentle in their methods of retaliation. The English Puritans regarded the rising with the same feelings of horror as our grandfathers felt on hearing of the massacre of Cawnpore. Vengeance must be taken, complete and terrible; the land must be reconquered with more severity than ever—but by whom? The King was unquestionably the lawful head of the army. But the King at the head of a victorious army might be more threatening to the liberties of Parliament than any Irish rebellion—nay, the King might be found on the side of the rebels. Parliament therefore threw over the last vestige of legal justification by demanding the control of the militia. "Not for an hour!" was the King's answer.

2.

The First Civil War

It was the mistake of the Parliamentary leaders that they pushed their advantage over the King to such immoderate lengths that only a civil war could decide the issue, a war which, if it were to last for any length of time, must almost certainly prove fatal to their cause whichever way it went. Once the force of militant Puritanism was fairly unchained, no one could say to what excesses it might not run nor whether Parliament itself would be able to control a victorious army of the elect.

The war, like most wars, pursues a simple enough course when viewed from a sufficiently comprehensive standpoint. In one sense it resembles the Wars of the Roses in being a struggle of the more civilized against the more backward part of the country. Parliament has the firm support of London, and of most of the fertile Southern and Eastern Lowlands of England; the King's strength lies in the Northern and Western fringe, the more mountainous and less civilized regions. The Tudor system had ceased to command the allegiance of the more progressive section of Englishmen, for the wealth and brains of the nation had not yet begun to concentrate in the North. The struggle resolves itself into an effort, on the King's part, to close in upon London, for which it was obvious, from the beginning, that his strength was inadequate. When his handful of an army had acquitted itself with tolerable success in a rough and tumble at Edgehill in the Midlands, when it had occupied Oxford and proceeded to advance down the Thames, storming Brentford on its way, it found the London trained bands in position at Turnham Green, and liked the look of them so little that it retired to Oxford without the formality of a battle. From that moment all real interest had gone out of the struggle; the King could not win, and it was only a question of time and determination how soon he should be rounded up.

And yet, by purely military calculations, he ought to have had a good chance of winning. He had an excellent staff as compared with that of his enemy; its plan for the encirclement of London was soundly conceived, and in those days of open fields he had not only the material for an excellent cavalry, but a born leader of shock tactics in his nephew Prince Rupert. The first Parliamentary army was miserably led, and at Edgehill Rupert and Wilmot had hunted their cavalry like hares. What was lacking to the Royalists was the will to win that enables men to sink their individuality and interests in a common cause. This the decaying Tudor system, with Charles I at its head, could by no means command. The Cavaliers did not fight like men who had staked everything on winning; some of the best of them feared victory little less than defeat. Sir Edmund Verney, the King's standard bearer at Edgehill, said before the battle that he heartily wished the King would yield to the Parliament's terms, but, he added, "I have eaten his bread and served him nigh thirty years, and will not do so base a thing as to forsake him; and choose rather to loose my life—which I am sure to do—to preserve and defend those things which are against my conscience to preserve

and defend." The most attractive of all the characters of this time was the gentle and scholarly Viscount Falkland, who was so horrified at the fractricidal struggle that, to all intents and purposes, he committed suicide at Newbury.

There is, in fact, among the Cavalier ranks, little reasoned consciousness of a cause worth dying for, apart from their personal loyalty to their King and master, and a temperamental dislike of the gloomy Puritans who, they instinctively felt, were taking away from England the colour and merriment that had been hers in the past. It is noticeable that of all the many Cavalier rouses that were being sung in the Halls at Oxford and round the camp fires of Rupert, the most celebrated expressed a sheer yearning for the colour and trappings of life which men associated with a court atmosphere :

"Though for a time we see Whitehall
With cobwebs hanging on the wall,
Instead of silk and silver brave,
Which formerly it used to have ;
With rich perfume
In every room,
Delightful to that princely train,
Which again you shall see,
When the time it shall be,
That the King enjoys his own again."

Sentiment of this kind, however endearing, is not of the sort that impels men to victory in a long struggle. Even in the palmy days of Elizabeth the vice of indiscipline had prevented us from pressing home our success against King Philip, and since Elizabeth's time the upper class had been running to seed. We are not surprised to find that indiscipline was rampant among the followers of Charles I. For this reason he never had an army that could be manoeuvred on the field, and not often one that could be relied on to carry out a strategic plan. His movement on London in 1643 involved the convergence of three armies, but of these the Cornish troops would not march Eastward while the garrison at Plymouth threatened their homes, the Northern army was pinned to its base in the same way by the garrison of Hull, and even the main force at Oxford contained a large proportion of Welshmen who were not willing to march on London before settling accounts with Gloucester. Thus was a promising scheme rendered hopeless.

As it was in strategy, so in tactics. Rupert or Goring might be able to sweep the opposing cavalry from the field, but they were never able to keep their own troopers in hand, and the result of a successful charge was that Cavaliers and Roundheads alike, on one

particular wing, disappeared from the field. At Newbury, when the King's army barred the Roundhead communications with London and had only to sit tight for their army to disperse, the battle was precipitated by the undisciplined offensive of some Royalist officers. At Marston Moor, the great defeat outside York which lost the North to the King, Rupert had the egregious folly to halt and dismount within charging distance of Oliver Cromwell. When the King surrounded Essex at Lostwithiel in Cornwall and compelled the surrender of his infantry, the cavalry broke through the cordon because Lord Goring had been too drunk to take an order. The King's army was never concentrated, but dispersed in useless garrisons of private residences all over the country, providing fine material for romantic fiction but worse than useless for the purpose of winning the war. Gentlemen, plumed and beribboned, came to Oxford for a gallop with Rupert and left it as they pleased. It is a marvel that they kept up the struggle as long as they did.

This, however, was partly due to the fact that, to begin with, their opponents were little more set on victory than themselves. What we have called the Whig party in the contention, that of the great nobles and well-to-do gentlemen, who desired to substitute their own power for that of the King, shrank from pushing matters to an extremity. One or two of them, like Hampden, saw clearly enough that if you are going to war, you must fight to win, but men like Essex and Manchester shrank from putting themselves beyond the scope of mercy should the King, as seemed probable sooner or later, come to enjoy his own again. They clung to the hope of some respectable compromise, if only for the reason that the King seemed a necessary part of the Constitution, and his consent must ultimately be obtained to any arrangement that was come to. Only when the heart of the rebellion was threatened directly by an advance on London or indirectly by the siege of Gloucester, did Essex, the Roundhead commander-in-chief, act as if he really intended to win, and on each of these occasions the situation was saved by the London trained bands, formed largely from that London mob which had been the most effective support of the Long Parliament in terrorizing the King.

One result of the backboneless Roundhead strategy was a number of minor successes to the Royalists, which produced apprehensions of defeat among the Parliamentary leaders and something like war-weariness among their followers. They therefore determined to redress the falling balance by throwing in the weight of the Scots,

who had hitherto held aloof. But it is not in the Scottish nature to give something for nothing, and the price demanded for their alliance was that the larger Kingdom should take the Covenant and conform her religious system to that of the smaller. It did not occur to the Scots that England herself might have something to say to this arrangement, and Parliament was too eager to get the Scottish army, to be particular what it pledged its word to. The bargain was therefore concluded; the Scots came South and turned the balance at Marston Moor, and an assembly of divines met at Westminster, to work out the details of setting up a Presbyterian Kirk in England.

To one man of genius on the Roundhead side, Oliver Cromwell, it had early been apparent that the Whig methods (again to use a title which was only invented later) of waging war could only end in prolonging it indefinitely. He was as impatient of Essex's tactics as Nelson was to be of Lord Howe's. He perceived, moreover, that the kind of man of which the first Parliamentary armies were composed could not compare with the gentlemen and their hard-riding retainers who were pitted against them. So, with an insight that was deeper than that of the professional soldiers, he determined, in his own command, to make the utmost use of the strongest moral force in the country, that of Puritanism. The ideal at which he aimed was an army of devout enthusiasts, men conscious of their salvation and of their divine commission to smite Amelek hip and thigh. Gradually he turned his ideal into practice, and the conspicuous success of his own Ironsides in the field caused this leaven of uncompromising Puritanism gradually to leaven the whole army.

Unlike the first Parliamentary commanders, Cromwell fought to win. It was the merest matter of course for him to declare that if he met the King in action he would treat him as he would any other soldier. These new methods were, however, little to the taste of Parliament. An army of saints might easily get out of hand, and the type of Puritanism favoured by the troops was of a more logical and individualistic, though at the same time more tolerant kind than that of the State-controlled Presbyterian Kirk which the Westminster divines were trying to set up. The strangest opinions were being mooted among them, heretical and democratic, very little to the taste of the staid and aristocratic gentlemen who, in getting the mastery of their King, had no idea of finding that they had raised up for themselves a tyrant more formidable than any Stuart. They fussed and interfered with the army to little purpose. At last matters came to a crisis when, instead of pushing home the victory of Marston,

Essex wandered off into Cornwall and got himself surrounded, and Manchester deliberately wrecked a scheme to cut off the victorious King from Oxford at a second battle of Newbury.

Parliament itself was compelled to recognize facts; the old commanders were dismissed in a body; an army, called the New Model, was formed on the Cromwellian principle, and though its commander-in-chief, Fairfax, was a gentleman more of the old model than the new, he at least had enough strategical sense to aim at seeking out the King's main army and defeating it wherever it could be found. Meanwhile the resources of the Parliament, which commanded the richest part of the Kingdom, were giving it an overwhelming material superiority, while the King's desperate straits for money and the way in which his undisciplined and needy levies contrived to live on the country, were killing his cause in even the most loyal districts. The issue was inevitable; the New Model soon found the King drifting about aimlessly in the Midlands and, outnumbering him two to one, smashed his army to pieces at Naseby. After that it was only a matter of "mopping up" the remaining Royalist forces, who showed little keenness to die in the last ditch. Meanwhile a rehearsal in miniature of the English war was taking place in Scotland, where the poet-hero Montrose was winning a series of glorious but fruitless victories for the King with a scratched-up army of wild Highlanders and Irishmen, against the Presbyterians of the Lowlands and the powerful Campbell clan. The higher civilization soon told, as it was bound to tell, and Montrose, with all his victories behind him, was caught by superior numbers and all but annihilated. Such, in rough outline, was the course of the first civil war.

3

The Triumph of the Saints

The battle of Naseby cleared the way for Puritanism, which was now free to profit as it might by its triumph. Its only possible rival, the Church of England, had gone down with the "Belial of the court", though the King pathetically refused to realize this, as he had refused to realize most other facts with which he had had to deal. What he had lost by arms he might regain by finesse, and he embarked upon a course which was as heroic in its intention as it was futile and cunning in practice. The King was determined, come what might, that he would not sacrifice, as he had sacrificed Strafford, the friends who had fought for him nor the Church he loved. Though,

even when he was brought to face the tribunal which had been got together to compass his death, he hardly realized that they would dare proceed to extremities, no man was ever more proudly disdainful of preserving his own life. He continued his shifts with unabated skill while his fate was inevitably closing around him, and he died, as he was well aware, a martyr for the Church that afterwards canonized him. And by the manner of his death he went far towards retrieving the mistakes of his life.

In the contest that had started at Edgehill between King and Parliament, both sides had signally failed. The victory was nominally with the Parliament, but the power was with the army they had raised up for their own protection. So long as the New Model was in being, there was no force in the country capable of standing against it, and the Parliament, as blind to facts as the King himself, not only did all it could to irritate the troops by its Presbyterian tyranny, but, by its ignoble meanness in trying to disband the army without paying off arrears, precipitated a crisis. The men refused to be disbanded and marched on London, where they soon found themselves masters of the situation. It was now only a question on what terms the New Model would tolerate the civilians at Westminster, and how long they would tolerate their power on any terms. Events were soon to happen that brought the soldiers more than ever to the fore. The Scottish Presbyterians, who had flattered themselves that they could impose their will on the larger Kingdom as the price of their support, found out that Parliament was perfectly impotent to carry out this or any other bargain against the will of the army. Disillusioned, they tried to make much the same bargain on much the same terms, this time with the Royalists. They were too late; there was nothing in the three kingdoms that could stand up against the New Model.

A second civil war broke out; smouldering embers of Royalism burst into flame; a considerable but ill-led and half-hearted Scottish army straggled into Lancashire along what is now the line of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway, and Cromwell, crossing the Pennines from Yorkshire, cut them in half by one of those overwhelming triumphs of strategy which, like Sedan and Tannenberg, are only possible where the material or moral superiority of the victor is decisive. It was the merest police work to stamp out the revolt in England, though the temper of the Roundheads had perceptibly hardened against the "malignants", and cold blood was now being required for hot. It was not likely that the King, who was held to be the prime mover of all this mischief, would escape.

Parliament, which never contemplated so shocking a breach with tradition as public regicide, went on with the game of negotiation till the army took the matter and the King out of their hands. Parliament was easily brought to heel by a Colonel and a force of soldiers who turned out the whole Conservative and Presbyterian majority, and left the remainder, or Rump, free to go through the legal farce of putting the King out of the way. What was left of the House of Lords dropped, for a time, out of the Constitution, and the Rump itself only survived until Cromwell, losing all patience with its politicians, sent them packing the way their Presbyterian colleagues had gone before them, and "not a dog barked at their going." To such an ignoble end had the Long Parliament come.

By this time the New Model had established such a lordship over the British Isles as no King had ever enjoyed. The massacre of Protestants in Ireland was now terribly revenged. Ireland was laid, crushed and bleeding, at the feet of a conqueror who knew not mercy to Catholics and "wild Irish". Not without reason is the curse of Cromwell esteemed the most terrible an Irishman can utter. "Say your rann now, little man," had been the cry of an iron gospeller as he pushed one of the last Irish bards over a cliff. The Irish cause had failed, partly because of the tragic Irish incapacity for united action, but most of all owing to the irresistible strength of the New Model. Crownwell and his saints were conquerors of a higher character than the old Normans and Elizabethans. If their God was a pitiless Hebrew Jehovah, they at least lived as if in His sight; indiscriminate looting was put down with as severe a hand as Wellington's; the abominations practised on Irishwomen in 1798 would have seemed to them, as indeed they were, hellish and damnable. They proceeded with the merciless logic and spiritual pride of God's chosen hewing down Amelek. The laws of war were executed with all the merciless severity characteristic of "the cruel wars of High Germanie"; garrisons were put to the sword, fugitives were smoked to death in caves, and the lesson taught by Mountjoy of starving the population into surrender by devastating the country was only too faithfully learnt by the Ironsides.

Slaughter and starvation were followed by a robbery of Irish land more systematic and extensive than any before. "To Hell or Connaught" was Cromwell's summary of his policy towards the inhabitants. It was the deliberate intention of the conquerors to solve the Irish problem by transporting the natives of three quarters of the Island, bag and baggage, to the province, on which Strafford

had cast greedy eyes, West of the Shannon. Their lands were to be given to retired soldiers or to speculators who bought them up at a fraction of their value. The usual precautions were taken against any reconciliation, by intermarriage, between the two nations, precautions happily futile. Of course, the idea of turning out the whole population was as impracticable as it was wicked; the spoilers needed their services in the mournful task of tilling the dispossessed lands, and the Restoration cut short the full execution of the Commonwealth policy. But the miseries inflicted on the Catholic landowners and their families, who were cast penniless on a province where there was no room for them, were pitiful, and another blow, perhaps the heaviest of all, was inflicted on the ancient Irish civilization. The Irishman's Church was now becoming all that was left to him, and he clung to it with a passionate and patriotic devotion.

The condition of Ireland was indeed forlorn. Her harp was silent in the dust; her once flourishing commerce was almost killed. "Poor Galway," writes a clergyman,[1] "sitteth in the dust and no eye pitieth her. Her merchants were princes and great among the nations, but now the city which was full of people is solitary and very desolate." To make assurance of ruin doubly sure, the Irish inhabitants were ordered to clear out of their once opulent seaport, in order to make way for adventurers from Gloucester. Poor Galway! Her case was typical. Englishmen thought not of the woes of Ireland, but of massacres, that lost nothing in the telling, of Protestants, and of the fact that God's slaughtered saints, the Protestants of Piedmont, were being put to the sword by Irish Catholic mercenaries. For by some strange fate, it seems as if the two sister nations must have eyes for, and experience only of what is evil one in the other.

We may take what comfort we can from the reflection that even in those hard days there were one or two Englishmen more enlightened than the majority towards their Irish brethren. Good Bishop Bedell, who died of his privations during the rebellion of 1642, had embodied the peculiar sweetness that distinguished the best sons of the Anglican Church. He had the rare distinction of acting like a Christian towards those who differed from him in their Christianity. He endeavoured to stand between the Catholics and the injustice of English law; he did all he could to encourage the study of the Irish language among his clergy, and some at least of the Irish loved him and gave him protection, though he was deprived of home, goods and library and, indirectly, of life when he refused to leave his

[1] Quoted in Mr. Bagwell's *Ireland under the Stuarts*.

flock in the time of trouble. Then there is an almost forgotten friend of Ireland in the shape of Vincent Gookin, whose father was indeed noted for his virulence against the Irish, but who, himself, incurred the odium of being a corrupted and degenerate Englishman because he took a brave stand against the injustice and impolicy of "Hell or Connaught". Charity, that would dwell rather on good than evil, will not suffer such names to die when the tale of England in Ireland is told. On the like of such "corrupted Englishmen" reposes England's true greatness in the past and her fairest hope for the future.

Two Cromwellian victories sufficed to make the first complete English conquest of Scotland. So blind to reality were the Lowland Presbyterians, that they had not yet abandoned hope of imposing their Covenant on England with the young Charles II as puppet King, and with infatuated bigotry they weeded their army of its best elements and furnished it with a corps of holy but incompetent officers. Even so Cromwell, advancing by the Eastern gate, found himself pressed as never before; the tough old soldier David Leslie fairly outmanoeuvred him and forced him to the imminent risk of destruction during his retreat between the hills and the sea. It was only the magnificent discipline of the New Model that enabled the whole army to execute a sudden right wheel during a September night and, attacking at dawn, roll up the Scottish army from flank to flank. It was now a forlorn hope to reform the King's service by admitting anyone who would fight for him, however ungodly. Cromwell, again baffled in his advance, this time deliberately left the Western road open, and his enemy, blindly accepting the gambit, started on a mad dash into England, and was soon rounded up and destroyed at Worcester. The civil war was definitely over, and the victorious army able to impose its will upon the British Isles beyond the hope of appeal.

4

The Book

The verdict of arms was thus decisive in favour of the Puritan ideal. The Elizabethan State Church, with its centralized, despotic organization, had proved itself incapable of commanding the allegiance of the strongest and most civilized part of the nation. England, or that part of it which counted most, had determined that there should be no half-way house between Rome and Geneva; the

Reformation was at last to be realized in all its fullness. Every barrier between God and man was to be broken down; salvation was to become direct and immediate; the humblest of God's people had a right to a glorious liberty and a peace passing all understanding. Rome had held the people in mental and spiritual slavery, and now all bonds of human authority were to be broken. "Thou wilt be as one," says Baxter, "that standeth on the top of an exceeding high mountain, he looks down on the world as if it were quite below him . . . the greatest princes will seem to thee but as grasshoppers and the busy, contentious, covetous world, but as an heap of ants."

Few, however, even of the most extreme Protestants were prepared to accept the logical consequences of Protestantism. Those who professed to abhor any half-way house had usually their own halting place beyond which they would neither go themselves, nor suffer others to go. The mitre might be swept away after the tiara, the stained-glass window share the fate of the rood, fathers and councils be respected no more than schoolmen, but the holy book and the holy day would be the objects of a veneration as blind as had ever been inspired by papal and priestly authority. The cell doors had been opened, but the prison gates were still locked.

Luther, in his famous defiance at Worms, had abjured the authority of Popes and General Councils only to affirm that of Scripture, and this collection of the classics of a remote time and an Oriental people became the bedrock of authority upon which the Puritan established his faith. The strangeness of the phenomenon is only obscured by centuries of familiarity. A holy or infallible book is certainly a religious property of most peoples civilized enough to write. But there has been nothing of the same kind as the Christian Bible. The Indian Vedas are a collection of ancestral psalms, whose interpretation is as jealously guarded by the Brahmin caste as ever that of the Bible was by the Catholic priesthood; the Koran is one book, written by an Arab prophet for members of his own race; the Confucian classics are a collection of native literature; and Buddhism, which, transplanted from the land of its origin, presents the closest parallel, has indeed a New Testament, but not an Old.

The Hebrew Classics, which have been given to the English nation in the most magnificent of all translations, are distinguished most by their astonishing diversity. Even the most sceptical of critics must admit that centuries went to their making, and we now know how different are the standpoints of the authors. And yet,

for all this diversity, the Bible has something of the unity of a Gothic cathedral, the product of many minds and periods, and yet made one by something more profound than any one architect's genius. The simple believer, who talks of "the Book", is using no misnomer. The unity is one not of opinion but of growth, and a growth interrupted by one enormous gap between the two Testaments; it shows how the narrow and barbaric faith of obscure nomads expanded into a Gospel of universal brotherhood, embracing the whole of mankind. It is a record suddenly and even startlingly arrested in the most interesting phase of the story.

This strange and seemingly unnatural conclusion has attracted the attention of a modern author who, if he realized its cause, would scarcely be so cheerful about his scheme of sharking together another and up-to-date Bible. For the Bible significantly stops just where the growth it records expands beyond the confines of the Hebrew race. Suppose that the works of the Fathers had been added to the Bible, and to these the works of the Schoolmen, and the principal chroniclers and Reformers and poets and philosophers who have contributed to advance or record the growth of Christianity, it is doubtful whether any lorry would serve the purpose now fulfilled by an ordinary breast pocket, that of carrying about the Bible. The fact is that the Hebrew race, with its wonderful gift of compression, is the only one that could conceivably have produced a rich and diverse literature, second to none, and capable of going into a pocket edition. Whatever we may think of the truth or morality of the Bible, justice as well as research must own it to be unique and unrivalled at least in its formal suitability to serve as a book of all books.

It has been necessary to make this digression because the Bible is, in sober fact, one of the most important of all constituents of English history, and because, at the height of the Puritan ascendancy, we have the extraordinary spectacle of a whole nation joined together in an almost unquestioning allegiance to the very letter of authors about whose environment and mode of life they knew next to nothing, and whom they therefore imagined as being not very different from themselves. Before the Reformation, this had not mattered so much, because the interpretation of the Bible was in the hands of the Church which had built upon it such an enormous superstructure of doctrine, that the actual word counted for comparatively little—the book was, in fact, deliberately kept out of the hands of the laity. But the theory of the Reformation was that the Bible was not the product of Paul and Ezekiel and Obadiah and the rest, but that the real

author was God Himself, and that these others were only His copyists for whose accuracy of rendering He made Himself responsible—how far this guarantee covered all subsequent translations was a matter of some debate, but the plain believer's ordinary impression was that the book he happened to possess was not only divine in every word and letter, but even a sort of talisman in itself. Therefore, since every saved man (and this category of course was held to cover the first personal pronoun) had the right of unimpeded access to God, he had also the right to possess and form his own conclusions about God's book. The result was to let loose a wholly uninstructed multitude who rushed to their own conclusions about that concerning which the most finished modern scholarship is fain to suspend judgment.

Only such a book could have sustained such an ordeal. The magnificent directness and sincerity of the Hebrew prophet or chronicler enabled him to speak across the ages to any British tinker or pikeman, and to impart at least what was most essential in his message. It also enabled him to impart much that was dark and cruel. The Hebrews had owed the intensity of their spiritual discipline to the fact that they were a little people with open frontiers, wedged in between vast and aggressive Empires; their land was the cockpit of the East, and only by developing a higher type of religion than any around them, and clinging to it with a fanatical yet minutely regulated devotion, were they enabled to accomplish the miracle of surviving, and to plant the seeds of so intense a national feeling that not even dispersion all over the world sufficed to quench it. But people struggling for their life against adversaries so much stronger than themselves, almost inevitably develop the qualities of unscrupulous cunning in contention and merciless ferocity in victory. The Hebrews were no exception. Their heroes were frequently sublime but seldom lovable figures. Even David, who was capable, on occasion, of chivalrous generosity, was guilty of such calculated and sneaking ingratitude to his loyal supporters as might have got him cut in Dante's lowest circle. And perhaps nobody but a Hebrew could have taken much pride in being of the seed of Jacob.

The malignant venom with which the oppressed Hebrew regarded the proud, military nations around him, and which we can so easily understand when we remember his desperate position, was, by the devout Protestant, fathered on to God Himself. It was God Who sanctioned the dashing of little children against the stones,

Who promoted the stoning of him who picked up sticks on the Sabbath; it was His mercy, which endureth for ever, that enabled His chosen to exterminate, without distinction of age or sex, the inoffensive inhabitants of a land they happened to covet; it was to save His dignity and not Elisha's that the two bears were provided with their Gargantuan banquet of forty-two cheeky children. Such seeds seldom fall on stony soil. When an appeal to the baser passions is made in God's name, men became strangely pious. Many were the hearts hardened against compassion, many the consciences stilled by some appropriate text of Scripture. A helpless, tortured old grandmother might wring pity from the toughest heart but—"thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." A Puritan colonel might have a human impulse to let off some poor Irish priest, until he remembered the sin of Saul. When the Germans invaded Belgium, at least one worthy Herr Pastor pointed out, with perfect truth, that King Albert was taking up exactly the same position as the unfortunate Sehon, King of the Amorites, and that the Kaiser, if he exterminated him and all his people, would be faithfully following the precedent of Moses, the man of God.

It is a not altogether strange, though lamentable fact, that the Puritans, in general, were more inclined towards the Old Testament than the New. As the sun pierced the mists clinging to the low-lying lands about Dunbar, and Cromwell perceived how perfectly his manoeuvre had succeeded, he cried in exultation, "Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered . . . like as the smoke vanisheth so shalt thou drive them away!" Nothing was further from his mind than that this God had commanded him not to resist evil, and had also commanded him to love his neighbour, including Malignants and Scottish Covenanters, equally with himself. "T'were to consider too curiously, to consider so."

The reason is obvious. The Puritan knew, deep in his subconscious mind, for what purpose he wanted his Bible. We have seen how the Calvinist doctrine had arisen, how it was not in the nature of a theory but of a weapon. The Puritan was not speculating, in academic calm, about the nature of the universe, but fighting for his cause against principalities and against powers, and he naturally wanted that cause to be a fighting cause. The teaching of Christ, Who perplexed and discouraged His followers by refusing to take a patriotic line against the Romans, Who forbade His servants to fight and scorned to contend, with their own weapons, against forces of this world, was as little suited to the needs of sea-beggars and

ironsides as it had been to those of the early Caesars. "Blessed are the merciful" would have been a poor text for the stormers of Drogheda; it was hardly through its meekness that the New Model came to inherit the mastery of Great Britain and Ireland, and "poor in spirit" is the last epithet that we should apply to John Milton. Combatants in the wars of religion that were desolating Europe, and by which the fate of the Reformation was being decided, may all have been fighting in Christ's name, but the less they had to do with His teaching the better for their success.

On the other hand, the fierce and exclusive patriotism engendered by the struggle against the heathen made the Old Testament, or a great part of it, an ideal *vade mecum* for members of those small Protestant congregations that sprang up, as if from the soil, and that neither the fires of Rome nor the severities of Laud availed to destroy. For all his theories of literal inspiration, the Calvinist was a practical adept in selecting and valuing his texts. By far the most important portion of Scripture for him was the Book of Psalms, which is largely an anthology of incomparably magnificent war poems. The Jehovah in Whom such limitless trust is confided is frankly a partisan, the God of Israel, a very present help in trouble, the unseen leader of the host and watchman over the city, Whose mercy smites nations and slays Kings, Who causes the orphan children of the adversary to wander begging their bread and allows none to have pity on them. That is one side of the picture, the other is a limitless and touching confidence that pants after Jehovah as a hart for the water-brooks, that walks through the Valley of the Shadow fearless beneath His protection, and prizes His love more than that of father or mother. For the average Puritan the Psalms are the centre or citadel of his belief. His very salvation is but a development of this intense self-surrender to a Higher Power.

There is another feature of the Old Testament that renders it peculiarly appropriate to the needs of the struggling little theocratic congregations which took their inspiration from Geneva. Of all the peoples of the ancient East the Hebrews were the most democratic at heart. Theirs was certainly not a democracy broadening down from precedent to precedent, or based upon any abstract theory of the rights of man. Largely it was due to the accident of the kingship having been forced upon a hitherto all-powerful priestly theocracy by urgent political necessity. Samuel, it is evident, from a narrative written from the priestly standpoint, had had to make a virtue of a supremely disagreeable necessity in consenting to crown Saul,

but he never ceased to do all in his power to make the King's position impossible. The task of a King of Israel or Judah was obviously no easy one, with the priesthood as a permanent if unavowed opposition, and a constant succession of prophets, men of inviolable sanctity in the eyes of the people, ready to denounce any royal shortcomings with a grandeur of invective unsurpassed in history. Small wonder that, under these circumstances, royalty at last disappeared and the priests remained in possession of the field.

Where Kings and priests fall out, the people come by their own. The prophets, ascetics often of humble origin, and to whom any stick must often have been good enough to beat a King with, displayed a noble enthusiasm in championing the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Jehovah was naturally enlisted in the good cause. "The Lord," says one of the Psalms, "executeth righteousness and judgment upon all them that are oppressed with wrong." The classic instance of Kingly injustice is that of Naboth's vineyard, and it was one peculiarly calculated to appeal to the English mind, with its respect for individual rights. Dogs, so the devout opponents of arbitrary government would not fail to remember, had licked the blood of Ahab and made a complete meal of Jezebel. Nor would it be forgotten how Nathan had bearded the meanest of all murderers with the piteous story of the rich man and the ewe lamb. It was not only against Kings that the wrath of the prophets was directed. Rich men who laid house to house and field to field (a practice of which England had had bitter experience), the unjust judge, the oppressor of the fatherless and widow, all were the objects of these terrific and shattering denunciations. The Hebrews were never suffered to forget how they had been in bondage to the Egyptians and how the Lord had delivered them, as He could always be trusted to rescue the weak out of the hands of the strong, whatever the odds. No more perfect armoury could be imagined than that of the Old Testament to provide God's poor saints with weapons against tyranny. When Charles I was going to the City after the failure of his attempt upon the five members, somebody thrust into his coach a paper on which was inscribed that terrible cry which had split asunder the inheritance of David—"To your tents, O Israel!"

5

The Elect of God

Such was the Old Testament to the Puritan, who tacitly assumed that he stood in the place of the Israelite, one of God's chosen people,

waging merciless warfare against God's and his own enemies, and that he had on his side the righteousness and justice with which he invested God's character. But, whatever the importance he attached to this formidable fighting creed, it was in consciousness of the fact that he was not only, in the spiritual sense, an Israelite, but also a Christian, saved by the Blood of his Redeemer. This assurance of salvation was the most vital of all factors in his belief, and it is essential to know exactly what it implied to him.

The Christianity to which the Puritan subscribed was derived less from Christ than from Paul of Tarsus. It is, indeed, remarkable to how small an extent the personality of the Son of Man, as portrayed in the Gospels, figures in the teaching either of Rome, where His figure is almost overshadowed by that of His mother, or of the revolt against Rome, where He becomes less of a person than a symbol of the soul's reconciliation with her Maker. Paul, who had never been acquainted with Christ, and had perhaps never seen Him except in a vision, found, not in His humanity but His godhead, an escape from the formal bondage of the Mosaic discipline. He thirsted, like all mystics, for a more vivid, a more intimate spiritual experience, and this experience he called Christ. " For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Luther, wearied with a fruitless asceticism and revolted by the spiritless formalism of Renaissance Rome, found himself in exactly the same predicament, and it is only natural that he should have instinctively recognized a kindred spirit in his great predecessor. Calvinism pushed the Pauline theory to a length of which Paul himself would never have dreamed. To live was now either Christ or Satan, and it was entirely beyond anybody's power to determine what his luck would be, in this world or the next. To say that Christ had died for everybody was in itself a damnable heresy, that of Arminius and Laud. He had done nothing of the sort. The Creator of the Universe cherished so implacable a grudge against all His creatures, on account of Eve's having eaten forbidden fruit, that His original intention was to have tortured them eternally without exception, but owing to the sacrifice of His innocent Son, He would allow a certain number, predestined by Himself for inscrutable reasons, to be admitted to grace.

How were these favoured individuals to be known ? The problem was a difficult one, but its solution was helped out by a convenient confusion of cause with effect. No amount of personal effort could make the least difference, but the effect of grace would certainly be seen in holiness of life and an indwelling assurance of salvation.

Whosoever, therefore, wanted to feel himself saved would, naturally, if not very logically, set himself to manufacture the symptoms. He would cultivate holiness and inward conviction, and if he were a person of normally healthy mind he would soon find the wish father to the state he wanted to attain, though were he of a hypochondriac disposition he might, like Cowper and the youthful Bunyan, be haunted by constant fears of being damned.

This new discovery of salvation was a fact of the first historical importance. The religious treatises of the time vie with one another in endeavouring to express the rapture of the soul set free. "As I was sitting by the fire," says Bunyan, "I suddenly felt this word to sound in my heart, I must go to Jesus. At this my former darkness and atheism fled away, and the blessed things of Heaven were set in my view . . . I could scarce lie in my bed for joy and peace and triumph through Christ." But the experience of conversion had more than an individual interest. It was felt that God was at this time mightily visiting His people, that He had it in mind to establish a community of saints, God's elect who should possess this world as well as the next. And for this purpose, it was thought by Englishmen that special choice had been made of England. "God," says Milton, "is beginning some new and great period of His Church, even to the reforming of reformation itself, and what should He do but reveal it, as His manner is, first to us Englishmen?" and Milton's vision of a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, is familiar to everyone. Every war waged by such a people was a holy war, all their enemies were the enemies of God, a thing that Cromwell had no hesitation in assuming even when these enemies happened to be Presbyterians of the most holy strictness, and when the very manoeuvre which had exposed them to destruction had been dictated not by their general but their preachers.

An intense pre-occupation with the soul and its affairs had the effect of deepening and quickening the national consciousness. The gorgeous pageantry of Elizabethan literature had gone by, but the still waters of the soul, below the reach of storms, were as yet unplumbed. Vastly inferior as Milton may have been to Shakespeare in scope and humanity, he had command of a sublimity of which the elder poet had no apparent conception. Such a character as Lucifer or even Samson Agonistes was entirely out of Shakespeare's range; it is impossible to imagine a saintly character stepping on to the boards in one of his plays. When Milton wrote of "sweetest

Shakespeare, fancy's child " warbling his native woodnotes, he was, perhaps subconsciously, expressing a criticism, though one exaggerated and incomplete. Shakespeare had not only fancy, but an ardent and penetrating imagination; he was perhaps unique among the Elizabethans in insisting on the supreme importance of personality, of truth to oneself. But even with him—and how much more with his contemporaries !—the main interest centres in external happenings and not spiritual development. In *Samson Agonistes* it is in the dauntless spirit of a hero purified by suffering and rising triumphantly above captivity and blindness, just as in the Book of Job the raiding Bedouins, the plague, and those two great winds, one of which overwhelmed the feasting sons and out of the other of which God's voice was heard thundering a series of overwhelming questions, are but a shadowy background to the tremendous spiritual drama.

This is not so in Shakespeare. Henry V is a hero and we are allowed to trace his development, but his is not a spiritual triumph ; it is enough that he wins a great battle and marries a princess with a Kingdom for her dowry. The spiritual interest is secondary. Even in Hamlet, the interest is centred round a murder which has to be first brought home to the criminal and then avenged. In the greatest modern drama, in Ibsen, for example, or Pirandello, some spiritual problem has to be solved ; in Shakespeare something practical has got to be done. To take another contrast, that of Spenser's moral allegory with Bunyan's, it is the weakness of Spenser that we are most often allowed to forget the allegory in the same way that, in Malory, we forget the war with Rome and even Arthur himself in an endless series of romantic adventures. In Bunyan, the tale of the pilgrimage is held up by long and inappropriate disquisitions on theology, so great is the author's eagerness to concentrate on the purely spiritual issue, even to the neglect of so splendid a story as that of Christian. Or finally, contrast Marlowe's rowdy and business-like Mephistopheles with the sombre yet shining figure of Milton's fallen Archangel.

It is an exaggerated but an illuminating way of putting it to say that the Puritans made the discovery of the soul. The Elizabethans were what William James would have called " once born ", they were content to fling themselves into the loveliness and adventure of life with the innocence of children, taking their own selves more or less for granted. Their very sadness was a luxury :

> " Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy."

The eye that turns inwards and surveys what lies there with dismay

at its insufficiency, that which we know as " conviction of sin " was scarcely opened. And yet in every church throughout the Kingdom were already repeated such passionate outcries as, " we do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings, the remembrance of them is grievous to us, the burden of them is intolerable." These were the first-fruits of Protestantism, but the harvest was not to be garnered until the ruling party of the nation, from the Protector downwards, was like Bunyan's man in rags, breaking forth into that lamentable cry of " what shall I do ? "

The healthy soul of the Elizabethans had become sick—that is one way of expressing it—or, to bring out the Puritan case, the imperfect soul had at last begun to realize its need of perfection. For the logic of facts had turned, both politically and spiritually, against the Elizabethan order of things. We have already traced the process of its decay and collapse. Once the strong discipline of national peril was removed it became

> " an unweeded garden
> That runs to seed, things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it ",

things like the decadent court drama and men like Buckingham and Goring. Lacking as it was in introspection, it was without a strong internal discipline, it followed blindly in the lead of the old Adam, the natural man, into the Wood of Error or the City of Destruction.

The much-needed discipline the Puritans could and did supply. They had a crude and one-sided psychology ; their methods were often as superstitious as those of the alchemists, and as wasteful as those of the legendary Chinaman who burned down his house in order to provide himself with roast pork, but they were the best solution of the spiritual problem that the time had to offer ; they did pull the nation together and imparted an earnestness and concentration to the English character that it has never wholly lost. Human nature, they saw, was a thing that could and ought to be improved. To recognize this was the first step towards perfection, and was called " conviction of sin ". In their rough and exaggerated way, the Puritans wanted to blackguard and defame poor Nature as something odious, damnable, hateful to God. They had no conception of a gradual improvement, of making the best of their human material by patient and rational means ; they thought in terms of their Calvinist theology which knew only black and white, the goats and the sheep. The improved man was for Heaven,

the natural man for its Antipodes; even the gates of Purgatory were banged, barred, and bolted. In theory men were improved, or rather saved, by grace, which was a simple but very powerful form of suggestion. In practice this was reinforced by a minute and relentless discipline, which aimed, not at reforming the unfortunate natural man, but destroying him altogether.

The old Adam had neglected his duty in order to follow his natural impulses—greedy lusts the Puritans called them—towards pleasure and colour and sex. Therefore, according to these crude and violent doctors of the mind, all these things were offences, and must be cut out and cast away according to the Scriptures. The end in view was a good one, to secure concentration upon one main object by eliminating everything irrelevant; the means of attaining it were as costly and ill-adjusted as those of the old cupping and bleeding surgeons. To restrain the Elizabethan licence, to make England godly, the Elizabethan joy of life, its pageantry and colour and song, all that constituted Merrie England, were ruthlessly and without necessity sacrificed.

There was, for all its virtues, inherent in Puritanism one dark and besetting sin, that threatened to bring the whole of its work toppling in ruin about its ears. The assurance of salvation, which every Puritan desired and which sooner or later most of them attained, brought with it a hard and humourless pride, from which the noblest minds, Milton's, Cromwell's, George Fox's, were not exempt. It is one thing to hunger and thirst after improving one's inner man, it is another thing to suggest to oneself that the inner man is, by Christ's grace, already improved out of recognition. It is a fearful thing for a man to place himself on a pedestal above his fellows. The Milton who deliberately sacrificed his eyesight to his duty, who penned that burning and piteous appeal for God's slaughtered saints in Piedmont, was the Milton who could scold like an interminable fishwife against obscure hacks of controversy, the domestic tyrant of whom one of his sorely tried daughters said, not without some sneaking sympathy from average posterity, that it was no news to hear of his wedding, but if she could hear of his death, that was something. And it would take a Carlyle to read without disgust the dispatch written about the Massacre of Drogheda, by the hero the underlying simplicity and grandeur of whose nature he has forever vindicated—Oliver Cromwell.

Such was the Puritan system, a rough and ready discipline based upon a by no means scientific psychology, but one of the most

powerful engines ever devised for changing and concentrating the spirit of a nation. To its upholders, at least, there was no doubt of its efficacy. It was a time of boundless hope. England herself was about to put off the old Adam, to cast off the filthy garments of her sinful past and to become something altogether different and holy. The Fifth Monarchy men were only giving definite voice to the general aspiration when they announced that the Empires of this world were over, and that the final and glorious Empire, that of Christ and His saints on earth, was about to commence.

6

Spiritual Bolshevism

It is this determination to make all things new, this general expectancy of a sudden and millennial change, that gives its most distinctive character to the period between the summoning of the Long Parliament and the Restoration. Men's minds were cast loose from their moorings, and the most revolutionary theories were calmly discussed in politics and religion. A spirit was abroad of getting saved quick, individually and collectively. The result was that the bewildered nation was rife with experiments and theories, sometimes in striking anticipation of subsequent developments, but which it would require centuries of preparation for her to assimilate. The Puritan regime was thus like a gigantic forcing house, and the more daring grew the enthusiasts, the more did the general body of the nation first distrust and then re-act passionately against the pace at which the Millennium was being pushed forward. It must have a sobering effect on ardent reformers, who imagine that in a few days or years they can remould the world to their hearts' desire, to follow to their close this and other periods of sweeping change. For mankind has its own gait, and though by tact its step may be quickened, it will not tolerate hustling. However good an idea may be, it must have time to sink in or, like Puritanism, its action will be followed by an equal and opposite reaction, unless, like Christianity reconciled to Caesar, it turns into its exact opposite. But this in itself is a view partial and incomplete:

> "Perchance because we see not to the close."

Reaction is only the sequel, it is not the end of revolution. What was best in Puritanism was not blown away by the wind from Flanders—it is with us now, and the French Revolution has survived the Metternich system. No man can garner the fruit of his actions

on this side of eternity. We sow of our best, with our blood and tears we water the soil, and then take our wages and go home. It is better than dreaming idle in the market-place.

We shall make no pretence at a detailed examination of all the multifarious attempts to realize the Puritan ideal. Many of the most important sects of that time are with us still, sobered down to a routine of respectability in marked contrast with the ardours of their birth. Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, even the Muggletonians, survive and play a not inconsiderable part in our social system. But they are no longer in the van of progress, and if anything is likely to be cut off as a result of their activities, it is the beer of the subjects and not the head of the Sovereign. The true heirs of Puritanism to-day are those who deny the authority not only of Popes and Bishops, but of Bibles and codes of morality and the assumptions on which religious and social dogma is based.

In this time of anarchic spiritual ferment, few were the modern doctrines that were not, in however crude a form, anticipated by those who, having broken loose from the restraints of authority, sought to realize the full liberty of the spirit. Ever since the beginning of the Reformation there had been a left wing of those whom we may best style Protestant Bolsheviks. The Anabaptists, by the extravagant licence to which they pushed their newly-acquired liberty, were, on the Continent, the scandal of the reformers, and obtained scant mercy. Some of these had appeared in England, as early as the reign of Henry VIII, often men of the highest principles and character. They were regarded in the light of a dangerous nuisance, and even kindly old Latimer, not to speak of Cranmer and Ridley, had no hesitation in sending them to the very martyrdom they were to undergo themselves.

Since that time, the connection between England and the Continent, and particularly Holland, ensured that the extreme forms of Protestantism should from time to time make their appearance here. Anabaptism became established, in a diluted and Bowdlerized form, in the two sects of English Baptists, general and particular. The Family of Love, a quiet and gentle sect, founded by one Henry Niklaes, a Westphalian, made its appearance in England under the name of the Familists. But what is most characteristic of the state of mind at the time of the Great Rebellion is the movement—for it is too indefinite to call a sect—of the Seekers. Honour is due to these obscure and probably illiterate men for taking up an attitude

almost unique in the history of human beliefs. For they did not profess to have attained the truth; they did not even, like so many modern agnostics, profess to know that the unknown is unknowable. They were frankly expectant, and it is a memorable picture that William Penn draws of their meetings. They "waited together", he says, "in silence, and as anything rose in any one of their minds that they thought savoured of a divine spring, so they sometimes spoke." No better evidence could be afforded of the extraordinary state of spiritual instability prevailing at this time.

Though we can only speak with extreme generality of the movements in this kaleidoscope of sects, not always either organized or clearly defined, we can say, roughly, that the Seeker movement takes two main directions, one comparatively moderate, and one extreme. On the moderate side, the Seekers are intimately connected with the growth of the Quakers, perhaps the most remarkable of all religious products of this time, whose spiritual energy was great enough to carry them across the Atlantic, and whose missionaries penetrated all over Christendom, and even to Constantinople. The founder of this sect, George Fox, is one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest of all English mystics, and forms the central figure in the second period of mystical quickening in our history, the time of Rolle and Hylton being the first. The works of the German shoemaker and seer, Jacob Boehme, were first translated into English in 1644; his influence is marked by traces of a small and obscure sect of Behmenites.

The Quaker movement represents a passionate attempt to get back from Christianity to Christ, even to the adoption of that doctrine of non-resistance which most Christians have tacitly agreed to ignore as impracticable. But the Quakers were not prepared to go the whole way in their quest for the pure spirit. One of their early leaders, James Nayler, did, indeed, ride into Bristol on an ass, in imitation of the Christ whose spirit he believed to dwell within him, and gave a Puritan Parliament a fine opportunity of showing what it meant by Christianity, not to speak of its own gross violation of the law, by having him whipped, pilloried, and bored through the tongue with a hot iron. But Nayler was, at the time of his offence, at open variance with Fox and had no support from the Quakers of Bristol, and he afterwards, in what Charles Lamb describes as "a strain of the beautifullest humility", made acknowledgment of his error. The Quakers stood for getting, at all costs, at the real sense of Scripture, but, despite the statements of their enemies to

the contrary, they took their stand upon its divine inspiration, even to the point of pedantry.

Not so the Ranters, who may be described as the left wing of the Seeker movement, and who were, to all intents and purposes, anarchists. Nothing would satisfy them but the indwelling spirit; and in their quest for this they succeeded in blundering upon extraordinary anticipations of modern rationalism. Mr. Rufus Jones, who, in his *Studies of Mystical Religion*, has collected much valuable information about the vagaries of this time, cites a passage from the *Carol of the Ranters* that would delight a Hyde Park atheist:—

> "They prate of God! Believe it, fellow creatures,
> There's no such bugbear: all was made by Nature.
> We know all came of nothing, and shall pass
> Into the same condition once it was
>
> By Nature's power, and that they grossly lie
> Who say there's hope of immortality,
> Let them but tell us what a soul is; then
> We shall adhere to these mad, brainsick men."

Even more striking, because less crude, is the idea, noted in Edwards's *Gangraena*, as one of many prevalent errors, that "we did look for great matters from one crucified at Jerusalem sixteen-hundred years ago; but that does no good, it must be a Christ formed in us—the Deity united to our humanity", a not unplausible interpretation of the words "The Kingdom of God is within you".

The Ranters themselves, though the term is a vague one and was probably applied to any pious-speaking libertine or extremist who could not be otherwise classified, got, as Mr. Jones truly says, "a bad name from everybody." Poor, uneducated men as most of them were, it was too much to expect them to know how to make wise use of a liberty that absolved them not only from laws but from the conventions of morality. And yet may it not be said that of all the sects and Churches of seventeenth century England, the Ranters have come closest to anticipating the spirit of the twentieth?

7

The Cause of the People

There is no period in our history during which military and political events, however startling, have so little importance relatively to the changes that were taking place in the world of thought, as that of the Puritan Revolution. Viewed as a political experiment, the Commonwealth must be pronounced a failure. In spite of Naseby

and Worcester, the Puritans, though never defeated, lost the war more hopelessly than if Rupert had accepted the challenge of Turnham Green and the King had come back to his own at the very beginning. Oliver Cromwell, when he turned the Rump Parliament out of doors, had, in fact, set himself a task of absolute impossibility, that of setting up a lawful government in the teeth of the law and, what was bound to follow, of the nation's consent to be governed. By an inevitable process, he was forced more and more to rely upon the naked sword. This might answer so long as his mighty personality remained to hold the New Model and the realm together, though the strain of it wore even him into the grave. And once his body entered its precarious lodging in the Abbey it was hardly more than a question of months how long the unnatural edifice he had supported would take in falling to pieces.

Cromwell's character has baffled criticism by its very simplicity. He was, like so many of those who have impressed men with being endowed with superhuman powers, whether for good or evil, the very incarnation of will-power. Every considerable impression he received set up an impulse to violent action, which he might hold in check, as a strong man presses down a spring, until it could be held back no longer. His temperament was, in fact, explosive, as we can see from his rubicund, choleric, though not unkindly face. Once his course of action was decided upon, he swept all before him, and it was at such times that he displayed an exhilaration that found vent in singing, as at Dunbar, or in rough horseplay, as when he inked the face of one of his fellow-judges when forcing through the signature of the King's death-warrant. His oratory is a series of involved, explosive periods, as if he were forcing a way to his meaning rough-shod over the niceties of language. He is his own best critic, where he frankly admits "We are . . . very swift in our affections and desires; and truly I am often judged for one that goes too fast that way, and it is the property of men that are as I am to be full of apprehensions that dangers are not so real as imaginary, to be always making haste."

Cromwell, in fact, had all the strength and all the weakness of a temperament exaggerately practical. He was wholly a man of expedients, and when sudden and overwhelming action was the thing called for, there were none who could stand against him. Whether, as at Winceby fight, it was a question of crashing down on the opposing squadrons without the customary halt to fire, or of putting down a mutiny by sharp, military justice, or dissolving a

Parliament that had got him into a corner, he was in his element. But such men are hardly capable of the calm, dispassionate thought, the power of impartially appreciating a situation, that builds not for the moment but for centuries. Carlyle, another impatient and passionate thinker, admired nothing so much in Cromwell as the part he took in the King's execution, which, whether it was a crime or not, was a ghastly blunder, and his dissolution of the Rump, which compelled him to twist constitutional bonds of sand for the rest of his life.

For such a man, the long and involved process of the English Common Law was bound to be viewed in the light of an intolerable hindrance. There was, in fact, an extreme similarity between Cromwell and Strafford, both men of imperious will. Strafford had expressed his scorn for Sir Edward Coke and his law books, but Cromwell, who was less of the fine gentleman, alluded to the sacred Magna Charta in so Rabelaisian a fashion as to defy reproduction. His instinct, like that of Strafford, was to get things done without any pedantic scruples about the way of doing them. He went straight for what he honestly considered to be the good of the people, and if they were such fools as to place hindrances in his way he would save them in spite of themselves. "That's the question," he says, "what's for their good, not what pleases them." And when he was once told that he would have nine men in ten against him, he promptly replied, "but what if I should disarm the nine and put a sword into the tenth man's hand?"

Cromwell's will was capable of leading him into dark and terrible courses, but no one not blinded by prejudice can doubt that his will was essentially sound, that he was a man of passionate honesty, a Mr. Greatheart, striving, without any thought of vulgar aggrandisement, to realize the noble and puissant nation of God's elect, of which he, no less than Milton, dreamed. His language about England is always that of a lover. "I will make the name of Englishman," he thundered, "as dreaded as that of Roman," and descending to a softer strain, "there is not a man of you would not desire to be found a good patriot. I know you would! But we are apt to boast sometimes that we are Englishmen; and truly it is no shame for us that we are Englishmen; but it is a motive for us to do like Englishmen, and to seek the real good of this nation and the interest of it." Such an ideal, Cromwell followed with all his strength and soul. The very bigness of his nature put him above the ordinary prejudices of his time and faith. When he was not sweeping to the accomplishment of his will, he was ever kindly. Even to the impossible Lilburne

he continued his pension, and to his interference James Nayler owed it that he was not starved to death in gaol. He was the most tolerant public man of his age, and beautifully said that if he had to be unjust he would rather that it were even to one of the elect than to an unbeliever.

Nevertheless, no man of equal stature has ever left so little behind him. His government was a series of improvisations, and if we have to class him, it should be with the series of statesmen who, numbering the two Cecils, Bacon, Strafford and Clarendon, believed in a strong executive, governing by the law, if possible, but at all costs governing without the constant amateur interference of a debating house. Seen from this standpoint, there is less difference in political, though a world in moral principle, between the two great Cromwells, Thomas and Oliver.

> "For forms of government let fools contest,
> Whate'er is best administered is best."

or as Wellington put it, "The King's government must be carried on," even, as Cromwell might have added, when the King's head is off. Oliver's foreign policy did indeed raise us again to the level of a first class power, but of his constitutional policy nothing was left because there was nothing to leave.

It was from men immeasurably inferior in character and practical ability that we obtain the utterance of ideas which, like those of the Ranters, seem to belong more to the twentieth century than the seventeenth, though some of them were the commonplaces of the French Revolution. The New Model Army, fresh from the victory over the King, became not only the centre of power but also of the most advanced thought in the country. It was a force unique among the armies of the world, not only from the spirit of intense if narrow virtue that inspired it, but from the fact that it was almost as representative and self-conscious a body of politicians as any Parliament. It forms the temporary and startling appearance on the stage of the English people. This had been the last thing intended by the rich and well-born politicians at Westminster, who were yielding to military necessity in taking to themselves this two-edged weapon, and if it did not escape the notice of the Cavaliers, it was only to make them cocksure of beating the half-trained rabble they expected to find at Naseby. But the army had come into being not only to beat the Cavaliers but to garner the fruits of the Reformation. From the very first, it had been the hotbed of religious extremes, and Cromwell had had enough trouble with the Presbyterian majority

of the Parliament to stop them from weeding out his best fighters on religious grounds.

When Parliament had the impudence to order the disbandment of its army without arrears of pay, the soldiers not only began to realize their power, but also the necessity of taking matters into their own hands. The real Parliament of the Kingdom became the Council of Officers, many of whom were men of low birth, and whose debates were not infrequently strengthened by the presence of " buff-coats ". The debates of this remarkable assembly were, by rare good fortune, taken down in shorthand, and have been republished by the Camden Society in the Clarke Papers. They form an extra-ordinary medley of philosophy and childishness. The whole subject of social philosophy is discussed from first principles; tags of the Old Testament are contributed by devout enthusiasts like Colonel Goffe, and at the solemn time when Charles was being brought to London to be killed, these commanders, who held the fate of King and Kingdom in their hands, were earnestly debating the claims of a poor woman called Elizabeth Poole to be inspired.

Cromwell, as usual, is all for what in modern slang would be called " cutting the cackle and getting to business ", he wants unity and united action before everything. The debate of principles is between his nephew, the lawyer-general Ireton, on the one hand, and the party descriptively enough called Levellers on the other, of whom the most doughty champion was a certain Colonel Rainborow, who, like some other extreme democrats, does not appear to have been universally popular, for when he went to be Vice-Admiral of the fleet he was not long in provoking a pro-Royalist mutiny. Rainborow was as absolute a believer in the abstract rights of man as Rousseau himself. " The poorest he that is in England," he said, " hath a life to live as the greatest he," and " therefore I do not think and am still of the same opinion, that every man born in England cannot, ought not, neither by the law of God nor the law of nature, to be exempted from the choice of those who are to make the laws for him to live under, and for him, for ought I know, to lose his life under."

Here is as frank and comprehensive a statement of the extreme radical position as could be wished for, and it must be remembered that this was no mere point of a debating club, but represented the opinion of men who, but for firm handling by Fairfax as well as Cromwell, might easily have got the mastery of the Kingdom. But abstract rights and the law of nature have never appealed to the English as they have to the French, and Ireton was more in sympathy

with the average Englishman when he countered Rainborow by arguing, in effect, that in chasing this phantom of abstract liberty he would be destroying all the concrete liberties of Englishmen which the law secured. Once you gave the vote—and the question is urgent now as then—what would become of property? Might not every man claim a natural right to his neighbour's goods? Was not the very right of electing representatives secured by the laws? "The law of God doth not give me property, nor the law of nature, but property is of human constitution. I have a property and this I shall enjoy. Constitution founds property."

So pleads the champion of constitutional right and things as they are, but the people's friend, no match for the skilled lawyer in debate, returns obstinately to his main point: "Sir, I see that it is impossible to have liberty but all property must be taken away. If it be laid down for a rule, and if you will say it, it must be so. But I would fain know what the soldier hath fought for all this while? He hath fought to enslave himself, to give power to men of riches, men of estates, to make him a perpetual slave." In this language might some modern democratic leader reply to an upholder of the existing system on the morrow of a greater war than any of which the Puritans dreamed. For these controversies are not settled in a debate, nor even in the course of centuries, and that between liberty and liberties touches the roots of British civilization.

Rainborow had rather weakly rebutted Ireton's thrust about the rights of property by talking as if the eighth commandment settled the whole matter. Such an illogical halt was by no means suited to the taste of the mere extreme Puritan democrats. There were some men in whom the fire of John Ball and Robert Ket was still smouldering, and only needed the Puritan spirit to fan it into a blaze. The common lands of England, they said, ought to be for the common people, in spite of all prescriptive and hindering rights. Some of these men formed a little sect called the Diggers, and with the naive optimism of men who verily believed that the triumph of the saints was making all things new, started to dig up some waste land on St. George's Hill at Kingston. "We desire," runs their manifesto, "no more than freedom to work and to enjoy the benefit of our labours —for here is waste land enough and to spare to supply all our wants— but if you deny this freedom, then in righteousness we must raise collections for the poor out of the estates, and a mass of money will not supply their wants."

The end was pathetic. Mr. Drake, the lord of the manor, had no

sympathy with abstract communism, and proceeded against them as ordinary trespassers. "They took away," says Winstanley, their leader, "the cows which were my livelihood and beat them with their clubs . . . and yet these cows never were upon George's Hill, nor never digged upon that ground, and yet the poor beasts must suffer because they gave their milk to feed me." The Diggers faded into obscurity, but there are ears in which their rude song will still find an echo:

> "To conquer them by love, come in now; come in now;
> To conquer them by love, come in now;
> To conquer them by love, as it does you behove,
> For He is King above, no power is like to love,
> Glory here, Diggers all!"

It would take too long to describe all the quaint and eager schemes that were inspired by the idea of realizing God's Kingdom on Earth. There were the stern Fifth Monarchy men, who preached a sort of Puritan Islam, and believed that the time had come for realizing, by the sword if necessary, the Kingdom of Christ foretold in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and of substituting for the law of England not the rights of man but the law of Moses. This sect was not even conquered by the Restoration, but broke out into desperate rebellion, easily quenched. Then there was the notion, widely prevalent at this time, and taking us forward to a fashion of Victorian history, that the rights of the free and virtuous English people had been taken away by the Norman tyrant of whom King Charles was the last representative, and that now, consequently, the people ought to come into their own again. It is not difficult to trace the connection between this theory, and the similar one propounded in France by the Huguenot Hotman, half a century previously, and, looking forward, we recognize in the capitalist, the villain of Karl Marx's social drama, this same imaginary Norman in a top hat instead of a helmet.

No review of this time, however brief, can fail to notice the least amiable and yet the most English figure of all, that of Colonel John Lilburne, "freeborn" as he was nicknamed. Lilburne had professed to belong to the party of the Levellers, and yet it is difficult to assign him to any party at all, so cross-grained was he. It was said that if nobody but John Lilburne were left in the world, John would fall to quarrelling with Lilburne. He was, in fact, of the party that is always "agin the government", litigiously insistent on his rights, and when he could not raise a grievance of his own, espousing those of other people. He had got himself whipped by the Star Chamber; he was for the army against its generals, for the merchants against

any regulation of trade, and the persistent opponent of Cromwell's government.

Little as he might appear to be qualified by disposition for being a popular favourite, the people were following a true instinct when they idolized "freeborn John",

> "And what, shall honest John Lilburne die?
> Three score thousand will know the reason why!"

Armed with the works of Sir Edward Coke, whom indeed he closely resembled, he was too tough a nut for any government, even Cromwell's, to crack. Twice he was tried, twice a jury acquitted him, after he had fought his own case with consummate ability. Cromwell had taken his stand upon efficiency and what was good for the nation, Lilburne took his on what he called England's birthright and the rights, the legal and prescriptive rights, of the individual. It is also characteristic of him that he did not fail to remark that after all he was as good a gentleman as Cromwell. However that may have been, it is certain that in the controversy between the two, Lilburne's cause was as old as the Constitution, in which Cromwell's Instrument of Government was but a parvenu.

On the other hand we have the stern and aristocratic conception of liberty for which Milton gave his sight and Algernon Sidney his head. This is more inspired by Roman than by English precedent, and especially in Milton, has little enough connection with the democracy which is the power of the common people. Milton, indeed, is especially careful to distinguish between licence and liberty:

> "For who loves that must first be wise and good."

There was never anyone less of a democrat at heart than the proud, reserved defender of God's ways to man, and he would have liked to see in England something not dissimilar to the burgher oligarchy of Holland. Harrington, who dreamed of a republican and imperialist Utopia inspired by memories of Rome and the precept of Machiavelli, adopted a useful hint from the Licinian laws, and pointed out that the best prospect of liberty lay in an agrarian law, breaking up the big estates and limiting the amount of property that any man could hold in land.

The cult of Cromwell was naturally connected in many minds with that of sheer physical force and the strong man, though plenty of Continental precedents might have been pleaded for such a view, and the greatest of all contemporary philosophers, Baruch Spinoza, had been most open in basing right upon might. In England this

finds no more striking expression than in Andrew Marvell's Horatian Ode to Cromwell:

> "Though Justice against Fate complain,
> And plead the ancient rights in vain—
> Yet these must hold or break
> As men are strong or weak."

In 1651 appeared the *Leviathan* of Hobbes, in which might and right are almost the same thing.

This famous treatise, which stripped the last rags of divine sanction from human affairs, was, in spite of the pious qualifications by which the author saved his skin, a work of thorough-paced materialism. Hobbes employs the ordinary fiction of a social contract between natural men. Men are naturally, by his account, unmitigated egomaniacs, cave-men in the sense in which the word is used by Nietzscheans and office boys. How such beings were ever more capable than the Kilkenny cats of entering into any compact or honouring it for a moment is a difficulty which Hobbes cuts through by the assumption that men did, somehow and at some time, agree to hand over irrevocably all their natural and individual rights to a Sovereign, whose powers consequently are and ought to be unlimited. The might of any sort of constituted government is, in fact, right, though what meaning right and wrong can have for what Hobbes calls men is not easy to fathom. However, no would-be despot, were he Lord Protector or monarch by Right Divine, would stand on fine points of psychology in face of so convenient a doctrine.

Finally, we must not fail to notice the great advance that was being made in the expression of public opinion. Already, during the civil war, journals, the ancestors of our modern newspapers, were being produced on both sides, and even after the Puritan triumph, the authorities had a hard task in tracking down unlicensed anti-government publications. But what was the most conspicuous feature of this time was the immense flood of pamphlet literature, in which everybody with views to express, from Milton down to the most insignificant crank or fanatic, took a hand. Lilburne alone was responsible for some hundred pamphlets. The method of thought of these polemics was not one calculated to produce enduring results, as the object was usually not to find the truth, but to annihilate an opponent as brutally as possible, point by point, and hitting freely below the belt. But, with all their faults, such publications at least allowed ideas to circulate as never before, and had the effect of drawing England closer into one nation united in spirit—a necessary prelude to Imperial expansion. And if all the other pamphlet

literature of that time were swept away, Milton's noble and far-sighted plea for the freedom of the press would still remain one of the proudest monuments of English thought.

The Nemesis of the Sword

It was for the Rump Parliament after the death of King Charles to define and sharpen the policy of commercial exclusiveness and imperial unity after which he, tentatively and with insufficient resources, had been feeling. Hardly had the domestic troubles been settled, than Parliament began to look abroad ; they were compelled to do so by the fact that Prince Rupert and other Cavaliers had taken to the sea, and were preying on British shipping. This alone would have constituted sufficient reason for the efforts that were now made to construct a navy of overwhelming strength and at a cost undreamed of when the monarchy was striving, by driblets of ship-money, to maintain a bare minimum of national security. It was now found that, in the expressive imagery of Prynne, the little finger of the new government was thicker than the loins of old King Charles.

The policy of the Crown, bequeathed by the Tudors and forced by circumstances upon their naturally wasteful successors, was of necessity one of economy. In face of an unwilling Parliament, or in the absence of any Parliament, they had found it all they could hope for to pay their way from year to year. Charles I, during the period of his personal government, had had no army worth speaking of, and it was only by straining the law and the loyalty of his subjects almost to breaking point that he could maintain the most modest of navies. But now Parliament was saddled with a large and victorious army, which they could not disband if they would, and whose expenses swallowed up the greater part of a revenue undreamed of by Charles I. And to this army was being added an equally powerful and very expensive navy. Even before Cromwell assumed the reins of government, the road to ruin had been fairly taken, and it only remained to follow up a policy of armaments by its natural sequel of aggressive war to render a final crash inevitable.

Meanwhile Parliament, now as completely divorced from the constituencies as any despot could have been, was subsisting partly upon the proceeds of a capital levy, raised on the estates of the Church and Royalists, partly upon a drastic increase and stringency in the collection of the customs, and partly by adding to these an excise

on ale, meat, clothing, and other articles of common use. Whatever the constitutional aspects of the case may have been, there is no doubt that this indirect taxation fell more severely on the shoulders of the people than the old direct levies of benevolence and ship-money, which came mostly out of the pockets of the well-to-do. Even so, Parliament had the greatest difficulty in making ends meet, and a steadily increasing debt began to be carried over from year to year.

Nevertheless a policy of peace and retrenchment, though obviously called for, was far from being to the taste of a government which had already flung aside all but the veneer of legality, whose only right to exist was that of the strongest, and which was already more the slave than the master of its armed forces. The Commonwealth itself was an adventure to be supported by a policy of adventure, and to settle down to the humdrum routine of peace was but to be left face to face with a constitutional problem that was really insoluble. The Parliament, therefore, had hardly finished with the Cavaliers before it was looking for fresh conquests overseas. In its choice of an enemy it was guided not by the pious desire of setting up God's Kingdom on earth, but by a shrewd business calculation of ridding our trade of its most dangerous rival. It was reserved for Calvinist England to turn on Calvinist Holland. For it must be remembered that behind the stern gentlemen of the Rump stood the slowly increasing middle class of London and the great trading ports, and where tradesman meets tradesman piety is apt to go by the board. The Dutch were never under any illusion about faith being stronger than business.

At first there were overtures for alliance, and it seemed as if these might have come to something when the virtual monarchy of the House of Orange was succeeded by a burgher oligarchy not at all unlike that obtaining in England. But the Dutch were out to drive a hard bargain, and the new militarism of England was not to be driven. So Parliament, in 1651, took the drastic step of formulating its colonial and economic policy in the great Navigation Act, which was only the development of a policy which had been pursued, on and off, ever since the reign of Richard II. By this Act, which confined the trade with England and the colonies, except as regards ships laden solely with the products of their native countries, to English owned and English manned ships, it was hoped to strike a decisive blow at the Dutch carrying and fishing trade. Whether it succeeded in doing so is, if we may trust so reliable an authority as

Dr. Cunningham, at least doubtful, but it is certain that in the colonies it caused a hardship and irritation that contributed in no small degree to their ultimate loss, and it did much to hinder the country from rising out of the trough of the severe trade depression that the Civil War, like other wars, had brought in its train. Its immediate effect was to precipitate war with Holland.

This was one of the most obstinate in which we have ever engaged; in numbers and bravery the navies were well matched, but the cumbrous methods of Dutch admiralty administration were a handicap more crippling than the limited sea experience of the officers of the New Model who blossomed into sailors. In a series of bloody and evenly contested battles the Dutch were driven back, still refusing to admit defeat, to their own coast. Meanwhile the same advantage of position that England was subsequently to have against Germany proved decisive against Holland. England stood on the flank of her opponent's communications, and was able to play havoc with the commerce on which she depended for her existence. The distress caused by our blockade, and not the victories of Blake, caused the Dutch to come to terms with Cromwell, who had now assumed the reins of government. For the satisfaction of injuring and humiliating Holland, England had considerably added to her own embarrassments, and the Protectorate was now, at the outset of its career, committed to an expenditure that it could only maintain by substituting force for law.

Cromwell, if we read his character aright, was a man of expedients, whose policy was guided less by calculation than by a volcanic will. Faced with a situation that demanded the utmost delicacy and patience, he preferred to cut the knot of his difficulties by the ruined gambler's expedient of doubling the stakes. Not content with the exhaustion produced by two civil wars and one foreign one, he must needs adopt an aggressive and militant policy by coercing Savoy, threatening the Pope, bombarding Tunis, and finally plunging into war with Spain. After first offering that country his alliance, upon terms that proved unacceptable, he swung round to the other extreme, publicly declared Spain to be the enemy of everything that was good, and proceeded to enter into alliance with France against her, a foolish step, for France was the rising as Spain was the declining power. The false analogy of the Elizabethan wars had engendered the notion that this war could be conducted at a profit, a grievous mistake now that we too had a colonial trade to be plundered.

As it turned out, there was plenty of glory but ruinous expense.

Our first effort, an ill-organized attempt to seize the island of San Domingo by an army scraped together from the riff-raff of the colonies and such drafts as English colonels were glad to weed out of their regiments, bolted in disgraceful panic, but by the luck that has often attended us in our own despite, this same force managed to overwhelm a handful of Spaniards in the more valuable but less coveted island of Jamaica, which passed into our possession. Admiral Blake crowned his career by sinking the Spanish treasure fleet under the guns of Vera Cruz, though the treasure was recovered by its owners. English and Spanish played havoc with each others' commerce. Meanwhile a detachment of the New Model, co-operating with the French Marshal Turenne, had secured for England a prize that might have proved more fatal than the most annihilating defeat. For England had now the possession of a gate to the Continent, not this time at Calais but further to the East at Dunkirk. And there is every reason to believe that Cromwell not only intended, but would have been practically forced to use it.

For now his position, so strong in appearance, was in reality desperate. Never, certainly, had our prestige stood so high, now that we had helped France to put her most dangerous Continental rival out of the running, and thereby so upset the balance of power that it would cost us a succession of wars to prevent France from becoming the tyrant that the Spain of Philip II had aspired to be. But in achieving this somewhat equivocal triumph, the Protector had brought his government face to face with imminent bankruptcy. The war, that had been relied upon to relieve the government of its embarrassments, had but plunged it more hopelessly into the mire. Dr. Scott, in his invaluable book on Joint Stock Companies, has drawn a vivid picture of the pass to which reckless militarism had reduced the nation. "In 1657," he says, "the debt was described as 'insuperable', so that the public faith, on which loans had been raised, began to be known as 'the public despair'. Money was wanting to pay the pensions of wounded soldiers and of widows; contractors and officers were threatened with arrest, on account of liabilities conferred on behalf of the State, and still further debts were contracted through there being no funds to pay off ships on arrival, with the result that the crews were kept on the pay-roll. In 1658 the army was said to be going barefoot in winter time, and their 'clamours' as well as those of the navy, were so great that they could scarcely be borne!"

The annual deficits of the new government were now greater

than the whole revenue of the King whose rigour in exacting it had provoked a revolution. Cromwell was faced with a harder problem than his victim, except for the fact that he had a contempt for legality such as Charles had never displayed, and a force to back him such as Charles had never possessed. But try as he would, no Parliament that he could get together could be persuaded to find the wherewithal for him to make ends meet. With his unfailing instinct for cutting the knot, he came down and turned his last Parliament out of doors with a thunder of flaming eloquence. "May God be judge between me and you!" he concluded, and some there were who answered "Amen." This was certainly magnificent, but it left him further off than ever from the means of paying his way. The capital levy, which had been such an invaluable standby to the Rump, was exhausted, and to make matters worse, the country was sinking into a trade depression that not only multiplied unemployment and distress, but was bound to affect the revenue.

The one way to relieve the situation was the one that Cromwell dared not adopt, which was to disband the army whose maintenance was swallowing the bulk of the revenue, and to cut down the navy to a pre-revolution standard. But nobody knew better than the Lord Protector that the army was now the sole thing that stood between him and ruin. He had, in his own expressive phrase, disarmed nine men and put a sword into the hand of the tenth, and it was by the naked sword that he was now reduced to govern. Even so, it was doubtful whether he could find the means of keeping his army in being. One fatal expedient remained which, if he had lived a year or two longer, would have been practically forced upon him, and must have been in his mind when he secured his gate to the Continent at Dunkirk. He had still his dazzling prestige and the finest army in Europe, troops who had shown themselves more than a match for the veteran infantry of Spain. The role of Protestant champion was one in which Cromwell had already figured; the saints of Europe might yet welcome another and greater Gustavus Adolphus; a war such as this might pull the whole nation together. Such a war was the logical culmination of the Protectorate, and there can be little doubt that the Lord would soon have informed Cromwell of its necessity.

But his good fortune held to the end. September 3rd had been his lucky day, but the crowning mercy of all fell on him when, with a prayer of beautiful humility on his lips and imploring pardon on those who, with eerie prescience, he foresaw would desire to "trample

on the dust of a poor worm ", his stormy spirit passed out upon the storm, and he was saved from being associated perhaps with another Agincourt, but certainly from bringing misery and ultimate disaster upon the land he loved so well.

9

The Fruits of Puritanism

No sooner was Oliver in the grave, than the whole edifice of his government began crumbling to pieces. There stepped into his place his son Richard, or, as he was nicknamed, Tumbledown Dick, a modest and inoffensive gentleman who has been subjected to a vast amount of contumely, because he had the rare good sense to retire from a hopeless task without fuss or bloodshed. The army, now that their leader was gone, split up into factions. The cleverest of the generals, Monk, keeping his head and restraining his ambition in a situation of the utmost delicacy, managed to get control of affairs and give back to the Long Parliament its Presbyterian majority, who, thoroughly embittered by the treatment they had received at the hands of the Independents, hastened to bring back the monarchy without exacting conditions. They had their reward when they, like their rivals, were swept down the flood of triumphant, vindictive Royalism.

So, in ruin and humiliation, closed the reign of the saints which it had cost so much blood and tears to establish. As a political factor, Puritanism was discredited. Whatever form of government the country might tolerate, it was certain that never again would it submit to such a discipline of gloom as the preachers had sought to impose upon it, and not for a long time to come would it allow its liberties to be curtailed by a standing army. Revolution, if it had got to come, would be conducted on very different principles. Protestantism, if it had got to stay, would stop short of protesting overmuch.

Not only politically but socially was Puritanism discredited by the Restoration. Charles II very neatly summed up the prevailing opinion when he remarked that it was no fit religion for a gentleman. In the time of the last King it had been professed by many of the greatest in the land, and was not inconsistent with a refined pursuit of the joy and colour of life. Colonel Hutchinson, so lovingly described by his wife, represents the best type of Puritan gentleman, of dignified and gracious manners, a scholar and a connoisseur, and withal a great lover. John Milton was probably the most cultivated man of

his time, gathering into his one brain the choicest beauty of classical antiquity, of Hebrew civilization and of the Renaissance. These, the aristocracy of Puritanism, left few, if any, direct successors. The Whigs, upon whom the championship of Parliament against the court devolved, were distinguished for anything rather than a real or affected strictness of life, and the Dissenters who clung to their faith after the dark days of the Clarendon Code were of plebeian, or at most of middle class origin.

And yet the work of Puritanism was not cut short by its eclipse; in the deepest sense it may be said that it was only beginning. During its brief triumph it had perhaps destroyed more than it had set up. It had done incalculable harm by the barbarous havoc it had made with works of ancient beauty, it had done its gloomy best to convert merrie into dismal England, and it cannot be said to have compensated for this by any permanent achievement of commanding excellence. A series of bloody wars, with their attendant glory and waste, some unsuccessful experiments in constitution-making, one or two immortal sonnets and an ode by Cromwell's secretaries, Milton and Marvell, one or two excellent books of devotion, at least one, out of a multitude of pamphlets, that is fit to survive, the *Oceana* of Harrington, the speeches of Cromwell, and our blundering into the possession of a West Indian island, are the chief positive achievements that Puritanism has to show during the hour of its triumph. Compared with others in our history, this might be described as a barren if not a destructive epoch.

It was in its eclipse and persecution that Puritanism produced its noblest work. Milton, no longer moved by a sense of duty to write classical Billingsgate against opponents who should have been beneath his notice, turned his powers to the composition of the epics of Creation and Redemption, and his sombre drama of blinded Samson, triumphing, even in death, over his persecutors—a message of invincible hope. It was in a Restoration jail that the tinker Bunyan caught the Hebrew secret of telling a story with a vividness and simplicity that makes Apollyon as real a figure to most of us as the Kaiser, and Vanity Fair as familiar as the West End. The best work of George Fox, perhaps the greatest of English mystics, and of William Penn, in some respects the most remarkable Puritan of them all, were given to the world after the Restoration. No one, we imagine, of taste or discernment would, if the choice were forced upon him, hesitate to sacrifice all the products of triumphant for those of defeated Puritanism.

But it is not by such definite achievements that Puritanism is to be judged. It was not only a doctrine but a spirit, and as such it had already, by the Restoration, penetrated inexpugnably every department of English life. The King enjoyed his own again, nine tenths of the nation were united in a passionate determination to reverse the tyranny of the elect; but the work that was done could not be undone, things could never be the same as they were before. The maypole might be set up and the congregation get gloriously drunk at Church ales, but the fact remains that the Sunday taboo, a refinement even on Calvinism, not only survived, but became a symbol and a rallying point for those who were assured of an invincible wrath, on the part of the Almighty, against the worldly enjoyment of His creatures. Merrie England had, in fact, been on the wane ever since the days of Elizabeth, and it had received from the Puritans a blow from which it never recovered. England might be more prosperous than ever before, but it could never be so lighthearted. The Puritans had knocked too much colour not only out of the Church windows, but out of life itself.

This was a heavy price, but, as some may contend, not too heavy to pay for the course of discipline by which the Puritans had succeeded in arresting what might almost be described as the spiritual rot that had set in since the great days of Elizabeth. The inspired *joie-de-vivre* that had marked the climax of resistance to Spain had even then concealed a certain lack of depth and concentration, and as inspiration cooled down, in the drama, in poetry, in life itself, insincerity and indiscipline became more and more apparent. The grim determination of the Puritan to get to the truth at all costs, the austere discipline, inward and spiritual no less than outward and visible, by which he regulated his life, had at least the effect of bringing back art and life face to face with reality.

Much was lost, and perhaps would have been lost even if there had been no Puritanism at all. In poetry there was none to carry on the torch of Milton and Marvell, and the far-fetched conceits of courtly lyrists died away in the rhymed rationalism of an age essentially unpoetic. The Castaras and Clarastellas of the seventeenth are at least preferable to the Delias and Belindas of the eighteenth century. But it was good that the gorgeous yet sprawling Caroline prose should be chastened and ordered into an instrument capable of expressing in the simplest possible terms the thought or story of its author. It was good too that in architecture a Sir Christopher Wren should say, with clear-cut directness, what he had to say, rather than

what, by more religious or ornate standards, he ought to have said. It was good that statesmanship should devote itself steadily and consistently to a policy, even if its ends were low and material, as were those of the Mercantile System. If the nation lost in colour, in exuberance, in pageantry, it gained in earnestness and the capacity for sustained effort which is the first requisite for an Imperial destiny — all that the Roman had comprehended by his word *gravitas*.

Moreover Puritanism, by plumbing the depths of the soul, had aroused an interest in character that was to bear abundant fruit. It is possible to forget the allegory of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and look upon it as the first readable novel in English, and the Puritan Defoe has sometimes, and with plausibility, been called the father of the English novel. Scarcely less important is the influence of Puritanism on the study of character in portrait painting, a development we have yet to trace. The habit of introspection had, in fact, been planted and taken root in the English temperament. And along with this went the habit of dissent, the impulse to question authority and refer all problems to the tribunal of human reason. The Ranters and Levellers had shown to what lengths this could be pushed, and the time was coming when men would be as protestant against the Scriptures as against the Papacy—Bunyan and Baxter did not more thoroughly embody the English Nonconformist spirit and tradition than Herbert Spencer.

As in art and thought, so in industry Puritanism had consequences of the utmost importance. When the fine gentlemen, who had dominated the original Long Parliament, fell away from the movement, it became more and more distinctively middle class. The typical Dissenter—to give the Puritan his new title—is represented by the Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Attentive, who conduct the dialogue of Bunyan's Mr. Badman. These are grave, independent men in a small way of business, very keenly alive to the main chance, and yet with a high ideal of honesty and just dealing. The Puritan discipline may have originated in the service of God, but it was equally effective for that of Mammon.

We no longer hear of the jolly free-handed type of employer represented by Jack of Newbury; gone too are the cultured and luxury-loving merchant princes that we meet with in the Stonor and Cely letters. The new man of business is above caring for such unbusinesslike vanities. He goes about the task of increasing production with the same austere concentration that he devotes to the salvation of his soul. Idleness he abhors, and is not prepared

to tolerate it in anybody under his control. He is a hard, though he may be a just and conscientious taskmaster. He will take care that his apprentices are duly sermonized on the Lord's day, but he will not, if he can help it, provide them with the means or the leisure for worldly enjoyment. The old gild atmosphere, with its conviviality and mystery plays, is incredibly remote from this new, strenuous, colourless existence. But upon such foundations is industrial supremacy built.

How far the Puritan spirit is responsible for the ruthless, economic individualism that ran riot during the eighteenth century is no easy matter to decide. Certainly the Puritan was an individualist, and a rebel against the old standards inculcated by the Church, which did at least make some organized attempt to temper business with charity, and to limit the business man's right to do what he liked with his own. The Court of High Commission, which had, however clumsily, tried from time to time to check the abuses of usury, was swept away by the Long Parliament, and nothing was put in its place at the Restoration.

It is unfair, however, to saddle the Puritan with the responsibility for a state of things which would probably have come to pass without his assistance. The materialism of the Restoration was more directly conducive to selfishness than the enthusiasm of the Commonwealth. To Bunyan, sharp practice in business was not the least of Mr. Badman's qualifications for a warm eternity, to Hobbes it would have seemed the most ordinary outcome of man's natural propensity for feathering his own nest.

Those who point to the ways of middle-class tradesmen and business men as the proof of Puritan influence, are apt to lose sight of the fact that the most notorious economic men of the eighteenth century were the pushing, agricultural gentlemen who were responsible for the Enclosure Acts. And as for the Poor Law, the Act which kept the poor man a slave, tied to his own parish without a chance of bettering his conditions, was passed by the Cavalier Parliament in the first flush of anti-Puritan reaction. Vaster and more gradual forces were at work than the consciousness of that time realized, and Cavalier and Puritan, old saint and new rationalist, were borne along the drift of the same current.

It must not be forgotten that Puritanism, in its heyday, was not by any means so homogeneous a thing as might be supposed. We may distinguish two main streams of tendency, one aristocratic and only half Puritan, and one which is of the undiluted Puritan

spirit. Milton and Colonel Hutchinson were Puritans, but they were something else too; even to the austere close, Milton was never able to drive out the Elizabethan that was half of his genius—never could he have humbled himself to equality with the least of his brethren in Christ—and Hutchinson differed little from the best type of Cavalier. Theirs was, in truth, a compromise with incipient Whiggism, in the days when it was yet possible, in the general estimation, to be a Puritan and a gentleman, and they left none to succeed them. But men like Fox and Bunyan were Puritans and nothing else, men whose whole concern was with the saving of their souls, and to whom the elegancies and refinements of life were very vanity. They might have endorsed Charles II's stricture in the sense that the life of a gentleman is wholly unworthy of one of God's elect. It was these men who handed on the torch of Puritanism, and who were the true spiritual fathers of English Nonconformity.

But if in England the elect were persecuted and suppressed, there was no abatement of the Puritan spirit or authority in the New England across the seas. It is thither that we must look for the strongest current of the Puritan stream. There the reign of the elect was no temporary experiment, but based on impregnable foundations, and to the existing colonies was added one still more remarkable, Pennsylvania, founded by Penn, the disciple and successor of the Quaker Fox, and inspired by a sober and practical determination to make the reign of love and tolerance a reality. Even an Indian was treated as a man and a brother, amenable to the influence of good faith and fair dealing. And in the stern and intolerant communities to the North, an ideal of life and culture was established the continuity of which was not to fail, until New England had stood in the forefront of the struggle against arbitrary power in the eighteenth and slavery in the nineteenth century, and until it had produced the most brilliant galaxy of literary talent that has, as yet, adorned the Western Hemisphere.

BOOK III

THE OLIGARCHY

CHAPTER I

FOUNDATIONS OF OLIGARCHY

1

Dives Triumphans

With the King back at Whitehall, the country mad with joy, a Cavalier Parliament, and a Church triumphant, it is easy to misunderstand the significance of the Restoration. To all outward appearance the cause of the Martyr King had won a victory complete and overwhelming beyond the fairest dreams he could have entertained. Loyalty and non-resistance were the order of the day. And yet, looking back at these events in the light of their sequel, we may well question whether these appearances were not after all deceptive, whether it were indeed royalty that had won the game.

It is natural to think of the Civil War as a straight issue between Cavalier and Roundhead. The reality was not quite so simple; the contest would be more plausibly, though still very roughly, described as three-cornered. The rich and aristocratic party which had first raised the standard of rebellion had not been permitted to enjoy the fruits of victory, and it was this party that, in the bitterness of its heart at the way in which it had been jockeyed out of power by its own army, had sought to redress the balance by bringing back a King whom it had only wished to render its figurehead and not its victim.

The very men, who had been most distinguished in the old Long Parliament days for their resistance to the last King, were now holding positions of trust and power under his successor. Among the commission that sent to a horrid death those stern men who had sat in judgment on their King, were actually two of those members whose attempted impeachment by Charles I had precipitated the civil war. These were the Earl of Manchester, the victor of Marston Moor, who received the Garter, and Denzil Holles, another gentleman

of aristocratic descent, who had long ago assisted in holding down a too loyal Speaker in his chair, but who had been a victim of Colonel Pride's purge of the Presbyterian majority of the Commons and had conceived a violent hatred against Cromwell on account of the latter's neglectful treatment of lords. Holles was, at the Restoration, the recipient of a barony. Among those who played a chief part in bringing the King back was the old commander of the New Model, Fairfax, another rich and well-connected rebel, who is entitled to everlasting gratitude for having saved the stained glass of York city. The typical Parliamentarian of the old school was, in fact, thoroughly sick of Commonwealth and Puritanism alike, and had come to realize that the danger from below was greater than that from above. Cromwell had found little support among the great families; the head of the Russells, whose attitude has ever been a reliable indication of that of other calculating magnates, changed from Roundhead to Cavalier early in the war, and soon retired to devote himself to the promising speculation of draining the fens.

The strong hand of Cromwell had indeed kept the extreme democratic tendencies of the Puritan left wing in check, but what had actually happened had in all conscience been disquieting enough; the triumph of the army and the preachers had brought to the head of affairs an unprecedented number of men of poor and obscure origin; degree had been vizarded to an extent calculated to alarm and scandalize those whose importance had been secured under the old order of things. Accordingly when monarchy was restored, and before parties had time to take shape, there was an effective though unformulated agreement between all sections of the governing classes that whatever their subsequent contentions, the mistake of the Civil War must never be repeated, and that under no circumstances must the situation be allowed to get so disastrously out of the right hands as during the past fifteen years.

Thus even in a Parliament elected amid a frenzy of joyous reaction, certain tendencies are apparent from the first by no means inspired by a disinterested Royalism. The principle of non-resistance is well enough, because resistance entails an army and an army has a way of taking matters into its own hands, and it is an obvious enough policy to set up the old order in Church and State, and to take merciless vengeance on those who have turned the majority of Parliament out of doors in order to knock the keystone out of the social arch. But when it was a question of undoing the early work of the Long Parliament and restoring the prerogative intact, the

Houses politely but firmly declined. Even the revenue which they allowed to His Majesty for his life was by no means sufficient to enable him to live comfortably of his own. And it was not long before they were asserting the rights of Parliament against the Crown in the most disconcerting manner.

It was, however, not against the Crown but the incipient democracy that Parliament bent its energy in the first years following the Restoration. Puritanism was now thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the upper class, and it was no longer fashionable for the scions of distinguished families to identify themselves with the movement. Hence in driving the Puritans from public employment and subjecting them to the most harassing persecution that ingenuity could devise, the Lords and gentlemen of Parliament were taking effective steps to purge the classes below them of their most dangerous element. At the same time, it was safe to restore the Church, now that her claws had been cut. The ideal of Archbishop Laud, of a Church standing above all classes, and with as stern a care for the life of the lord as that of the beggar, had vanished for ever. No longer were the vices of the great in danger of the High Commission, and the Church had received an even sharper lesson than the aristocracy as to the danger of subversive tendencies in doctrine or policy. Henceforward her interests were steadily united with those of the possessing class.

One of the first financial measures of the Restoration was one which, whatever its merits, shifted taxation from the shoulders of the landed gentry on to those of the whole community. The cumbrous feudal liabilities which were the heritage of a military social system were commuted for an excise. More important was the blow struck at the poor by the Act of Settlement of 1662. This terrible measure, though the principle of it was not new, enacted that any poor man who had settled in a parish for more than forty days would become chargeable to that parish in case of destitution. The parish was, however, allowed to have him sent home in the interval, and, naturally wishing to keep down the rates, would be reasonably sure to do so. The effect was obvious. The institution of villeinage, which had been allowed practically to become extinct in the reign of Elizabeth, though it was pleaded in legal cases after her day, was reintroduced under another name, and without any of the advantages of seignorial protection and the custom of the manor. The poor country labourer was tied to the soil more effectively than ever; he was debarred from seeking employment elsewhere, and

declined towards the status of a serf dependent on the tender mercies of the local employers and such doles as the parish might concede as the necessary minimum to keep him above ground. To complete the process it was only necessary to take away what remained of his common lands.

Whatever else may be said of the policy thus inaugurated, there can be no doubt of its effectiveness. Ever since the Middle Ages there had been outbreaks, at long intervals, against the social system, for we can fairly count the Levellers and Diggers as the successors of Ball and Kett. After the Restoration nothing serious of the sort occurred in rural England, until the damp squib of the Swing Riots which fizzled in 1830. The towns were still a formidable obstacle in the way of oligarchy, especially London, whose mob was capable of taking matters into its own hands, and against which the hardiest statesmen did not dare, as yet, to employ military force—though that would come in due time.

And yet here, as elsewhere in our history, we must beware of too unqualified generalization. If the lot of the poor man was hard, it was not wholly without its compensations. For in a sense unknown to the great monarchies of the Continent, England was a free country. Neither the monarchy nor the oligarchy, in the hour of their most dazzling triumph, ever dared attack the formidable edifice of the Common Law. And crabbed and merciless as this law could be—so many as ten thousand poor debtors were reputed to be languishing in jail at one time—in it was contained the guarantee against tyranny ever becoming absolute. The Common Law may be said to have been practically completed at the Restoration, its principles had become embedded in the very life of the country. Henceforward commences the era of statute law, in which Parliament, with the King's assent, itself decides what additions can be made. But such was the strength of the Common Law that it proved capable of assimilating and interpreting all additions, so as to lose neither character nor continuity.

Indeed, it was during this very period that some of its most valuable safeguards were permanently established. Bushell's case secured the freedom of a jury to bring in whatever verdict it chose, without question or punishment. The Habeas Corpus Act, passed in the height of party controversy, affirmed an old principle in establishing the freedom of the individual from arbitrary arrest. It may seem a mockery to assert that it made a decisive difference that tyranny and extortion had to work through the forms of law,

but the importance of this will be realized when we compare the state of England with that of the despotisms which were becoming fashionable abroad. Everywhere the trend was towards absolute government, and the Roman Law, which dominated the Continent, was powerfully biased in favour of centralization. But English Law was tough in its championship of liberties, and by that zigzag path lay the likeliest way, though long and hard, to eventual liberty.

In tracing the formation of the oligarchy which was to dominate England so completely during the eighteenth century, we must not lose sight of the fact that there was an absence of class feeling which is astonishing when we consider how completely the poorer class came to be subjugated and despoiled, until the Industrial Revolution added the horrors of the first factories to those of a starved and pauperized peasantry. The mere fact that historians up to a very recent period have so strangely ignored this formidable development is not without its significance. For, paradoxical as it may seem, it is to a large extent true that the victims themselves ignored it. There is no evidence of any persistent and widespread class feeling. The people of England were capable of getting furiously excited about the prospect of Seven Bishops going to prison, or Dr. Sacheverell's having a damper put on his pulpit eloquence; they were capable of being lashed into murderous hysterics by a Titus Oates or, a hundred years later, by a Lord George Gordon, about the horrible doings of Catholics, but of any class feeling at all corresponding to that which inspires the modern proletariat, and did burst out in France at the Revolution, they were comparatively free. Of this apathy we shall have more to say hereafter. Interpret it as we will, it is one of the strangest and most suggestive phenomena of our history.

2

Insularity and Versailles

One of the most important results of the Restoration was to open this country to a fresh stream of Continental influence. The Puritan Revolution, especially in its later and more democratic stage, had tended towards a close and intense nationalism. The community of God's elect, into which the Puritans had aimed at making England, had no need of instruction from the children of this world without the pale. Even the Dutch influence, which had played so large a part in moulding the early Puritanism, waxed faint when Tromp

hoisted his broom at the masthead and Dutch prizes were a familiar sight in our harbours. God, in Milton's words, had revealed Himself, as His manner was, first to us Englishmen.

The bonds of nationalism were accordingly tightened and the Navigation Act lay down the lines on which foreign and commercial policy, which were more and more coming to be identified with each other, were to be carried on at the expense of other nations. It is about this period that a new barrier is set up between the nations of Europe, by the gradual discontinuance of Latin as a medium of intellectual exchange. Newton's masterpiece, published in 1687, was indeed given to Europe in Latin, but this was reverting to a fashion that was rapidly becoming out of date. One reason for this is that a vernacular prose has come into being on both sides of the Channel, capable of expressing the subtlest shades of meaning with conciseness and intelligibility. Thomas Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*, had shown with what downright vigour philosophical ideas could be expounded in the King's English, and Dryden was to enforce the lesson in the sphere of literary criticism. A clear cut practicality, in the best Puritan tradition, was now succeeding to the gorgeous pageantry of a Milton, and the long-drawn, mazy reveries of a Burton and a Brown.

Nationalism is, in fact, becoming everywhere more intense and all-absorbing. The struggles that devastated Europe up to the middle of the seventeenth century may not have been so religious in reality as they were in name, but Protestantism and the Counter Reformation were movements that did not stop short at frontiers. Cromwell, like Gustavus Adolphus before him, had aspired to be the Protestant champion of Europe, and Cromwell's intervention on behalf of the "slaughtered saints" of Piedmont had about it a touch of religious knight-errantry. But the policy of the Navigation Act and the Dutch Wars was that which survived the Restoration, and a hard and brutal John Bullishness towards foreigners becomes painfully conspicuous. Too characteristic are the manners of a jolly English naval captain, returning from the Mediterranean, who, on receiving an offer of help from a French Admiral, our ally at the time, replied that he wanted nothing, and if he did, would not take it from such rogues as they were. The most bitter expression of the envy, hatred, and malice which are too often dignified by the name of patriotism came from Lord Shaftesbury, when he tried to incite his countrymen to a shameful war with Holland in the letter and spirit of the elder Cato's *delenda est Carthago*. War

was unavoidable, the States were England's natural enemy, the bond between nations was interest and not sentiment, and so on, in the most approved style of modern Jingoism.

There is, happily, another side to the picture in the humanity and chivalry which, despite ugly incidents, did on the whole distinguish our Dutch wars on both sides.[1] It was a gentlemanly act of Charles II to release a Dutch Admiral out of admiration for his bravery, and one respects De Witt for his admission that the British defeat in the Four Days' Battle had cast more glory upon them than ten victories could have done. Prisoners were humanely treated. Men like Evelyn were still capable of a nobler patriotism than that which is founded on conscious greed and sub-conscious fear; they could look upon even a Dutchman as a man and brother. But the main current of national sentiment was flowing steadily in the direction of a selfish materialism.

Under these circumstances it was perhaps not a wholly unmixed evil that the King, who had now come to enjoy his own, was half a Frenchman by birth, and more than half in spirit. For Charles II was his mother's son as surely as James II was his father's. His swarthy, vivacious, and sharply cut features were manifestly of a Southern type. When he came to England his spiritual home was in France. Seldom had any King been so devoid of patriotic sentiment. Charles had perhaps knocked about the world too long for him to fix his heart on any one land. When he chose to exert himself he could be an efficient and resourceful ruler, just as a doctor may prescribe calmly and skilfully for a patient whom, personally, he would as soon see dead as alive. There are not a few patients who prefer such an impersonal attitude in their physician. Charles II could at least have pleaded in his defence that the country enjoyed a steadily increasing prosperity under his auspices, whereas his virtuous father had plunged it into civil war, and the devout man of genius, Cromwell, had brought it to the brink of ruin.

With the coming of Charles II we take a step forward from a remote and romantic atmosphere into one with which we are familiar. Charles II would have been quite at home in the cocktail bar at the Ritz or in the enclosure at Ascot, except that he might have been considered somewhat disconcertingly "brainy". It is impossible to imagine Falkland or Newcastle or Cromwell, or indeed any of the protagonists in the Civil War, as being anything else than hopelessly out of place. The emotional impulses that had determined men's

[1] See especially G. B. Hertz, *English Public Opinion after the Restoration.*

conduct hitherto scarcely affected Charles II. The Church of Rome possessed a certain aesthetic attraction for him, but he was not prepared to inconvenience himself for that or any other religious body. Fundamentally he was an agnostic, and a realist of the most uncompromising type. For national honour he cared no more than Falstaff. On the other hand he had an insatiable curiosity with regard to nature and her processes, and he passed long hours experimenting in his laboratory. About his prospects, or those of others, in any other life than this he was genially indifferent; he believed in getting all the enjoyment there was to be got between the cradle and the grave, and unlike the Puritans, he liked to see others getting it to

Posterity would do well if it were to be less profuse in moral strictures on Charles II and his court. It requires but little imagination to conceive of the wicked enjoyment with which the respectabilities of college dons must be received in Elysium. Reprehensible as his conduct may have been, the nation at large, as well as those who were brought into contact with him, esteemed him the best of fellows. Possessed of an imperturbable good temper, a sportsman, a humorist, and endowed by his very cynicism of outlook with an easy-going tolerance, he knew well that his subjects would never get rid of him to make a King of his earnest and devout brother, nor yet to inaugurate another rule of saints and Major-Generals. And posterity, in spite of the pundits, will go on liking him in a shamefaced sort of way.

It is Charles II's great achievement that he did something to inculcate a new way of life, not better than that of the Puritans, but complementary to it. Puritanism had inculcated a deep and healthy seriousness, but it had built on too narrow a basis. Charles was serious about nothing, not even about his own death, but he did realize the necessity of getting the best he could out of this world, and therein he was, in his generation, wiser than the children of light. If society in England was to be organized henceforth for the benefit of the few, it was at least as well that these favoured ones should justify their existence by the standard of life they maintained. And with all its unabashed viciousness and secret corruption, never had an English court breathed such an intellectual atmosphere as that of Whitehall. The most worthless of them all, the Duke of Buckingham, was a dilettante both in science and music, while that fascinating scamp, the Earl of Rochester, was reputed to have been the most brilliant scholar among the nobility, and was as ready to

compound a prescription as he was to dash off a satirical quatrain. The philosopher Hobbes, that bugbear of the clergy, was welcomed and, for a time, pensioned by a monarch who appreciated a nimble repartee more than orthodox principles. "Here comes the bear to be baited," Charles would remark, when the formidable old gentleman put in an appearance. The King was a steady and judicious patron of the sciences, and if his amours attracted more attention than his intellect, it is at least possible that he owed much of his popularity to his having flaunted the one and concealed the other under a mask of indolence.

The mere fact that Charles was, to all intents and purposes, a Frenchman, enabled him to temper the growing insularity of his people by exposing his court to the rays that emanated from Le Roi Soleil, Louis XIV of France. For Versailles had become, for the time being, the centre of European culture. When we walk through the halls and gardens of that most imposing of palaces, with its accommodation for ten-thousand souls, we should be dull indeed if the spirit of the place could not impart to us some inkling of its historical significance. It embodies the crowning triumph of the French monarchy. From being only one among feudatories as powerful as themselves, the sovereigns of France had at last so thoroughly crushed their aristocracy as to be able to concentrate it round their own persons in a condition of splendid but absolute obedience. Their châteaux knew them no more save for an occasional brief visit; the bonds were loosened that united them to their people. Such was the magnificence of their bondage that they felt it not, but rather rejoiced to partake of a life so rich and so spacious.

The court of Versailles had this advantage over the earlier Renaissance, that it held up a more positive and self-sufficient ideal. The scholars who had gathered round Lorenzo de Medici on the banks of the Arno had aimed at reviving the glories of a past age, they looked not to the future but to Plato. Even Montaigne, even Milton did not dream of any worldly culture which could hold a candle of its own to their beloved classics. In spiritual matters the Puritans may have aimed at making all things new, but the pride of Louis XIV and the measureless self-confidence of the French temperament did not shrink from a similar attempt in the temporal sphere. Louis had no more doubts of his qualifications to act as an autocrat in taste than in politics. *Enlevez moi ces grotesques!* had been the scornful words with which he had disposed of the paintings of Teniers. It was his part to give the law, not to receive it.

Intellectually the tone had been given by René Descartes, who had died in 1650. This weak and sickly boy from Touraine had compensated for his bodily infirmity by an invincible ambition to conquer the ultimate truth of philosophy by his own unaided resources. He had not the least reverence for antiquity and he did not trouble to make himself master of the classics. Certainty was his aim, and the only fact that he would take for granted was his own existence. With his clear-cut French logic and his innate mathematical genius he conceived of a universe as neat and calculable as a well-constructed machine, with God as the supreme mechanic. Even animals were, to his thinking, merely automata, without souls or capacity for feeling, a piece of pedantry that gave rise to hideous cruelties of vivisection at Port Royal. Naturally Descartes, like the prudent man he was, reserved intact the whole doctrine of the Church, but the effect of what he did was to take to pieces the universe as it had appeared to his predecessors, and to construct it again on mechanical principles. Those who came after him would know what to do with his orthodoxies and even his God.

The court of Versailles was certainly by no means so iconoclastic as Descartes ; it had even a pedantic reverence for Greece and Rome, but none the less Louis XIV did aspire to realize a splendour and grace of life that should surpass everything that had gone before. France was not only to give the law to Europe politically, but in art and letters she was to be *arbitrix elegantiarum* among nations. Over central Europe and, in the eighteenth century, as far as distant St. Petersburg, her spiritual dictation came to be unquestioned even by those who had hurled back her arms from their frontiers. It was the aspiration of Charles II to set up a model of Versailles at Whitehall, and to make French influence in the latter half of the century what Dutch influence had been in the former.

It is customary to draw comparisons between the two courts, much to the disadvantage of Whitehall. This is doubtless due partly to our national habit of castigating vices that, in reality, rather pleasantly intrigue us. The court was the smart set of that day, and would have lacked half its attraction without its sins. But the delightful memoirs of Count Grammont are in themselves enough to show that with all its faults there was a light-heartedness and bonhomie about its masques and love-making and occasional visits to some fashionable watering place, that compared not unfavourably with the stiff and ill-natured atmosphere that centred round that humourless egotist Louis XVI. Among the worst doings of the

English court, we never read of any such exhibition of pure caddishness as that recorded in Saint Simon's memoirs of the practical joke played upon the Princesse de Harcourt, an old if singularly unpleasant lady. The jokers, among whom was the heir to the throne, burst into her bedroom on a winter's night and pelted her mercilessly with snowballs, going on, in spite of her screams, until her bed was swimming with water. Even Sedley and Rochester might have shrunk from such boorish brutality. Nor, to take another comparison, does the Court of Charles II appear to have exceeded in grossness that of his grandfather, James I.

It would be a mistake to talk as if Whitehall, with the culture that emanated from it, was nothing but a small and cheap edition of Versailles. The French influence was powerful and fructifying, but it did not break the continuity of English life. The debauchery that had come to be associated with the Cavalier party had been rife under the virtuous auspices of the Martyr King, and was due to the gradual decadence of the Elizabethan upper class, or rather to the lack of concentration and discipline which had been its weakness all along. In a sense Rochester and his fellow gallants were the last and least estimable of the Elizabethans. It is equally true to speak of them as embodying an extravagant and temporary reaction against Puritan strictness. Even then we have not stated the whole of the case, for they are, to some extent, the forerunners of a very different age and ideal, the genteel rationalism of the eighteenth century.

3

"The Wisdom of Being Religious"

The Restoration has not been a period upon which posterity has been accustomed to dwell with much satisfaction; at best it has presented a series of richly coloured scenes like those of a costume play, but compared with the great days and motives that preceded it, it offers a spectacle of low ideals and corrupt protagonists. There is a lowering of the passions; the fire of Milton and Cromwell dies with them. We are on the threshold of an age in which correctness is more sought after than greatness, what Matthew Arnold has happily designated as a prose age. This feeling of disappointment is by no means unreasonable, when we reflect that the general cooling of inspiration is associated with certain ominous changes in the social system, and the concentration of power and culture within the

bounds of a privileged and wealthy minority. But whatever our final judgment, it is necessary first to understand what the men of this age were aiming at and what they achieved.

The Puritan no less than the Elizabethan scheme of life had broken down through its own inherent defects. For a diffuse joy of living it had substituted a tense and all too narrow concentration, it had eliminated too much of the colour and richness of life; its cult of the Hebrew classics had afforded an insufficient basis for any satisfactory philosophy. The high, contending ideals of the previous generation had, it was generally felt, succeeded in deluging the land with blood without doing much good to anybody. And men of all shades of opinion began seriously to doubt whether questions of doctrine and dogma were after all worth fighting about, and whether it would not be better to live and let live than to press one's ideals home at the point of the pike.

The new type of cavalier, who thronged the benches of Parliament and the ante-chambers of Whitehall, differed almost as much from the dead Verney and Montrose and the living Clarendon and Ormonde, as from the Puritans themselves. He did not take the questions at issue so seriously, and in spite of a critical delight in sermons, he was bored by an excess of fervour which his not unnatural prejudice against the new saints caused him to identify with hypocrisy. His view of the civil war is admirably stated in Butler's rollicking satire of Hudibras—

> "When civil dudgeon first grew high,
> And men fell out, they knew not why,
> When hard words, jealousies and fears
> Set folk together by the ears,
> And made them fight, like mad or drunk,
> For Dame Religion as for punk. . . .
> When pulpit, drum ecclesiastic,
> Was beat with fist instead of a stick. . . ."

On the other hand, that thorough-paced materialist, Hobbes, would have settled the religious question once and for all, by making conformity with whatever religion the sovereign happened to fancy an obligation on every subject. He had already shown how the virtual denial of any sort of religion was consistent with a verbal and ironic orthodoxy. What it came to in effect was that you might believe that black was white as a matter of faith, while holding the exact opposite as a matter of fact. This was not an heroic or even a particularly ingenuous attitude, but Hobbes was, even less than Erasmus, of the stuff of which martyrs are made, and it was better to prevaricate than to suffer.

The new spirit of toleration and lowered enthusiasm had begun to penetrate even the Church. The terrible earnestness of Laud, who might have taken the " all or nothing " of Ibsen's Pastor Brand for his motto, had not been restored with the establishment for which he died. There was now no danger of an Archbishop of Canterbury affronting the greatest in the land by tactless interference with their morals, nor of his assuming, as Laud had done, in the case of the Richmond Park enclosure, the part of Elijah to the King's Ahab. The Church had been taught a lesson that was never to need repetition, and to the maxim " no Bishop, no King ", was tacitly added, " no parson, no squire." The Crown and oligarchy between them had, in effect, captured the Church, and it now only remained for the oligarchy to capture the Crown to obtain the mastery of England, but for the one momentous qualification involved in the continued existence of the Common Law.

Nevertheless the Church of England was, for a generation, to enjoy a St. Martin's summer that gave her a deceptive appearance of vigour. Many of those who had been brought up in the Laudian tradition were now in high office, and while they lived something of the great Archbishop's spirit lived on. There was Rainbowe, Bishop of Carlisle, who might have gone on to Lincoln if he had not, in the true Laudian spirit, fallen foul of a great lady of the court over a point of morals. His liberality to the poor was lavish and unwearied, as was also that of Cosin, the splendid and munificent Bishop of Durham, who was thoroughly imbued with Laud's conception of the beauty of holiness, and sought to realize it not only by outward adornment, but also by the authorship of some exquisite collects. The demand for sermons, a heritage of Puritanism, was supplied by a galaxy of pulpit orators, South, Barrow, Stillingfleet, Bull, and finally Tillotson, men whose excellent prose is more honoured than read by a less homiletic generation. On a deeper level of piety there dwelt a singularly sweet though scarcely an intense mysticism in those two lyrical Celts, Thomas Traherne and Henry Vaughan, not to speak of Henry's equally remarkable twin brother Thomas, an adept in the Hermetic mysteries, better known under his pen name of Eugenius Philalethes. And finally there was Thomas Ken, the saintly author of " Glory to Thee my God this night ", who defied Charles II by declining the delightful experience of entertaining Nell Gwynn, and was rewarded by her good-humoured Defender with a bishopric—" To whom should I give it but to the little black fellow who refused poor Nelly a night's lodging ? "

But in spite of it all, a new spirit was beginning to permeate the leaders of the Church, which, whatever its merits in the abstract, was little conducive to religious fervour. Reason was enlarging its empire at the expense of the emotions, commonsense and clear thinking were coming to be the first requisites of a cleric no less than of a layman. "To teach doubt and experiment," Blake was to write, "certainly was not what Christ meant," but it was what the intellectual leaders of the later seventeenth century meant, and could not help meaning, so strongly was the current running in this direction. Logically it was the outcome of the Reformation no less than of the Renaissance; the more extreme Puritans had plainly shown that the spirit that constantly protests may come to be the same thing as the spirit that constantly denies. Some of the Ranters had differed little from atheists. And within the bounds of the Church itself, similar tendencies had already begun to manifest themselves.

Among the brilliant company who had gathered under the roof of Lord Falkland before the Civil War was William Chillingworth, the foremost of Anglican apologists against Rome. The book on which his fame rests is one which it is not easy to read through nowadays with the patience that its merit demands. A Jesuit, calling himself Knott, had written a Catholic apologetic of no particular importance; a certain Doctor Potter had answered him; Knott had answered Dr. Potter, and then Chillingworth set himself to dissect Knott's answer and to refute it sentence by sentence, after the amiable controversial fashion of that time, which would not admit that an adversary was capable of stringing three words together without falling into gross, demonstrable, if not unpardonable error.

In this unpromising form, Chillingworth contrived not only to annihilate poor Knott many times over, but also to advance arguments hardly less dangerous to his own side. To Knott's championship of authority he responds with what amounts to an unlimited assertion of each man's right to judge for himself, and he quotes, with telling effect, St. Paul's "prove all things, hold fast that which is good." Before you can accept any authority, he argues, you must be convinced on rational grounds of that authority's credentials. Even faith will not avail as a substitute for reason, "faith is not knowledge, no more than three is four." Chillingworth is of course convinced that reason will lead up to a moderate and Bible-grounded Protestantism, but from this conclusion other reasoners may differ. Through the lips of her ablest defender, the Church has appealed

to a Caesar whose throne is the brain, a dangerous concession indeed, which was perhaps in the mind of the charitable Presbyterian divine who insisted on attending Chillingworth's funeral in order to throw the dead man's masterpiece on the top of his coffin with the words, "Get thee gone, thou corrupt, rotten book . . . get thee gone into the place of rottenness, that thou mayest rot with the author and see corruption!"

This pious wish was far from being fulfilled, for it was in the spirit of Chillingworth that the best minds of the succeeding generation were more and more inclined to face the disputed questions of faith. It is now that the University of Cambridge for the first time comes into prominence as a centre of liberal thought, a position that she was henceforward to hold in contrast to her more conservative sister. Even before Milton had gone down, the first stirrings of this spirit must have been perceptible, and he may perhaps have made the acquaintance of a future Provost of King's, Benjamin Whichcote, one of the wisest and sweetest personalities that has ever graced Cambridge courts, one whose influence over men may be compared with that of the Oxonian Jowett in a later age. It is characteristic of him that he insisted, in spite of the suspicion he thereby incurred, on having half the emoluments of his provostship paid to his unfortunate predecessor whom Puritan rigour had displaced. Two of the clumsy, long names so dear to literary historians have been applied to him, Neo-Platonist and Latitudinarian, but he was not one of those men who fit easily into categories. He prepared the way for a broader minded and more rational view of religion by what he was rather than by what he wrote, and he shunned notoriety as much as others court it.

What Whichcote divined, more by the brightness of his own nature than by any formal reasoning, was that religion is not the exclusive property even of Christians, but is natural to man; it is nothing more nor less than health, "the very temper and complexion of a man's soul." Of course he believes, with all his heart, in Christianity and revelation, but, as he himself says, "religion doth not destroy nature, but is built upon it." Prior to all revealed religion is that which is implanted in the mind, that truth which is "connatural to a man's soul". Good Provost Whichcote would no doubt have been scandalized if anyone had suggested to him that the tendency of his thought was so far to widen the bounds of religion as ultimately to threaten the monopoly of any denomination or creed whatsoever, but there is no denying the deadly implication of such aphorisms as,

"If you say you have a revelation from God, I must have a revelation from God too before I can believe you."

This Provost was turned out at the Restoration, but his spirit continued to inform the common rooms of his University. Little practical purpose would be served nowadays by unravelling the intricacies of what is rather vaguely known as Neo-Platonism, as it manifests itself in Ralph Cudworth, one of those perennial dons who devote their lives to one never finished work of portentous erudition, in Henry More, whose bent was as much towards a discursive mysticism as philosophy, or in those two obscure yet not insignificant thinkers, Nathaniel Culverwell and John Smith, Cambridge men all, Fellows of their colleges. They were, consciously and ostensibly, defenders of Christianity against such assailants as Thomas Hobbes, who would have reduced morality to mere egotistic calculation, and would only have admitted it at all under the sanction and protection of a sovereign power. But the defence was little less damaging than the attack, for though the distinction between right and wrong was posited as absolute and eternal, the foundations of morality were natural and rational, and not necessarily Christian. Morality was, in fact, being divorced from dogma.

In the same way Smith, in defending the immortality of the soul, appealed (with imperfect knowledge of the facts) to the universal consent of all peoples. Christianity might be the expression of ultimate truth, but if its essentials could be deduced by the light of nature or from the writings of pagan philosophers, its unique claims to recognition would lapse. "The inference," as Coleridge truly says, "is as perilous as inevitable, namely, that even the mysteries of Christianity needed no revelation, having been previously discovered and set forth by the unaided reason."

The Cambridge Platonists, to use a question-begging and unsatisfactory term, represented the extreme left wing of the Church, and it was not be be expected that the spirit of the time should express itself throughout the whole body as in these single-hearted and erudite men. If they tended to loosen the bonds of faith, it was through their earnestness and devotion to the truth, but a far greater number of Churchmen were working to the same end by their very indifference. It was not to be expected that cynicism and corruption would confine their effects to the laity, and there was a general disposition to take all questions of faith and dogma less seriously. It was under the Merry Monarch that the Vicar of Bray first got preferment. Enthusiasm had fallen into terrible discredit

by reason of the Puritan extravagances. On some minds this reaction had the effect of substituting a sweet reasonableness for dogmatic assertion; Jeremy Taylor made what was then the startling discovery that honest error is no crime, and Whichcote beautifully remarked that "the largest sword, the strongest lungs, the most voices, are false measures of truth."

But toleration is not always the effect of indifference. There is a cold as well as a hot bigotry, and a spiritual lukewarmness is no reason for abating one jot of ecclesiastical pretension. In the next generation the most ruthless asserter of High Church claims was Bolingbroke, who was, from the Church's point of view, a thorough-paced infidel. But the most crooked staff was good enough to trounce Dissenters. Even the gravest divines thought of religion in a more rationalistic and commonsense way than would have been possible in Gothic times. The best type of Churchman is found in the cautious and courtly Tillotson, and among the fourteen volumes of his sermons, perhaps the most notable discourse is the one on "the wisdom of being religious". The following of Christ offered, in fact, a demonstrable balance of advantage to a man of sense.

4

Plus Ultra

Thus, even within the fold of the Church, a new spirit was astir to exercise a decisive influence on the development of Western civilization. The old faith was on the wane, a boundless curiosity had taken its place. If we were asked to name any one man as the representative of his time, we should be inclined to select Samuel Pepys, the charm of whose immortal diary consists in the fact that nothing was too common nor too mean to excite his interest. Something of a blackguard and more of a bounder, but a zealous, capable public servant, a brave man on occasion (did he not stop in London on the noble plea that as a soldier took his turn at the sword, so he, the clerk to the Navy Board, must take his at the plague?) and beloved by a distinguished circle of friends, he went through the world with the wondering eyes of a child, now hungrily exploring everything around him, now, with equal avidity, turned inward on himself. Well was such a man fitted to occupy, as he eventually did, the presidency of the Royal Society.

If we wish to form a fair or generous estimate of this much abused period it is upon Gresham College rather than Whitehall

that our attention should be focussed. The ephemeral comedy of Restoration politics and court scandal has attracted most of the attention, and a quite disproportionate amount of abuse. "A heartless, corrupt, and profligate age," remarks posterity, luxuriously muck-raking for yet another *liaison* of the Merry Monarch, while it forgets the men who quietly and with infinite pains were wresting from nature secrets which, but for the neglect of men to profit thereby, might by this time have made life noble beyond the dreams of optimism.

Francis Bacon, in spite of his having contributed nothing of importance to scientific discovery, and whose very method was far from being ideal, nevertheless had, by his faith in the possibilities of science and his vision of its achievements, held up a standard of inspiration before those who mustered for the supreme war of man against matter. In his uncompleted fragment of the New Atlantis, he had imagined an organized society for the increase of human knowledge, which he had called the House of Solomon. What had been a dream with him became a reality, and was taking shape even in the year of Naseby. The scientific spirit was already in the air, and both in London and at Wadham College, Oxford, we hear of scholars coming together for purposes of research and experiment. At the Restoration, under the wise and enlightened patronage of the King, Solomon's House received incorporation on English soil as the Royal Society.

The idea of an academy for the study of science was no new thing; the first of them, as distinct from academies of classical culture, had been formed at Naples exactly a hundred years before. But of all such bodies, the Royal Society may justly claim to have been the richest in talent and the most fruitful of results. It was not entirely free from bickering and jealousy, and the callousness of the time allowed scant sympathy with the sufferings of such animals as happened to be selected for experiment, though in an age when tumours were seared off with red-hot iron or grubbed out with the fingers, men did not fare very much better. But take them for all in all, a more single-hearted and unselfish band of enthusiasts was never collected together. No social snobbery was allowed to mar the instinctive democracy of the truth. When the shopkeeper Graunt was proposed for membership, his claim was urged by the King himself, who gave particular charge that if they found any more such tradesmen, they should admit them all to the society. Subscriptions were remitted to those who could not afford them.

It is no part of our intention to detail the work that was accomplished in every known branch of science by this wonderful band of men, by Flamsteed, the frail and sickly astronomer royal, who went as far as St. Helena to map out the heavens, Ray, who first introduced scientific classification into botany, Sydenham, that wise and beloved physician, Wallis, the mathematician, Hooke, who perfected the microscope, Boyle, the father of modern chemistry, Halley, whose name is immortalized by a comet and who supplied valuable assistance and yet more valuable suggestions to Newton, and finally Newton himself, whose *Principia* perhaps represents the highest of individual human achievement in the realms of pure thought. It is with the most general aspects of their work and spirit that we are here concerned.

First, then, let us note to what an extent the new wine of thought was mixed with the old superstition and fallacies. Newton himself was not above wasting his time in trying to fit a key to the perennial puzzle of apocalyptic symbolism ; the ingenious Marquis of Worcester imagined that he had solved the problem of perpetual motion, or that of supplying an everlasting increment of force out of nothing, and Sir Thomas Browne, who had written a refutation of vulgar errors, appeared in court against two poor old women accused of witchcraft. The Oxonian divine, Joseph Glanvill, in many respects one of the most enlightened men of his time, was not above publishing an elaborate treatise adducing all kinds of testimony to prove the reality of witchcraft, and it is pitiable to find one who, in his other work, carried on the torch of Bacon, gravely recording how the witches are in the habit of carrying off children by night to a country called Blockula, there to sup with Satan and his cronies. Some of the matters debated by the Royal Society seem childish enough when judged by our modern lights.

But the trend of the time had set definitely against these survivals, and progress, though gradual and irregular, was sure. Blockula and Glanvill notwithstanding, the witch mania died of its own accord, like the plague flea when exposed to the light of noon. Less was heard about Aristotle and Galen ; indeed a definite movement was afoot, on both sides of the Channel, to exalt modern above ancient culture. Echoes of this controversy reach us in the works of Swift. Thought was, in fact, breaking free alike from its Hebrew and its Classical leading strings. The early scholars of the Renaissance had gone to Plato for inspiration, those of the Restoration went to the things themselves.

It is in this connection that the work of Joseph Glanvill assumes an importance startling enough in view of his solemn lucubrations about witches. His *Scepsis Scientifica* or *Vanity of Dogmatising* is as different from his credulous *Sadducismus Triumphatus* as can well be imagined. It is, in effect, a critique of human reason; he attempts for the scientific intelligence what Kant was to undertake in the realm of metaphysics. "Take nothing for granted," is the gist of his message, which is throughout a plea for the diligent humility which is the first requisite of the scientist. He not only shows what a fallible guide is human sense, but also teaches a lesson that has never been properly assimilated even now—how pitifully is the untrained reason at the mercy of the affections and will, how our conclusions are determined beforehand not by the facts but by our inherited dispositions, by custom, education, interest, the love of our own productions, and finally by our reverence for antiquity. On this last point Glanvill is worth quoting:

"While we think it so piaculous, to go beyond the Ancients; we must necessarily come short of genuine Antiquity, Truth."

"Our eyes," he says elsewhere, "like the preposterous animals, are behind us."

Newton's oft-quoted remark that he was like a child picking up pebbles on the sea shore, is thus thoroughly in the spirit of Glanvill, and indeed of the Renaissance itself. For the tendency of the Renaissance was to enlarge man's power and life by belittling his importance. It deposed him from the position at the centre of the universe and his status as the spoilt child of God; it set him to the task of pitting his will against a universe to which he was as nothing. He could only advance to a scientific apprehension of his surroundings by eliminating his own personality. The Greek had handicapped himself by postulating a neat and comprehensible universe; his mind would have been shocked by approximations and unthinkable conceptions like the roots of minus quantities. The Greek wanted not only to have a logical universe, that is to say one ordered on the same lines as his own brain, but also one on which he could impose his own standard of values. His classifications were befogged by the conception of a greater or less degree of perfection, and Ray, a member of the Royal Society, first got botany out of the Aristotelean rut by going to the plants themselves, and not to his own sense of right or fitness, for information.

The specialist is now coming into his own. Those grand and comprehensive intellects, the Leonardos, the Bacons, which had

taken the whole of art as well as science for their province, were being rendered impossible, for the time at any rate, by the increasing accumulation of knowledge, as well as by the tendency to take things in their stubborn actuality, instead of weaving them into some all-comprehensive system. The scientist came to nature, not as a Caesar forcing her to accept his image and superscription, but as a beggar humbly craving for any alms of knowledge, however insignificant. The idea of getting wise quick, with which even Bacon had been obsessed, gradually began to recede. Leibnitz, the German philosopher who discovered the calculus at the same time as Newton, conceived of a progress that should endure throughout infinite time. The spacious idea of the universe, to which the new astronomy compelled the minds of men, could not fail to exercise a sobering effect on the imagination. "The thought of those infinite spaces terrifies me," confessed Pascal. The idea of conquering all knowledge and all mysteries by the resolute application of some new method and in a few generations began to seem a trifle absurd.

And yet people were beginning to realize, that progress towards ever improving if still imperfect conditions was an attainable ideal. The old crippling conception of mankind sunk in original sin and having no power of themselves to help themselves was, by the most enlightened spirits, tacitly, if not formally abandoned. As men's imaginations had, in the preceding generations, fixed on America, so now they began to dream of the empire that science should, in the fullness of time, win from nature. Dryden, in the course of an ornate and somewhat tedious ode on the wonderful year, 1666, breaks into a rapture of prophetic vision of ships going "as by line" upon the ocean, of all the world as one city, and of men voyaging to the extreme verge of the earth and thence investigating the moon and stars. Cowley, addressing the Royal Society, finely says:

> "From you, great champions! we expect to get
> Those spacious countries, but discover'd yet;
> Countries, where yet, instead of Nature, we
> Her images and idols worshipped see."

Glanvill, who had played so important a part in trouncing the reactionary dogmatism that was impeding thought, took up the cudgels for the Society against a stupid doctor and clergyman who had denounced its proceedings as subversive of true religion and Aristotle. The title of his book is significant of its contents, *Plus ultra* or "More beyond", and it is not only a spirited panegyric of the Society's work, but also a vision of progress, gradual, laborious, but of limitless potentiality. "Let envy snarl," wrote

Oldenburg, the President of the Society, "it cannot stop the wheels of active philosophy in no part of the known world."

Another notable characteristic of these Restoration scientists is the singular purity, if we may so express it, of their enthusiasm for knowledge. In striking contrast to a court where every man and most women had their price, was this band of comparatively obscure men who pursued their researches with a noble aloofness from utilitarian considerations. True, a certain proportion of their work, such as Evelyn's silviculture, Newton's contributions to scientific navigation, and Sydenham's reforms in medical practice, were of obvious and direct utility, but for the most part they were content to pursue the truth for her own sake, regardless of consequences. Newton's determination of the planetary motions, Flamsteed's mapping of the heavens, Ray's classification of plants, Boyle's law of gaseous compressibility, might be destined indirectly to transform human life, but they offered no prospect of immediate gain either to their authors or anybody else. Perhaps it is wrong to talk of an irreligious age, when religion is only being diverted from the pulpit and the altar to the laboratory, the observatory and the dissecting room.

The progress of invention is, during this period, surprisingly meagre when we consider what advances were being made in pure science. The fact is that the discoverer is powerless in default of the economic ripeness of the time for his invention. And as yet, though the ground was being prepared, the time was not quite ripe for any decisive improvement in mechanical production. Two things were necessary, a large amount of disposable capital and a certain diffusion of technical ability. The latter was supplied when, during the short reign of James II, Louis XIV, with an almost insane consistency to his policy of centralization, revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had been the charter of the French Protestants, the most industrious and skilful of his subjects. He had previously given a lesson in the use of standing armies by quartering his blackguardly troopers on these innocent people, of course in the name of Christ. The result was that in spite of all efforts to prevent them, they flocked in their thousands to England, and Louis presented us with the industrial skill that might have gone to the enrichment of his own land and treasury.

As for the capital and capitalist organization, these were rapidly developing, especially since the Jews, in whose tracks commercial prosperity followed with uncanny certainty, had been admitted

to England through the tolerance of Cromwell, and the tactful persistence of Manasseh Ben Ephraim, a wise and high-minded Jewish patriot. A money market was beginning to take shape on modern lines; London was coming into rivalry with Amsterdam, and companies were being formed for all sorts of purposes, domestic as well as foreign. As the national prosperity ebbed and flowed, so did commerce and industry slacken or flourish, and Dr. Scott has done invaluable work in pointing out how a crop of inventions followed with each boom of commerce. This happened after the conclusion of peace with Holland in 1674, and during the boom between the two crises of 1678 and 1682, and there was another leap forward following on the Huguenot immigration.

But for the great advance the time was not yet ripe. Capitalist industry was still in an immature and experimental stage, and until it was more fully developed, the employer had only minor uses for the scientist. But the gradual accumulation of scientific knowledge was bound to produce overwhelming results, once the floodgates of industrial opportunity were thrown open to that long pent up stream of knowledge. The fact that economic organization had lagged behind scientific progress may have had no small part in determining the catastrophic swiftness of the Industrial Revolution, when it did come.

5

The Arts of Transition

The change of mind and outlook was bound to manifest itself in all forms of creative art. The Restoration is a time, essentially, of transition. Merrie England and Puritan England had had their day, and their spirit had sunk deep into the national consciousness. But neither joy of life nor spiritual discipline had been sufficient of themselves, and the spirit of reason and inquiry was now coming into its own. To a poetic and a religious age was succeeding a prose age, and much that was glorious and lovable in the seventeenth century seems to have perished in the eighteenth. But this winter-time of the spirit was not death but only the necessary seedtime, a new spring. Life, that had shed so much of its outward glory, was at work all the time beneath the soil, as fruitfully as ever. If we may press the analogy so far, we should describe the last forty years of the seventeenth century as being autumnal, and invested with all the peculiar splendour of decay.

The literary Colossus who bestrides this period of transition is John Dryden. There is perhaps no one who has so certainly impressed both his own time and posterity with the greatness of his personality, of whom it is so difficult to say in what, precisely, that greatness consists. We have accepted Dryden as among our immortals, his name appears, and could not help appearing, by critical consensus of his own and subsequent ages, among the unchallenged masters of English literature, and yet Dryden is little read, much less than many authors of far inferior pretensions, and no amount of scholarly galvanism is likely to revive his popularity. One or two magnificent character sketches from the satires, perhaps the finest of their kind in the language, odes which achieve everything except the undefinable afflatus that carries the hearer away and annihilates the critical faculty, some boldly chiselled epigrams and resounding passages culled here and there from larger works, are what he, who reads for delight and not for culture, chiefly values in Dryden's poetry. His lyrics are cold and self-conscious; they have not the poignancy of Rochester's best, nor the breezy insouciance of Dorset's. As for his plays, it is easy to indicate their fine points, but it would be by no means easy, we fancy, to sit through one of them from beginning to end.

Dryden, the poet and dramatist, is a giant battling grandly against the spirit of his time, which was running against poetry. It was a self-conscious age, and self-consciousness is the death of poetic inspiration. It is in the colder forms of verse that Dryden chiefly succeeds, in the deliberate and reasoned satire, in the ode which is constructed with as much care and forethought as St. Paul's Cathedral. Some autumn glory of the old poetic splendour clings about him—if he is as ice compared with the Elizabethans he is all fire judged by the standard of Pope and Johnson. But he is, most significantly, the first of English critics whose writings, other than fragmentary, possess more than an historical interest. In this department of literature his hand seldom fails. His prose is strong, sane, discriminating, and thought-out to the end. It would almost justify us in saying that England first began to know about poetry when she ceased for a season to produce it, though this, like all epigrams, would simplify the facts unduly.

Dryden, supported by Otway, Shadwell and Lee, made an effort to put the serious English drama on its feet again after its Puritan eclipse. That forlorn hope failed, though not ingloriously. The dramatic genius of the time best expressed itself through the

prose comedy of manners, of which that entirely disreputable but most amusing blackguard Wycherley was the first great exponent. *The Country Wife*, a rollicking farce concluding with a dance of cuckolds on the stage, is a play whose unexpurgated revival is unthinkable in an age when the cuckoo is no longer allowed to mock married men from every tree, but for sheer brilliancy of dialogue and rapier-play of wit it need not fear comparison even with Molière. And after Wycherley came Congreve, whom the keen eye of George Meredith singled out as a master of the comic spirit. For indeed, as Mr. Trevelyan has divined, it was the comic spirit, in the Meredithian sense, that had come to England with Charles II, a humorous and sham-dissolving commonsense.

But for heroics that age was entirely unsuited, and even Dryden could not, with all his forethought and theory, accomplish for a moment what Shakespeare had done with such majestic and unfailing ease. Dryden invited direct comparison with Shakespeare by dealing with the tragedy of Antony and Cleopatra. He threw the best of his genius into this attempt; he produced some sonorous blank verse and an ingeniously constructed plot, but between him and Shakespeare is a great gulf fixed over which he had not the wings to soar. *All for Love*, as he called it, is an attractive costume play, with the conventional sex motive, and the characters and incidents carefully contrived to meet the requirements of an intelligent audience. How different is this from that earlier play, careless and unstudied in its dramatic technique, but in which we are watching not cunningly pulled puppets, but figures of an almost superhuman fealty, so grandly conceived as not to be dwarfed by a background of contending empires and a world in travail!

It is at this time that English verse begins to be put into its eighteenth century strait-waistcoat of the rhymed, iambic couplet. No more effective restraint was ever devised for the aspiring muse. This is not to say that this metre can never give form to flexible and glowing verse if rightly used, as it has been by Keats, Shelley, Swinburne, and Mr. Masefield. But the rhymed couplet as it was used, largely in emulation of the French Alexandrine, by the poets of the Restoration, was not meant to be flexible, but as hard and precise as it could be made, a vehicle for pointed and epigrammatic statement. When it was adopted in a play, it meant that the characters did not talk, but made speeches. The back-chat of the hopelessly correct lovers in Dryden's rhymed plays is a game of scoring points; it is not life nor anything like it. Dryden himself was

beginning to find out this when he discarded rhyme for blank verse, but blank verse itself was beginning to go the way of the time, to become formal and rhetorical. Dryden saw this tendency and strove against it with all his technical skill, but in vain. He and Otway might produce a specious imitation of the vanished glory, but blank verse is on an inclined plane, and at the bottom is the dreadful, pompous monotony of Addison's *Cato*.

It was science and not poetry about which the age really cared. If any proof were needed of this, it would be furnished by the fact that while Aristotle and his rules were being turned out of science, they were actually, following French precedent, being introduced into the drama, and unities of place and time were becoming a veritable dramatic obsession. It was hard on Aristotle that his authority should have been falsely quoted in support of this nonsense, which was derived less from him than from the dull and uninspired hackwork of Seneca. But the scientists meant business and had no use for Aristotle. With the poetic drama it was different.

In the other arts, with the one exception of music, the value of the achievement is in direct proportion to the scope given to reason and the critical faculty. It is therefore not surprising that this should be one of the great periods of English architecture, dominated by the figure of Wren, surely the first among individual English architects —for the Gothic cathedral was more the work of a community than a man. Unknown is the grave of Arthur and unknown to fame is the architect of Old St. Paul's. But the graceful steeples and spacious interiors of Wren, that delight the eye and satisfy the pride of the true Londoner, are as definitely individual works as the Rokeby Venus and the *Essay on Man*. They are, and could be, the work of no man but Sir Christopher. And yet he would not have been what he was, had he not embodied the spirit of his time with a more sensitive completeness than any of his contemporaries.

Some critics have been bold enough to carp at Wren for no better reason, apparently, than that he expressed what he thought and felt, and did not conform to the standards of another age, or to some technical requirements of a kind known best to critics. It is true that we shall look in vain for the emotional satisfaction we are accustomed to derive from Gothic; there is about Wren's buildings no turbulence of aspiration, no sense of mystery—he would have eschewed both as positive faults. Everything to which he set his hand is clear-cut, lucid and rational. There is no need to seek the obvious contrast of the Gothic cathedral, it is enough to compare

St. Paul's at London with St. Peter's at Rome to realize how thoroughly imbued with mundane commonsense is Wren. For St. Peter's has its mystery; in its florid way, it seeks to overwhelm the imagination by a sense of its vastness and grandeur, as befits the power that it embodies of imperial and spiritual Rome. In St. Paul's those majestic spaces have been narrowed down until they are no longer formidable; all is as clear and expository as a scientific lecture:

"That, ladies and gentlemen, is what I have to say. The facts are before you. Judge calmly for yourselves whether or not it stands to reason."

Wren, we know, was a member of the Royal Society, and what he said in stone was substantially the same as what Newton had expressed in the propositions and diagrams of his *Principia*. We may not care for an art of this kind, and our caring about it or not makes little enough difference, but Wren and Wren's age had something not unimportant to say, and Wren succeeded in saying it with all the beauty of entire sincerity. Successive generations of Cambridge men can scarcely have failed to benefit, even without realizing it, from the spectacle of Neville's court and Trinity Library, with their silent exhortation to clear thought, thoroughness, and harmony. Wren's steeples have all the grace that comes from proportion, from that quality that the Greeks knew as "*eurhythmia*"; they take us with the illusion of having ourselves overcome almost insuperable difficulties by a supreme effort of the brain.

His churches are certainly temples of no world but this; their interiors are those of spacious and dignified assembly rooms, designed not in the fear of God but for the sober elevation of man. But the Church itself, as the last of the Laudian survivors died off, was gradually ceasing to be a religious body in anything but name. To have provided a reverential or passionate setting for the discourses of such comfortable and commonsense gentlemen as were now coming into the occupation of benefices would have been sheer architectural bathos. And Wren had his own ideals, to which he gave noble and convincing expression:

"Architecture," he says, "establishes a nation, draws people and commerce; makes the people love their native country, which passion is the original of all great actions in a Commonwealth. . Architecture aims at eternity .... Beauty, firmness, and convenience are the principles."

In yet another branch of art, England attained to a glory that

has, by some freak of insular modesty, been successfully hidden under a bushel even to this day. To most people it will come as a surprise to hear of the Restoration as a golden age of English portrait painting, not unfit to stand comparison even with those of Gainsborough and Watts, and this is not on account of naturalized foreigners, but of artists English in birth and spirit, names little honoured and almost forgotten. That it should be portraiture and not landscape or religious painting for which this time is distinguished is exactly what we should expect. The Puritan insight into the depths of the soul, and the critical bent of the Restoration, are here happily met together.

Nowhere was the influence of the Low Countries more dominant than in English painting during the seventeenth century. Mytens is the best known among a number of Netherlandish painters in England as early as James I's reign, and after him comes Vandyck, who, with his fine sympathy for the Cavalier aristocracy, exercised a profound influence on the growth of a native school of portraiture. Gainsborough, on his death-bed, is reported to have said that he would be with Vandyck, and the latter may claim the credit of having divined what was noblest in the soul of Charles I before it had broken through the shell of that lonely, reserved nature. The Charles of Vandyck is not the weak blunderer who leaned on Buckingham and abandoned Strafford; he is the Christian gentleman who could do nothing common nor mean even on the scaffold, the Royal Martyr, who, though dead, was strong enough to bring about the downfall of his enemies. It was a worthy tribute of an artist to the only one of our sovereigns, since Henry III, who merits the title of connoisseur.

But powerful and decisive as the Netherlandish influence, Dutch and Flemish, undoubtedly proved, the direct continuity of English art may be traced from the missal painting which was carried to such delicate perfection by the monks of the Middle Ages. For the miniature is the secular child of the missal, and from Nicholas Hilliard the line of succession is through the Olivers and the elder Hoskins to the supreme mastery of Samuel Cooper, "the prince of English limners," as he was called, who showed that the miniature could be not only decorative, but also illuminative of the sitter's inmost personality. What could be more subtly characteristic than the dyspeptic, irritable expression, and the restless eye of Cooper's John Lilburne? An impossible person, you would agree with almost everyone who came in contact with him, to live or work with, and yet earnest to the woeful exclusion of commonsense and humour.

Easel portraiture by Englishmen first achieves noteworthy results about the time of the Civil War, with two masters who were, both formally and in spirit, of the opposing camps. William Dobson, the pupil of Vandyck, whom Charles I called the English Tintoretto, perfectly caught his master's manner, though the Cavalier gentlemen whom he painted have a touch of Englishry that is Dobson's own. The aristocracy, stimulated by their sovereign's example, were beginning to display an intelligent interest in painting; the Earl of Arundel, by no means an amiable personality, was a zealous and discriminating collector of pictures, and Charles I had a magnificent collection of his own, which was broken up and lost to the nation by Puritan vandalism.

But the best of the Puritans were by no means insensitive to art; Cromwell, in particular, loved both pictures and music, and of more importance to art than Dobson, because more original and of deeper artistic penetration, is his Puritan rival, Robert Walker. The very spirit of the man was that of the party whose chiefs he painted. He cared little for outward adornment, and he interpreted his sitters not with the flattering complaisance of the courtier, but more with the austere scrutiny of the preacher. His Lambert is the vain and unsubstantial creature that Lambert proved himself, and even his Hampden displays a hardness, almost a cunning, that give an ambiguous cast to his nobly chiselled features. Nowhere better than in Walker is displayed the Puritan tendency to look past appearances to the naked soul.

It was, however, at the Restoration, that English portraiture blossomed into full glory. It is almost a tragedy that the attention of posterity has been focussed upon the work of the Dutchman, Van der Vaes, better known as Lely, and, after him, the German Kneller. That Lely had a greatness of his own, the influence that he exercised over greater English painters who studied under him is enough to prove, but his was a very showy and obvious talent, and Lely was seldom able to attain more than the most superficial comprehension of the English men and women he painted. His beauties of the court are a row of blousily attractive demi-mondaines posing for customers. Their portraits, with their gaudy colouring, make excellent advertisement posters, and tell us nothing whatever about the ladies except what might be expected to interest a discriminating *vieux marcheur*. This no doubt accounts for Lely's popularity with his fair sitters. His statesmen have usually masks for faces. His portraits of Danby and of Halifax, perhaps the greatest

political Englishmen of their time, tell us, no doubt, exactly what they would have liked Lely to tell, namely that they were both excellently dressed and could keep their secrets to themselves. His portraits of the Admirals at Greenwich Hospital certainly display a convincing, seamanlike manfulness, but even here, in some strange way, he has contrived to suggest that he has been painting their opponents by mistake, for these sea-dogs look more Dutch than English. As for Sir Godfrey, his faces are usually added, like those of the models in tailor's shops, to give an air of realism to the suits of clothes that he painted with such loving sympathy.

So rooted is the prejudice in favour of these foreigners, that any unusually good Restoration picture, in default of evidence as to authorship, is in danger of being catalogued without more ado as a Lely. Our galleries are shamefully lacking in the works of the English artists of this time, because it has been seldom thought worth while to acquire them. And England is still almost ignorant of the existence of a galaxy of portrait painters to whose work the best of Lely and Kneller is but surface glitter. Space forbids us to do more than glance in passing at Greenhill, some of whose work may be seen at Dulwich gallery, and who painted the superbly virile Captain Clements at Greenwich Hospital—no doubt of *his* being an Englishman! Poor Greenhill, in spite of his having, like Marlowe, died young as a sequel to a debauch, could yet paint a woman, and such a handsome woman as the "Unknown Lady" in the possession of Mr. Marsh,[1] without the prurient vulgarity too characteristic of Lely's feminine portraits. Among many others worthy of record we select the names of Joseph Michael Wright, whose Mrs. Margaret Herbert shows so true an appreciation of pure and high-souled womanhood, and Mary Beale, whose interpretation of character is so delicately and unmistakably feminine, and whose portrait of the fantastic poet Cowley displays a striking resemblance, that perhaps goes deeper than the surface, to the features of Rupert Brooke. And to come to a slightly later period, we would give the whole of Kneller and most of Lely put together for Gandy's one portrait of William Jane in the Bodleian, with its strength and insight.

But if the neglect of these masters is a reproach and a wonder, that of John Riley, the greatest of them all, is little short of an artistic tragedy. One is almost tempted to say that a man who can

[1] There is a fine reproduction of this, in Mr. Baker's *Lely and the Stuart Portrait Painters.*

go into the National Portrait Gallery, and see Riley's Dugdale, or his Chiffinch, or his James II, and then deliberately prefer the flaunting canvases of Lely, would be capable of bartering a Raphael for the Christmas Supplement to Soper's Popular Annual. Even that by no means profound dilettante, Horace Walpole, seems to have had some inkling of Riley's greatness. "One of the best native painters that have flourished in England," he calls him, "whose talents while living were obscured by the fame rather than the merit of Kneller, and depressed since by being confounded with Lely . . . with a quarter of Sir Godfrey's vanity," he continues, "he might have persuaded the world he was as great a master." And yet no life of him appears in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and his reputation has been no less insulted than injured by the attribution of some of his best work to Lely.

Riley was a fatally modest and nervous artist, and he allowed himself to be depressed, almost to the point of retiring from his profession, by the comment of Charles II, on surveying Riley's portrait of him :

"Is that like me ? Then, odds fish, I am an ugly fellow ! "

There was no need for Riley to have been discouraged, for Charles, with his shrewd humour, was really paying him the subtlest of compliments, and no doubt realized it. For there were elements in the Merry Monarch's character such as court painters are not accustomed to emphasize in their sovereigns. But Riley had imbibed enough of the Puritan humour to be incapable, without treason to his art, of flattering a sitter. He was more mercilessly austere even than Walker. His James II, as fine a piece of technique even in the painting of gorgeous clothes as anything of Lely, gives a clearer explanation of that monarch's fall than most histories. James, though coarser fibred and duller witted, is—he who has eyes may see—his father's son as surely as Charles II is his mother's, and James has the same earnest yet bewildered outlook upon a world to which he can adapt himself no more successfully than his father before him. The sinister face of Riley's William Lord Russell is by no means that of a martyr for liberty, but of a Whig magnate such as the Russell family might be expected to produce. His portrait of Waller the poet is a severe and searching criticism ; we think not of the two or three immortal lyrics, but of the time-server, and of the winter of cold rationalism that was descending upon English poetry. And at pompous Arundel there is one family portrait that might well have suggested to Pope his couplet :

"What can ennoble sots or slaves or cowards?
Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards."

But no one divined more surely the spirit of his age in its best as well as its worst aspects. Riley was never happier than when he was painting some man of scientific or scholarly intelligence. The spirit of an antiquary who is also a shrewd and kindly man of the world is that which informs his Sir William Dugdale, and his Sir Robert Boyle might very well bear the title of Boyle's masterpiece, *The Sceptical Chymist.* But perhaps the greatest of all Riley's portraits is that of Sir Christopher Wren, which constitutes a veritable summary in expression of Wren's architectural achievement, in all its thoughtfulness, its proportion, and its honesty of workmanship, a worthy ornament for the Royal Society. It is a thousand pities that Riley had not the opportunity of crowning his work by a portrait of Newton. He died young, but even so his place is with the immortals, where his fame, so unworthily quenched on earth, doubtless—

"Lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed."

The realistic impulse had for a long time been felt in sculpture. In the Middle Ages monumental effigies had more commonly represented types than individuals, though it is hard to believe that such a recumbent painted figure as that of Archbishop Chichele at Canterbury is not an exact portrait, while of his neighbour, Henry IV, we know, from the desecration of his tomb, that he is represented thereon with substantial accuracy. After the Reformation, it became the sculptor's supreme object to represent his subject exactly as he or she was in life. Accordingly, while pose and drapery show a sad falling off from pre-Reformation standards, the features are portrayed with such vividness as to create, at best, almost an illusion of reality, though there is much unevenness of accomplishment, and sometimes the faces are as stiff as the figures. The Elizabethan and Jacobean sculptors were at their best in representing a very tired old man, to whom death seems a welcome rest from the cares of the world—such a one as Richard Owen at Westminster or Sir G. Snigge in St. Stephen's at Bristol. An endearing feature of this portrait sculpture is the sweetness and individuality of the numerous children represented.

If the Restoration was one of the great periods of English portrait painting, it is, in the most common estimation, *the* great era of English music. Unlike portrait painting, the musical genius of this time

has received adequate if tardy recognition, and the time is past when any historian of Macaulay's calibre could pen a comprehensive survey of England at the accession of James II without even the mention of Purcell.

Throughout Western Europe the seventeenth century was a time of musical transition. The old polyphonic melodies, of which the Elizabethans had shown such sweet mastery, were being superseded by a type of music in which the solo was the predominant factor, and this in spite of the part songs which were still, if we may trust Pepys, so pleasant a feature of social life. Music was, in fact, moving away from the Christian and democratic ideal of the Middle Ages, of which the idea was that the melody was equally contributed by all, and it was becoming the work of specialists.

Charles II, when he came to the throne, found English music like a house swept and garnished. The Puritans had been particularly hostile to Church music, and the Long Parliament had gone so far as to order the destruction of organs, a threat that was happily not always translated into deed. By the time of the Restoration the continuity of English music had been thoroughly broken, and the time was ripe for revolutionary changes. Now that the Church had come back to her own, Church music naturally came back with her, but the spirit of the Restoration had no use for the heavy and solemn devotional melodies that had delighted Charles I. The Merry Monarch took a keen interest in music, and he had learnt something of the new methods in France, where the naturalized Italian, Lully, who on 1662 was appointed court musician to Louis XIV, was beginning to transform French music. Charles had no wish to be bored in church more than necessary, so the Royal Band and the choir in the Chapel Royal were soon indoctrinated with the more sprightly and tuneful methods.

Charles was an energetic and discriminating patron, and it was something of a stroke of genius when he decided to send the most promising of all his choir boys to Paris, in order to study French methods on the spot. Pelham Humfrey was only sixteen when the King selected him for this honour, and he came back, as we gather from Pepys, with a considerably swollen head, "an absolute monsieur." But Humfrey turned out to be a genius of the highest order, one of a group whose names include those of Lock, Blow, and, above all, Purcell. The new methods achieved a success that was almost unnaturally rapid, and for the last time England could plausibly claim to stand in the forefront of European music. The

new impulse was soon felt in secular as well as Church music; the genius of Purcell was extraordinarily comprehensive, and its only limits were fixed by the yet imperfect development of technique and instrumentation. He is perpetually struggling, with the resources of the seventeenth century, to do the work of the eighteenth and nineteenth. It is a marvel that he was able to accomplish so much of permanent value, including the first of English operas, *Dido and Aeneas*, though as yet England was not ripe for its performance.

And then the outburst of musical genius died away almost as rapidly as it had begun. Throughout the eighteenth century England continued to be a land of song and of song-writers, taste was highly developed, and concerts of good music patronized. But her line of great composers was broken; Blow and Purcell left no successors, and English music was soon to pass under the splendid but alien domination of Handel. The refined taste, which in that age of oligarchy alone counted, had got divorced from the national spirit. The new music of Charles II's reign, like that of contemporary France, was essentially courtly and aristocratic; the heart of the people was probably little touched by it, though it was to the quick step of Purcell's music that Lillibullero marched James II out of England. The tendency of the new Church music was to transfer the singing from the lips of the congregation to those of the choir, and Cromwell's troopers, all chanting a Psalm together before going into action, were performing a more devotional if less tuneful act than a fashionable congregation listening to some highly trained boy singer lifting his voice alone in the anthem. Merrie and singing England had received from the Puritans a blow from which it never fully recovered; it was not only from the cathedrals that music and colour had been banished, but from life itself.

But how then do we account for so glorious a musical harvest as that garnered immediately after the Puritan domination, and for the fact, recorded by Pepys, that the ladies and gentlemen of the Restoration continued to delight in part-songs like any Elizabethans? Perhaps we shall do well to remember the law discovered but not accounted for by Nietzsche: that music, as a matter of practically universal experience, is later in its appearance than the sentiment it expresses, as when Bach and Handel give voice to the German Reformation, or when Mozart pays in clinking gold what is due to the age of Louis XIV; or, we may add, when Sir Edward Elgar says complacently in the twentieth century what Leighton and Tennyson were saying in the nineteenth.

The clear-cut intellectuality of the Restoration, however well Wren might formulate it in stone, could find no conceivable expression in music. Certainly it is not that to which Purcell gave voice in his songs and anthems. But we should not be far wide of the mark if we were to describe the music of him and his fellows as the swan song of the Church of England. The spirit of pious sweetness, the beauty of holiness, which had been the dream of Laud and the reality of lives like Herbert's and Fuller's, found voice in the very hour of its passing. In form, men like Purcell were not only abreast but often ahead of the latest foreign developments, but the spirit that inspired their melody was akin to that of the gentle Herbert, who could say to his friend, "let me tell you, I would not willingly pass one day of my life without comforting a sad soul or showing mercy . . . and now let's tune our instruments."

6

Divine Right Yields to Oligarchy

We need not linger long over the ignoble spectacle of Restoration politics. The vicissitudes of our domestic struggles at this time are dramatic and complicated enough, but the main issues are simple, and they are all that count in the development of British civilization. The Restoration had brought back the Constitution to its old state of unstable equilibrium between a King responsible for managing the nation's business and a Parliament with no responsibility for governing, and yet possessing the control of the pursestrings. It was like the fable of the two goats crossing the stream by one narrow plank and meeting in the middle. One or other had to go down. Even the loyalty of the Cavalier Parliament was not proof against its continually seeking to encroach upon the King's prerogative.

Charles saw all this plainly enough. With his cool and lucid intelligence he perceived that the division of sovereignty between King and Parliament could not last, and he was resolved that the balance should turn in his own favour. He had none of the proud ambition that made Louis XIV work nine hours a day in order to impose his will not only on France but Europe. He was—and it does him honour—more interested in the advancement of man's empire over matter than in such bloody and resounding achievements. But he was, before everything else, an egoist—he had not studied Hobbes for nothing—and his egoism took a form which is surprising in so full-blooded and vigorous a man, who, like his father,

was in the habit of walking any ordinary companion off his feet. He had his own ideas of what constituted a happy life, and these he was determined to realize. If he valued power, it was not as an end, but as a means to living well. He would have been quite content to let the sleeping dogs of the Constitution lie, but if they showed a tendency to bite him, why, then, the only thing was, if not to poison, at least to drug them.

When the King came back he found himself confronted with an aristocratic and moneyed class which soon controlled, almost without question, the machinery of national and local government. The failure of the Puritan experiment had quenched for an indefinite period any hope of their power passing into the hands of the people; the upper class had, in fact got the democracy fairly down, and it only remained to run through the victim's pockets legally and at leisure. But it was not likely that the descendants of the men who had plundered the Church and started one King on the road to the scaffold were going to share their power loyally with that King's successor. Charles had been brought back because it was only under the auspices of a king that the tyranny of the Saints could be removed; now that the New Model was an evil dream of the past and the dissenters crushed and persecuted, it might be time to reconsider the King's position.

Such was the game that Charles, once his interest was fairly roused in it, set himself to play with a knowledge and finesse that would have done credit to a Tudor. He perfectly understood that the key to power was a golden one; so long as he could manage to make both ends meet he could defy his Parliament. But he differed from Henry VIII and Elizabeth in his cosmopolitan indifference as to where that money came from—if it was necessary to raise it from the foreigner by mortgaging the national policy, he had no particular objection on principle. He was also well aware that nothing runs away with money and a Sovereign's power so much as war, even a successful war. It was therefore his aim to keep out of foreign trouble as much as possible.

There was working in his favour a trend of national sentiment that might give him a winning advantage. The mystical cult of the Divine Right of Kings, which had been growing ever since the downfall of the Roman Church in England, had now reached an unprecedented pitch of intensity. Cavalier loyalty had fastened during the time of defeat and privation upon the person of the Sovereign and was too strong to be quenched even by disillusionment. As Butler put it:

"Loyalty is still the same,
Whether it win or lose the game."

The Church was solid for the monarchy and divines vied with each other in expressions of abject servility. The Martyr King now attained a power over men's minds that he had never exercised during his life. A special service of humiliation was appointed for the day of his death, in which his sufferings were compared with those of Christ Himself, although, on that very day, it was whispered that in some secret haunt certain stout old rebels were still wont to meet and—horrible to relate—eat nothing but calf's head! The primitive idea of the King's being a medicine man was much to the fore; for some reason, his touch was supposed to be particularly efficacious for the cure of scrofula, and on Charles's first appearance in the park, an individual with a rapidly disappearing nose insisted upon rubbing its unsavoury remnant on the hand of his disgusted sovereign.

The extraordinary strength of English Royalist sentiment has been obscured by the event. The throne, in fact, had a cruel run of bad luck, as thrones dependent on the accidents of heredity will. The sovereigns who followed Charles II were either by their religion, their nationality, or their dullness, calculated to repulse the most ardent advances of loyalty, and yet even hen-witted Queen Anne was able to excite a passion of loyalty verging on national hysteria. What might not an Elizabeth or a Henry VIII, what might not one of the able Plantagenets have done with such a backing? As we might expect, such feelings were particularly strong among the honest country squires, the "lesser barons", who had neither the brains nor the opportunity for disillusionment with the court. The great, sophisticated magnates, and the growing class of bourgeois capitalists, had little enough sense of the divinity that hedges a King or anything else, except a fat estate and a comfortable bank balance.

So the cards were dealt, and the game between monarch and oligarchy began. Charles was too clever not to be as excellent a ruler as was compatible with his own interests and comfort. The nation never advanced more rapidly in prosperity than under his auspices, and though he was entirely indifferent to her honour, her interests abroad were quietly and substantially provided for. The work of American colonization went on rapidly and without hindrance, and Charles effected, at the end of his first Dutch war, the extremely advantageous exchange of our last footing in the East Indian Islands for the Dutch colony of New Holland, or New

York, thus linking up the Northern with the Southern group of American colonies, and giving us a clear stretch of coast from Maine to South Carolina. Our acquisition of Bombay, as part of the Queen's Portuguese dowry, was a notable step towards our eventual supremacy in India. Among Empire builders Charles II, with his quiet but understanding interest in colonial affairs, is surely entitled to a place.

The business of government started on unexceptionable lines by the appointment of Clarendon, a Cavalier of the best school and a statesman of the Tudor tradition, to what we should now call the premiership. After a few years the inevitable reaction succeeded the first delirium of loyalty. If plain men had been exasperated by a reign of the saints, they were inclined to be scandalized at the reign of the sinners, especially when old ruined Cavaliers went uncompensated, and the pretty ladies of the court accounted for no inconsiderable part of the national revenue. The most unpopular act of all was the one which does the greatest credit to Charles's good sense; Cromwell's expensive and dangerous acquisition of Dunkirk was quietly sold off to France. Then Charles found himself drifting into another war of attrition with Holland, and was probably telling no more than the truth when he professed to find himself the only man in England who did not desire war. This war was very bloody, obstinate and indecisive, but things were on the whole going in our favour, in spite of a terrible but final visitation of the bubonic plague, followed by a fire that reduced the most important part of London to a heap of smoking ruins.

It did not require a minute knowledge of our history to predict that a war would set Parliament, even a Cavalier Parliament, encroaching upon the prerogative. They raised all sorts of difficulties about granting money, and demanded to control its expenditure after it was granted. This was, of course, to give the legislature the control of the executive, and Clarendon, with his stiff Tudor theory of the prerogative, stoutly opposed it. As the King was not prepared to surrender his whole position, he found himself entering upon the third year of the war without the necessary funds to carry it on. An earnest patriot like Charles I, confronted with a situation so menacing to the national safety and prestige, would have strained the law in order to provide himself with the means of doing his duty. That road lead to the scaffold, and Charles II saw no reason for taking it. If the nation's representatives refused to find the money for the nation's business, that was their affair. Charles

coolly laid up his hitherto successful fleet and negotiated for peace. The Dutch saw the opportunity and sailed up the Medway to Chatham, burning several of the now useless warships, but causing little loss of life, while Charles was amusing his seraglio by a moth hunt. The Dutch exploit had little more tangible effect than that of hurrying up the conclusion of the treaty on the lines, very advantageous to ourselves, previously arranged.

Rumour expected Charles to abdicate. He did nothing of the sort, and relieved himself of an awkward situation by the old Tudor trick of turning loose a scapegoat. Clarendon must go and take the unpopularity with him. Charles was bored with Clarendon's virtuous solemnity and airs of the old retainer; he disliked him for much the same reason as Queen Victoria disliked Gladstone. Gratitude was a sentiment in whose existence he had little belief, and with Clarendon disappeared the spacious, old-time tradition of the Cecils. The new type of politician was " restless, unfixed in principles and place ", a quick-witted but unscrupulous adventurer, and with such men Charles preferred to deal. His Parliament had taught him the lesson that he must either be a master or a slave, and he determined to take the offensive. His quick grasp of essentials showed him that his best chance lay in linking his fortunes with those of the splendid despot who had achieved in France all, and more than all, that he hoped to achieve in England.

His first idea was frankly to sell his support to Louis in return for the financial and military backing necessary to establish his own power and, incidentally, to set up the Roman Catholic religion in England. A secret treaty was signed to this effect, by no means disadvantageous to England's interests abroad, but committing her to the support of France in a shameful and treacherous attack upon Holland, in which the combined fleets were soundly repulsed. But Charles, not being an Englishman, had misjudged the national character and soon found out his mistake. Fear and hatred of Popery was still an obsession, and an attempt to suspend the persecuting laws against Catholics and Dissenters alike provoked a violent reaction and a still further addition to these laws by the passing of the Test act, excluding both Catholics and Dissenters from public employment. Charles had miscalculated the situation and instantly gave way. Catholicism was not practicable policy, and the first crude scheme was dropped.

Charles now shifted his ground, and gave the reins of power to a patriotic, if not too clean-handed minister, in the Earl of Danby, son

of a Yorkshire baronet, who pursued a policy of friendship with Holland and opposition to France. But Louis knew enough about Charles to give himself a blackmailer's advantage over his fellow-conspirator, and the publication of some secret correspondence of which Danby had been the unwilling instrument led to an outburst of popular fury which sent the minister to the Tower, and made Charles take the desperate step of dissolving his old Cavalier Parliament. The crisis of the reign had now come. Those members of the oligarchy who wanted to capture the executive and reduce the King to a crowned puppet, or, as the phrase now is, a constitutional monarch, commanded a majority in each of the Parliaments that now followed in quick succession. They were called the Country or Whig party, while those who still favoured the Divine Right and the old distribution of powers between a royal executive and a Parliamentary legislature were called the Tories. These were the same parties that had already begun to take shape in the Long Parliament, when Charles I upset everything by his imbecile attempt on the Five Members.

Charles II now had to deal with a situation little less difficult than that which had proved his father's ruin. Not only was Parliament preparing to push home its advantage to the practical extinction of any sovereignty but its own, but the country was now thoroughly roused. The London mob was still a formidable power, and London was in one of its fits of collective hysteria. Rumours got about, not unfounded on fact, of a plot to convert England to Popery, and the sensational murder of a sound Protestant magistrate, a mystery unsolved to this day, fired a long prepared train of anti-Catholic fury. People saw Jesuits everywhere, and a few enterprising rogues were able to fill their pockets by swearing away the lives and liberties of innocent people. Meanwhile the Whigs were clamouring for the exclusion of the King's brother James, now an open Catholic, from the succession. No power, it seemed, could stand against so overwhelming a flood of national sentiment.

Charles was roused to the height of his political genius. A single mistake, and he was ruined. But he made no mistake. Unlike his father, he knew how, and just how long, to wait. He bent before the storm, he allowed the plot-fever to run its course, and even when the fury was beginning to abate, he let the innocent Lord Stafford be thrown to the wolves to make all safe. Meanwhile, he succeeded in fixing up a secret arrangement with Louis that would give him just the money he needed to keep him independent of Parliament.

That gave him a winning advantage, and he used it with consummate finesse. He summoned a Parliament, still with a rampant Whig majority, not to Westminster but to Oxford, now the spiritual as it had formerly been the military headquarters of Royalism. The exasperated Whigs attended with bands of armed retainers. This was a fatal mistake and Charles knew it. They had raised the spectre of civil war, of another New Model, of the King cracking his last joke to the man in the mask in front of Whitehall. The tide of national sentiment was now turning against the Whigs as violently as it had run in their favour. Charles allowed his new Parliament just enough rope to put the seal on their unpopularity and then, with the genius of a born actor, had himself conveyed to their place of assembly in one coach and his robes in another, and dissolved Parliament almost before the members had realized what was happening. Panic overtook them, and the roads leading from Oxford were crowded with Whig magnates stampeding in every direction from they knew not what.

The Whigs had shot their bolt, and it only remained for the King to press home his victory. This he did with ability and entire unscrupulousness during the remaining years of his reign. A desperate plot to murder him gave him the opportunity of taking off the two ablest heads, next to Lord Shaftesbury's, among his opponents, and though Shaftesbury himself escaped his clutches, he retired to Holland a broken and dying man. The Whigs were, for the time, crushed and cowed almost as completely as the Dissenters had been, and though Charles defied the law by not summoning a Parliament for the brief remainder of his reign, he made himself fairly safe, should the necessity arise, by a series of audacious measures, the result of which was to pack the corporations, the electoral bodies of the towns, with his own nominees. He had now, with the tacit acquiescence of his subjects, established himself in a position more nearly approaching to absolute power than that of any of his predecessors, and there seemed a prospect of Parliament becoming a mere machine for registering, at long intervals, the sovereign's decisions.

But royalty is ever at the mercy of accidents. Charles could secure his brother's succession ; he could make it safe that he should start with an ultra-loyalist Parliament and a generous revenue for life, but he could not prevent that brother from playing the fool of the most aggressive type. James II, on coming to the throne, displayed an unexampled ingenuity in doing everything that

could conceivably be thought of to bring down his throne in ruin. The nation had scarcely recovered from its fright of a Popish plot when James so openly endeavoured to force Catholicism down its throat that even the Pope declined to be a party to such madness; Charles I had offended the nation by nothing more than by his Court of High Commission, this court was restored with Judge Jeffreys as its president; memories of the Commonwealth had given the nation a horror of standing armies, James assembled an ill-disciplined and unreliable rabble in uniform to overawe London; Charles II had made one of his few mistakes in his illegal attempt to dispense with persecution, this mistake was the only part of his policy his brother thought it worth while to copy; "no Bishop, no King," was a safe and proven maxim, James prosecuted his Bishops and left nothing undone to bully the Church out of her servility. It was a truly Gilbertian situation when the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge was turned out of office for his contumacious disloyalty in refusing to break the law by allowing a Master of Arts to dispense with an oath of allegiance to the King, and an acknowledgment of that King's supremacy over the Church of England.

The crowning folly was when James, one of those hopeless persons who believes that a strong line is a ready way out of every difficulty, began to bring native Irishmen over to coerce England. A song, of the kind only too familiar in Anglo-Irish politics, appealing to every instinct of bigotry and racial prejudice, was composed to the effect that the Irish were going to cut the throats of all the English and make the land their own. Everybody was singing this, including James's soldiers at Hounslow. After a good deal of backstairs work among the magnates, who were now thoroughly agreed as to James's impossibility, Prince William of Orange, the Protestant ruler of Holland, was invited over with his wife Mary, James's daughter, to take the Crown. Louis XIV could and would have prevented this by keeping William busy at home, but James selected precisely this moment for standing on his dignity and so far irritating his august friend as to drive him to the supreme blunder of his career, that of launching his armies at Germany instead of Holland. With the door thus obligingly held open, William arrived in England with a mixed army of Dutch, Germans, and Swedes, who were greeted with the utmost delight by a nation in which the memory of a very different revolutionary army was still alive. James's commanders, headed by Churchill, afterwards the great Duke of Marlborough, coolly

betrayed him, the redcoats offered no resistance, and James bolted as ignominiously as advocates of the strong line are apt to do when pressed. Corruption and foreign arms had triumphed, perhaps usefully but certainly not gloriously, over obstinate ineptitude, and one of the least glorious episodes of our history ended with a Dutchman as King, and an oligarchy in effectual sovereignty over England.

CHAPTER II

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OLIGARCHY

1

"JE MAINTIENDRAI"

WHEN the English political leaders, who might have fairly claimed to have the feeling of the country behind them, decided to confer the crown jointly on William of Orange and his wife Mary, they were regarding the matter from a standpoint widely different from that of their chosen sovereign. To them the issue at stake was largely between the Crown and the Parliament, that is to say, though they may not have put it so to themselves, between an hereditary monarch and a very small minority of the nation. To William himself, these high matters of domestic politics were of no more interest than the bickerings of children. He had come to England for one reason and one alone, to advance the cause to which his life was devoted, the cause neither of his natural nor yet of his adopted country, but of civilized Europe. William was in fact, and this is the whole clue to his career, a good European. He had attained a standpoint that even now would be considered, in most quarters, eccentrically advanced.

And yet never was hero less visibly heroic. William had about him little that was splendid, less still that was lovable. A fatherless, disinherited boy, he had grown up among enemies of his House in an atmosphere that made reserve and suspicion a part of his nature. We catch a glimpse of him, a correct, ungenial youth, visiting the court of Charles II, and we can imagine the wicked delight that his host must have taken in getting him so drunk that he tried to break into the apartments of the maids of honour. Then, two years afterwards, in 1672, came the onrush of Louis XIV's magnificent army upon a practically defenceless Netherlands, and in that hour of despair and ruin the Dutch turned instinctively to the scion of the patriot house whose motto had been ever *Je maintiendrai*—"I will maintain." The sickly youth was now the champion of European liberties; rather than yield, he said, he would die on the last dyke.

By flooding the country he gained a breathing space. His consummate diplomatic skill quickly gathered allies, and the long duel commenced, that was not even to end with his life, between this man of infinite pains but no genius, and the magnificent *Roi Soleil* with France at his back. Into this duel England was now drawn under his leadership.

Like all men who sacrifice their lives to a mission, he sacrificed everyone else to the same cause without scruple or mercy. Men and nations alike were the pawns with which the great game was played. He had no delight in cruelty, and yet when the De Witts were mobbed to death and when a Highland clan was treacherously exterminated in the valley of Glencoe, he found it convenient in each instance to show favour to the murderers. He dragged England into the vortex of Continental warfare, but he concluded a treaty between England and Holland to the complete sacrifice of Dutch interests. All that concerned him was to bring England into line against Louis. For this the time was ripe. The more than half French sons of Charles I had held England in leash too long, and James, by his flight into France, and the military support which he sought and obtained from Louis, helped to open the nation's eyes to the real enemy to her liberties.

It was not long before a terrible danger fairly roused the country out of its habitual sense of insular security. Catholic Ireland had burst into revolt; Louis had thrown into the island a French force, with James himself, to provide it with a nucleus. William hurried thither with an Anglo-Dutch army to relieve the pressure on the Protestant North East, and thence to strike by the East Coast route at the capital. In his absence the French Admiral de Tourville appeared in the Channel at the head of a fleet which was for the moment overwhelming. Not far from the cliffs of Picardy lay an army under Marshal Humières, fully equipped for an invasion of England—there was nothing on land that could possibly stand up against it, and an unknown number of Jacobites were expected to join it at the first opportunity. A battle was fought off Beachy Head between Tourville and an Anglo-Dutch fleet commanded by Lord Torrington. This brave and skilful seaman, finding himself confronted with impossible odds, took the one step possible for the saving of the situation. He drew off his fleet substantially intact and kept it "in being"—the expression was his own—on Tourville's flank. Humières did not dare to embark, and Tourville frittered away his advantage by sailing down the Channel and burning

Teignmouth. The fleet in being had saved England from the horrors of the dragonnades, just as another fleet was one day to save our countryside from the fate of Belgium. But the Admiral, though acquitted by a court martial of his brother officers, was dismissed from the service by the King, and has been held up to obloquy as a mean-spirited poltroon.

Matters soon righted themselves. On the very day of Torrington's action, an Irish army, with James at its head, bolted from its position behind Boyne Water, and the stamping out of that revolt was now only a matter of time and treaty-breaking. Next year the English and Dutch were strong enough to defeat Tourville and get the command of the Channel. An English force, still imperfectly trained and disciplined, went over with William to Flanders in order to take part in the long, dreary war that was wearing down the power of France. William was a second-rate general, and ill fitted to cope with so masterly a tactician as the Marshal de Luxembourg. Two desperate battles he fought and lost in two successive years, but he continued pegging away as doggedly as ever. Louis might keep striking right and left at the ring of enemies that encompassed his frontiers, but however skilfully the blows might be placed, they were growing feebler and feebler; they had none of the force behind them necessary for a knock-out. At last this exhaustion enabled William to reap the greatest success he ever attained. He recaptured the fortress of Namur with Marshal de Boufflers in command, a deadly blow at French prestige, a feat commemorated in the song, *The British Grenadiers*. Two years later the combatants, who had fought each other to a standstill, concluded a peace which left matters much where they were before all this slaughter began.

But the last and most exciting act of the drama was yet to be played. England, equally sick of Continental war, of a standing army and a Dutch King, was busy disarming, while Louis, realizing that Charles II of Spain was slowly dying, prepared to seize the splendid heritage of Imperial Spain for his great-nephew Philip and his House of Bourbon. William, whose long, dreary struggle had now almost worn out his frail body, patiently set to work to provide against this contingency, and so to partition the Spanish Empire that only outlying provinces would fall to the Bourbons. He must have felt that, with England determined on peace at almost any price, he was bluffing from a weak hand, and that Louis knew it. Nevertheless the Spanish Empire, which was presumed to be incapable of a say in its own destinies, was partitioned and partitioned again in

anticipation. Then what life there was in poor Charles II of Spain flickered out, and Louis, who had some excuse for his action in the fact that it would probably have taken a war to force any partition of their empire upon the proud Castilians, tore up the Treaty and with ineffable dignity proclaimed to the assembled court of Versailles himself a perjurer, and his nephew King of Spain and the Indies. But even William might not have aroused England from her determination to seek peace and ensue it, come what might, had not Louis fairly goaded her into action by seizing the Barrier Fortresses of the Low Countries and by recognizing James II's son, on the death of his father, as King of England. This was too much, and the good European once again had the satisfaction of bringing England into line with Europe's other defenders. There was only one more service left for him to perform. Having entrusted the Flanders command to a general far more skilful than himself, he yielded his over-wrought frame to an unmarked grave in Westminster Abbey, and left England, united under an English sovereign, to crown his life's work with victory.

2

The Dutch King and His English Parliament

So strong is the Whig tradition that dominated English history during the greater part of last century, that responsible historians are still to be found who talk of the Glorious Revolution which transferred the sovereignty of England from the Crown to the people. What actually happened at William III's accession was something quite different and much more prosaic. The worldly-wise and unsentimental magnates who combined to bring about the change were not going to repeat the mistake of their fathers of the Long Parliament, and exchange the rule of a King for that of their social inferiors. They were clear in their own minds as to the issue at stake, and their object was to end, in their own favour, that system of double rule by which the actual government of the realm had been in the hands of the King, and the means of government in those of the well-born and wealthy minority represented by Parliament. Hitherto Parliament had exerted its power in the manner of a father who perpetually keeps his son short of money, and the King had tried to maintain his independence by going without or raising the money in other ways.

It was plain that this state of unstable equilibrium could not go on for ever. So long as it lasted, England was a house divided against itself, and Parliament, in the words of Professor Pollard, a permanent opposition. This might answer, after its fashion, so long as England could avoid being drawn into the main stream of European politics, but when quick decision and strong action were called for, she was fatally handicapped. The efforts of James I to intervene in the Thirty Years' War, of his son to assist the Huguenots, and the events which led to the Dutch triumph in the Medway, had witnessed the same paralysis of England owing to the fact that King and Parliament were pulling different ways, and that it was the settled policy of Parliament to reduce the resources of government to a minimum.

Now, however, England was being drawn into a struggle that would demand her utmost energy and resources to carry to anything but a ruinous conclusion. The power and ambition of Louis XIV constituted a threat that could not be much longer ignored. Sooner or later, England would have to choose whether to fight or sink into the position of a humble satellite. The latter policy, which was that of Charles II, was at least capable of defence. England had stood aside from the last Continental struggle, and yet Louis had failed to crush the powers leagued against him. She might have again stood fast behind her wooden walls and devoted herself to developing her resources and her dominion overseas. This would have been a prosaic policy, but the motives that impelled the Whig bellicosity against France were not themselves of a very exalted nature, when even the virtuous Sidney did not hesitate to fill his pockets at the expense of the French Secret Service.

Fortunately, perhaps, for England, the death of Charles II nipped this policy in the bud. It had no doubt been his intention to steer the ship of State quietly and dexterously towards the stagnant waters of absolutism. Charles, in fact, would have ended the divided sovereignty of King and Parliament by concentrating all power in his own hands. He was not a Hobbist for nothing. The gist of Hobbes's political doctrine was that sovereign power must be absolute and undivided. Hobbes himself does not rule out the possibility of a people or assembly retaining the supreme power in its own hands, but the bias of his teaching is towards just such an absolute monarchy as existed in most Continental nations.

But James II was incapable of thinking out any policy clearly. To make a success of his brother's scheme, it was necessary for him

to have maintained a bland indifference to any idea of maintaining England's prestige and influence—for what they were worth—in European politics, and to act as a loyal, if interested second to Louis XIV. But James, while he was flouting, with brutal tactlessness, all the most cherished traditions of his subjects, had hankerings after being a patriot King, and a power to be reckoned with beyond the seas. And he brought the question of divided sovereignty to a head, by demanding from his Parliament the means to create an effective standing army.

Naturally—if there was any question of putting up a fight, as a member of a Continental alliance against Louis XIV—elementary prudence demanded the creation of such a force. The citizen militia, on which England relied for her defence, would have been even more useless against the veterans of Louvois than the old Saxon Fyrd against the armies of the Conqueror. The question was keenly debated in Parliament, and the weight of argument was overwhelmingly on the side of those who asked, like a certain Sir Winston Churchill, whether the beefeaters constituted an army fit for our requirements. The only conclusive answer would have been one that it was impossible to make, to the effect that England did not mean to fight Louis at any price, and that Louis was too busy on the Continent to want to attack England. That, to a nation that already cherished an insular contempt for the "French dogs", would hardly have been a palatable argument. A man wiser than James would never have raised the question.

For the constitutional issue was thereby raised in its most acute form. It had been over the command of the militia that Charles I had finally broken with his Parliament, and the New Model had put the fear of standing armies into the hearts of Englishmen for more than a century. A professional and disciplined army of any size could as easily be used to crush liberty at home as to defend it against the foreigner. Therefore it would be dangerous in the extreme to have an army at the King's unrestricted disposal, and if war with France were indeed inevitable, it followed that the division of sovereignty between King and Parliament must be ended by giving Parliament some sort of effective control over the executive.

William's accession was Parliament's opportunity, if not to end, at least to secure a decisive advantage in its struggle with the Crown. William's acceptance of the throne was hedged about with conditions which placed the Crown once and for all at the mercy of Parliament, and in a series of Acts, culminating in the Act of Succession

towards the end of the reign, this advantage was pushed home. Every device by which the Crown had maintained or could maintain its independence of the Houses was made definitely illegal, and the standing army, which might have enabled the King to override Parliament, was ingeniously made the lever by which Parliament could control the King. The savage and remorseless terrorism that passed by the name of discipline in those days was, under the Mutiny Act, only legal for a year at a time, and without annual renewal by, and therefore annual meeting of, Parliament, the force would spontaneously dissolve into a mob of civilians.

The logical consequence of the Parliamentary victory, which was nothing more nor less than the capture from the Crown of the executive, did not immediately show itself. The reigns of William and Mary, of William alone, and of Anne, form a period of confused but inevitable transition. The Prince of Orange was too strong a man to accept the position of a crowned puppet, and he was too necessary to make it advisable for Parliament to drive him to the point of abdication. Towards the constitutional struggle in England he was coldly indifferent, except in so far as it affected his life's work, that of delivering Europe from Louis XIV. To this end he worked with whatever tools came to his hand, and without regarding the possible effect of his policy on the domestic status of himself and his successors.

He started, in the time-honoured fashion of English Kings, by selecting his ministers not from any particular party, but according to what he deemed to be their fitness for their posts. This did not turn out to be altogether a success. Parliament was not to be depended upon from one moment to another; it was corrupt and thoroughly irresponsible, and had not got out of the habit of regarding itself as a perpetual opposition. To the steadfast statesman, carrying on a desperate struggle for the deliverance of Europe, the mischievous vagaries of the politicians, his real masters, must have been a sad irritation.

The man who is said to have suggested a way out was about the most thorough-paced scoundrel of that by no means too clean-handed age,

> "A second Machiavel, who soared above
> The little ties of gratitude and love."

This was Robert Spencer, second Earl of Sunderland, a man who had crawled to the harlots of Charles II, had changed his religion to curry favour with James II and subsequently betrayed him, and

now had insinuated himself into the good graces of William III, thanks to that monarch's habitual indifference as to the cleanness of the tools he employed. Sunderland's advice was simple, almost obvious, but it implied nothing short of a constitutional revolution. It was to the effect that William should ease the chronic friction with his Parliament, by selecting his ministers exclusively from the party which commanded a majority. This party happened to be Whig.

William had certainly no idea of accepting any new principle of government, but to his practical mind it seemed that Sunderland's expedient would serve the purpose of tiding over his immediate difficulties. It was the Whig party that kept him on the throne and supported him in his war with France, and though the Tories had, in their desperation, joined with their rivals in supporting his candidature, to the upholders of Divine Right a foreigner who reigned by virture of a bargain struck with Parliament could never be anything but an odious makeshift, more odious still after the death of his Stuart wife. Accordingly William, making the best he could of his awkward situation, yielded to Sunderland's advice, and appointed a definitely Whig ministry, the leading members of which were nicknamed "the Junto". Thus a Parliamentary majority commanded the machinery of government, and a state of affairs was brought about which, if it were only to become permanent, would reduce the monarch to a mere puppet for registering the decisions of whatever party happened to have most votes for the moment.

But William did not mean the expedient to be permanent, and he presently reverted to his old device of a mixed ministry. The Crown had not yet sunk to the surrender of its prerogative of choosing its servants. And yet the ancient position it sought to defend was, in the long run, untenable. If Parliament desired to govern, govern it could, or in default, render all government impossible. Nevertheless, the power of the Crown died hard; until the coming of the Hanoverians the sovereign continued to preside over the councils of his ministers, and in the matter of foreign policy William, in particular, was jealous of any interference.

But Parliament was already sufficiently master of the government to arm it with powers that it would never have dreamed of tolerating in previous reigns. A standing army was raised for the war as great as the New Model itself, and fit to take its place in a Continental struggle. An even more striking innovation consisted in the formation of a national debt. The practice of anticipating

the revenue had been common for some time, and had been carried almost to the point of bankruptcy under the Commonwealth. But this borrowing had been a hand to mouth expedient, and an effective limit was put to it by the fact that the King, who was lucky if he could meet his current expenses from year to year, could not guarantee the payment of interest, because he could not pledge the authority of Parliament in advance, and without Parliament extra money was not to be had. Charles II had met the difficulty by repudiating his debts, but this was a device which did not lend itself to repetition, nor lower the rate of interest for future borrowings.

Accordingly it was a notable step forward when Parliament, instead of levying crushing taxation for the war, proceeded to borrow the extra money in the City at a comparatively low rate of interest, the lenders being incorporated into the Bank of England, and their interest secured by earmarking a tax on shipping. The danger of the Crown being able to render itself independent of Parliament by borrowing from the Bank was expressly guarded against in the act of incorporation. The necessity of meeting the interest on the debt, as well as the ordinary expenses of the year did, in fact, make the King more dependent than ever upon Parliament for the means of paying his way. At the same time, it greatly strengthened the new settlement by enlisting the whole-hearted support of the moneyed interest on its side, for it was believed, not without reason, that no James would honour the debts of a William. A legitimist Restoration meant a financial crash in the City.

Thus was inaugurated what seemed to the men of that time the strange financial convention, by which the men of one generation may indulge in any extravagant adventure they choose, and pledge posterity for all time to foot the bills. It placed a new and formidable power in the hands of government, and that it should have been accepted at all shows how strong had become the patriotic solidarity which includes in the community not only its living members, but those who are dead, and those yet to be born.

3

Whig Revolution Principles

Nothing is easier than to summarize the results of the Revolution in one rapid generalization, nothing is frought with more peril. To say that it substituted the power of the people for that of the Crown is considerably further from the truth than to say that it meant the

capture of the executive by an oligarchy. But even this latter statement, though true in itself, does not comprehend quite the whole truth.

It must be remembered that, during this period of transition, Parliament was less undemocratic than it subsequently became. The Triennial Act kept it in reasonable touch with the constituencies, and made bribery at elections more expensive in proportion to their frequency. Twice, in the first decade of the eighteenth century, an appeal was made by the Sovereign to the constituencies, and each time a majority was returned expressing a genuine wave of popular feeling. Certainly there was never an age when politicians of all parties were more corrupt, but it was a more individual and less organized corruption than it became in the heyday of the rotten boroughs.

When, therefore, we say that the Revolution established an oligarchy in power, it must not be in oblivion of the fact that to no one of that age, so far as we can ascertain, was this perfectly apparent. To the Whigs, who stood most whole-heartedly for the new order of things, it was a triumph of law, of justice and of liberty. Moreover, this is substantially the verdict of Macaulay, of Hallam and of Burke. And yet it is a fact not to be seriously disputed, that during the century and a half that followed the Revolution, power became gradually concentrated in the hands of a small minority, who used it to depress the common people to a state of impotence and degradation scarcely precedented since the "devils and wicked men" of King Stephen's days.

To understand the nature of the Revolution, as it appeared to the best of the Whigs, we must hold to the connecting thread of the Common Law that runs all through our history. Among those who welcomed William III on his accession, was a famous old lawyer, Sir John Maynard, of the true breed of Sir Edward Coke, a man of vast erudition, an editor of medieval law-books, a counsel capable of straining the law mercilessly to secure a conviction, and withal, the father of the Bar, for he had entered the Middle Temple when Bacon was still Chancellor and Raleigh hardly cold in the grave. To William's congratulations on his having survived so many of his learned friends, he replied:

"I had like to have outlived the law itself, had not your Highness come over."

The ablest contemporary defence of the Revolution comes, almost certainly, from the pen of John Somers, a lawyer who had made

his mark by a five-minutes' speech as Junior Counsel on behalf of seven Bishops whom James II had been mad enough to prosecute. The unimpeachable integrity of Somers's character, no less than his commanding intellect and his profound legal erudition, rapidly brought him to the front and established his position as the chief of those Whig Fathers to whose authority Burke, in a famous pamphlet, was one day to appeal. Somers takes his stand on the ground of Sir John Fortescue, Sir Edward Coke and the great Common Lawyers. It was the reign of law which William's accession had established. "Our representatives," says Somers, "to secure us from the encroachments of this and all succeeding ages, have thought fit to declare and establish the rights of the people so fully, and upon such sure foundations, that England is now the securest and happiest nation of the world, if the natives can but be sensible of their own happiness." In the true spirit of Fortescue he contrasts the happiness of law-governed England with the misery of France, with her arbitrary monarch and permanent standing army.

"Nothing," he says, "could be more terrible to the English, who are so much in love with liberty and property, than to see themselves be dragooned out of both with the help of so powerful an ally as Louis XIV." A cynic might adduce the experience of the ensuing century to prove that French assistance was by no means necessary to enable the squires and rich men to perform this feat at the expense of their neighbours.

Somers was a practical statesman and a lawyer speaking to his brief for a particular purpose; what may be not unaptly described as the Bible of Whiggism is contained in John Locke's *Essay on Civil Government*. This spare, precise man, who was, like Cecil Rhodes, a native of the West Country, though an Oxford don and somewhat of a recluse, had been the intimate friend and adviser of that arch-schemer, the first Lord Shaftesbury, and the two had between them drawn up an extraordinary feudal constitution for North and South Carolina. In the dark days of Royalist triumph Locke had passed years of exile in Holland, the safe asylum for genius not tolerated elsewhere. Like Somers, he was a cautious man, with a balancing mind and a distrust of enthusiasm. It was only when he was well advanced in middle age that he felt sufficiently assured to publish his conclusions.

The treatise is as cold and cautious as the man; it has none of the clear-cut grandeur of Hobbes, nor the passionate insight of Rousseau. It is, like the Revolution settlement, a series of

compromises, and carries on, in a respectable English way, the work of Hobbes in divorcing government from God and putting human affairs on a commonsense basis.

This was, indeed, the significance of William's Kingship. Charles II and his brother had, in the opinion of loyal Tories and Churchmen, been on the throne because God and heredity had put them there. The most disingenuous supporter of William could hardly urge this as his title to turn out James II. He was there for no other reason than that he and Mary were, in the opinion of Parliament, the next heirs to whom there was no insuperable objection. And accordingly Locke opens his case by a devastating attack upon a certain Sir Robert Filmer, a Tory apologist who had derived the Divine Right of Kings from certain prerogatives assumed to have been conferred on Adam by his Maker, and handed down from father to son ever since. Poor Sir Robert's sole title to remembrance is that Locke thought it worth expending powder and shot on him.

Locke, having annihilated his opponent at greater length than necessary, takes up the parable of Hobbes and Hooker, of a social contract between men in a state of nature. Locke's natural men are less formidable than the murderous anarchs of Hobbes. They are, in the absence of government, in much the same mutual relations as the sovereigns of independent states; they are under a law of nature which imposes a certain elementary standard of justice and decency. And if they come together for the purpose of adding to this a human or positive law, they are not, like Hobbes's men, going to barter away their natural freedom forever and unconditionally. Their rulers are taken on by contract for a definite purpose; should they be guilty of flagrant breach of that contract they can be dismissed without for a moment dissolving the society, just as Parliament got rid of James II.

Locke has a fine conception of the duties of the legislative body which he describes as the supreme power in the Commonwealth, and on this subject the principles he lays down are worth quoting in full:

"*First*, they are to govern by promulgated, established laws, not to be varied in particular cases, but to have one rule for rich and poor, for the favourite at court, and the country man at plough.

"*Secondly*, these laws ought to be designed for no other end ultimately, but for the good of the people.

"*Thirdly*, they must not raise taxes on the property of the people without the consent of the people, given by themselves, or their

leputies. And this properly only concerns such governments where he legislative is always in being, or at least where the people have iot reserved any part of the legislative to deputies, to be from time o time chosen by themselves.

" *Fourthly*, the legislative neither must nor can transfer the power f making laws to anybody else, or place it anywhere, but where he people have."

Such is the Whig philosopher's conception of a reign of law, and of a Parliament, supreme indeed as regards the other powers in the State, but held in strict bounds of legality and always accountable to the people for whose good it has been appointed. There is no need to examine the details of Locke's social edifice. They are demonstrably tinged with ignorance, inevitable in those days, of social history, and the argument fails to take into account the complexity and organic stubbornness of human society. Locke writes as if it were possible to deal with men in the abstract, and to construct a polity without taking any account of time or national differences. What he does, as matter of fact, evolve, is nothing ideal or universal at all, but something characteristically English, a glorified version of the Revolution settlement, as seen through Whig glasses. Not the least characteristic feature is the importance Locke attaches to property. There are cases, he points out, where it would be justifiable to kill a man, but a crime to take his purse. It was during the eighteenth century that brutal assault went comparatively free, while to steal a sheep was a hanging matter.

Neither Tudor monarchy nor Whig oligarchy succeeded in doing away with the Common Law ; the Whigs were, in fact, pre-eminently the party of that law. And pedantic and cruel as the Common Law could be, so long as it was alive there could be no absolute nor arbitrary tyranny. The stubborn spirit of individual right was bound, in the long run, to prevail against any person or class that sought to monopolize power in the State. The best that can be said for the Whig Revolution is that it contained within itself the seeds of that very democracy against which its leaders were so careful to guard.

A curious and illuminating incident occurred at the very beginning of William's reign. Among those who, like Locke himself, came back from exile abroad, was a stern and venerable figure in which few could have recognized the old Ironside General Ludlow, who, as a young man of twenty-eight, had put his signature to the royal death-warrant, and who, at the age of three-score and ten, imagined that the accomplishment of another Protestant Revolution would restore

him to his native land and even, perhaps, to high command. He had pathetically misread the signs of the times; no second triumph of the Saints was at hand—the rich magnates were not going to repeat that mistake. One of these magnates, head of the elder branch of the Seymours, a man of such boundless snobbishness that he insisted on speaking of the Duke of Somerset as belonging to *his* family and not he to the Duke's, had his eye on Ludlow. This was less owing to any reverence for Charles I, than to the fact that he, Seymour, had got hold of Ludlow's forfeited estates, and feared complications with the old owner. Accordingly he moved heaven and earth to get Ludlow apprehended and, presumably, hanged, drawn and quartered like the other regicides. The old republican soon was taught the difference between the rule of the Saints and that of the great families, and only just managed to make his escape, possibly with William's connivance, from the fate of Naboth. He never came back, and died in his quiet retreat among the Swiss mountains, trying to console himself by the reflection that to those whose father is God, every country is a fatherland.

Tory Nationalism

From a patriot's standpoint, no less than from that of William himself, the events of his reign must have seemed both inconclusive and unsatisfactory. The alliance of Whigs and Tories, which had turned out James, quickly fell to pieces when that monarch's ineptitude no longer held it together. William soon found himself reduced to holding his throne as the nominee of the anti-monarchial party. The English people did not love him, for he was neither an Englishman nor lovable. The spectacle of De Ruyter's fleet in the Medway was hardly more humiliating than that of the blue Dutch guards, with their enormous moustachios, lining the approaches to Whitehall. At the best, his rule was a lesser evil than that of James, at the worst, as his many opponents did not hesitate to assert, he was an outlandish usurper, bent on sacrificing English interests to those of Holland, and, in short, fit for the gallows.

It is not surprising that with the country in such a frame of mind, it should not be pulling together either for William or against Louis. It became a regular thing for British statesmen to conduct treasonable correspondence with James in his refuge at Saint Germain. The most honest and consistent of the clergy, headed by

six of the seven Bishops whom James had persecuted, gave up their livings rather than acknowledge William as their King by Right Divine. English and Dutch did not always hit it off between themselves; Torrington was accused, though with less than justice, of having put the Dutch in the forefront of the action of Beachy Head, and then deserted them, and at our first battle in Flanders, the Dutch Count Solmes, instead of reinforcing our desperately pressed troops, merely remarked:

"Damn the English! If they are so fond of fighting, let them have a bellyful!"

The old party of Divine Right, finding themselves saddled with a Parliamentary King, now committed themselves to the narrowest kind of nationalism. This was the more surprising, as it was on the Tories that Charles II had relied, towards the end of his reign, to support him in his policy of subservience to France. But now the whole Tory party was for the rights of honest Englishmen against the hated Froglanders, as the Dutch were called, and for the liberty of the subject as against standing armies. When it was a question of nationalizing foreigners, one of the Members for Bristol made a slashing speech in which he adjured the Commons to kick the bill out of the house and the foreigners out of the kingdom. It was in vain that the speech was burnt by the common hangman, its author got the credit of being a saviour of his country and the bill had to be dropped. An unending stream of pamphlets and topical poems denounced Dutch rule and a pro-Dutch war, and our bloody and unsuccessful first Flemish campaigns served to swell the tide of feeling against the King and his government.

Not that there was ever any serious question of having James back. This was made clear enough when, after the battle of Beachy Head, the danger to the country produced a spontaneous rally even of the least well affected elements to the side of the government. It was then the turn of the Whig pamphleteers to point out the danger we were running of having our homes and women at the mercy of Louis's brutal troopers. And when Namur fell, something like a national triumph greeted William on his return; poems of ponderous jubilation were written by Mat Prior and others, and Englishmen were driven to realize that, with all his faults, their Dutch King was a man and perhaps a hero, not unfit to have the leading of redcoats to unaccustomed victory beyond the seas.

But when the strain of war was relaxed, a violent reaction set in; the Tories now had a majority, of which they availed themselves

in the worst spirit of partisanship. But there is no doubt that they had a case, and one not easily to be refuted, against the foreign policy that was draining England's blood and treasure in Continental campaigns. The old policy of the great Tudor Sovereigns had been to keep England out of adventures on the Continent, and to preserve an attitude of masterly inactivity towards the conflicts of her neighbours. Towards such outrages as the seizure of German and Italian fortresses in time of peace, the Tories would have preserved the attitude of Gallio. They had no ambition to become saviours of Europe, and William's aims were quite beyond their spiritual purview.

About the necessity of keeping a strong navy, they were as firm as the Whigs, but to have a standing army in time of peace was to revert to the dark days of the New Model, and to have Dutch troops quartered in London was intolerable. A furious controversy sprung up about the necessity of standing armies, one side urging the liberty of the subject, the other pointing out that with 150,000 French veterans constantly under arms, the peril of invasion was constant, and that with only raw levies to oppose a landing, the country would be at their mercy. One writer even went so far as to suggest National Service as a way out of the difficulty. The ablest contribution was that of Somers, who, granting the peril to liberty from standing armies in general, argued in true Whig fashion for one in England, on the ground that the army under the Revolution settlement really belonged to Parliament.

William's foreign policy of the Partition treaties scandalized the Tory mind, and Somers and other Whig ministers were actually impeached for their share in it, though the House of Lords absolved them. The Tories worked their will on the army, cutting it down to 7,000 men, though this did not include troops quartered in Ireland. The Dutch guards were packed unceremoniously home, and William, driven to distraction by this last affront, had serious thoughts of going with them, but with the dogged self-control that had always distinguished him, he stuck to his thankless post, and, with his sword arm crippled, took up the threads of his diplomacy as best he might. His best friend was Louis himself, who, by his brutal violence, roused such a feeling in the country as enabled William, a dying man, to end the Tory obstruction by a successful appeal to the constituencies.

5

The War of the Spanish Succession

The European war that now ensued was of a more dramatic and decisive nature than any of those which, during Louis XIV's long reign, had preceded it. The *Roi Soleil* made his supreme bid for European domination under the most favourable auspices. Before the Grand Alliance of European Powers could be got together to oppose him, Spain and France were firmly united, the blue-coated armies had swamped the carefully contrived Dutch Barrier, overrun the ill-fated country that is now Belgium, and poured across the Alps to possess themselves of the Lombard plain. Nay more, French diplomacy had given Louis the door to Vienna in the shape of an alliance with Bavaria, through which an army based in Strassburg could strike down the Danube valley at the heart of the Empire. These magnificent advantages, which all his previous campaigns had been unable to give Louis, were counter-balanced by a handicap less obvious. France was an exhausted nation, and if proof were required, it would be in the fact that while England was raising money, through the Bank, at easy rates of interest, Louis was lucky if he could get an advance at 20 per cent. France must strike hard and home if she was to strike at all.

At this crisis the place of that dogged but mediocre commander-in-chief, William III, was taken by John Churchill, better known as the great Duke of Marlborough. This man was a product of the same restless, intellectual ferment that had found expression in the Royal Society, of which his father was a member. But Marlborough was not interested in the Heavens above, like Newton, nor in the earth beneath, like Boyle, but in life itself. Hitherto the ordering of a man's life had been an affair between him and his God, or at any rate his Church; it was something mystical and authoritative. But Marlborough had, though but implicitly, conceived of his own life as a thing to be ordered, and shaped on a rational plan, with which neither religion nor any conventional standards of conduct had anything to do. It was a pity that Nietzsche did not make himself better acquainted with English history, for he might have found in Marlborough the nearest approach to his idea of the superman that the world has yet seen, a more finished and faultless specimen than either Napoleon or Caesar Borgia.

And certainly Marlborough furnishes a wonderful example of what a man can do for himself who bends his whole energies to

the task of self-development. He realized that a serene disposition and an imperturbable temper were good things, and he acquired both in the hardest of all schools, that of marriage to a virago. But it is better to love your wife, especially when that wife is your most valuable ally, than to be miserable, and consequently Marlborough insisted on loving and being happy with Sarah. Men were like clay in his hands; he knew all their foibles and how to find the weak joint in everyone's armour. Lord Chesterfield, no mean judge, acknowledged in him the pattern of all the graces. Success could not turn his head, the most cruel of luck could not provoke him to impatience.

As a soldier he alone of the world's great commanders seems never to have made a mistake of any importance. From first to last, he succeeded in everything he undertook, and this in face of almost incredible difficulties. Time and again his best laid schemes were brought to nothing by disloyal and disobedient allies, for every battle and campaign that he won he missed winning two more because he could not get Dutchmen and Germans to fight or allow him a free hand. In strategy, tactics, and military administration he was equally great, and he possessed to a pre-eminent degree that coolness of judgment which Lord Roberts thought to be the first requisite of a soldier, and in which even Napoleon more than once showed himself to be conspicuously lacking. He claimed, not unjustly, never to have thrown away the life of a man; he was as economical with his human material as with his private fortune. To this he added a tact and persuasiveness that enabled him to impose or rather insinuate his will upon tough soldiers like Charles XII of Sweden and pig-headed meddlers like the Dutch commissioners. His colleague, Prince Eugene, adored him; the soldiers knew him affectionately as Corporal John.

Marlborough suffers severely when brought to the bar of conventional morality by such respectable historians as Macaulay. But it is more a historian's business to understand the people of whom he writes than to vindicate his own respectability by thundering at their tombstones. And to understand Marlborough, it is necessary to place ourselves at what we may conceive to have been his standpoint. For he was just as much an innovator in life as Bacon in thought; as Nietzsche would have put it, he had completely broken down the old tables. Honour, duty, patriotism, were words that impressed him no more than they did Falstaff. If he swore to James II to defend him to the death, that was because it was the

best way to manage James; if, after James had rejected his advice, he rode off into William's camp, it was because the time was come to abandon a fool to his fate. The charge that he deliberately betrayed British soldiers to their doom by communicating information of Talmash's ill-fated attack on Brest to the enemy is at least not proven, in view of the possibility that this may have been done with the connivance of William, in order to lure off French troops from Flanders, or, alternatively, that Marlborough took the highly characteristic course of imparting to James, as a token of good will, information that he knew he already possessed.

Marlborough must be classed not so much as an immoral, as a non-moral man, or at least as one who submitted to no verdict on his actions but that of his own calm and lucid intelligence. If he was without the merits he was at least without the drawbacks of conventional virtue. His serene disposition made him the most humane and considerate of men; to cruelty he was a stranger, to jealousy or revenge he never condescended. If he had a weakness, even when judged by his own standard of rationality, it was that he fell into the common mental confusion between money as a means and an end of life. If it be true that, though one of the richest men in Europe, he walked about in his infirm old age rather than pay a few pence for a seat, our comment would be the word with which Marlborough himself was accustomed to dismiss unwelcome suggestions—"silly!"

If we have lingered at what may seem disproportionate length over Marlborough's personality, it is because it may reasonably be taken to constitute one of the most important phenomena of that age. Since the Restoration the tendency had been to pull to pieces the old world of faith and authority and rebuild it on purely rational lines. This was attempted by Newton and his fellows in science, by Locke in political philosophy, by the Deists in religion, but Marlborough took a step further—one in advance even of the present age—in rationalizing individual life, a thing very different from surrendering to libertine or criminal instincts. He gave, in his own person, perhaps the most conspicuous example ever afforded of what may be done by the steady and consistent application of reason to life.

The story of the war may be briefly told. Marlborough, who went to command the allied forces in the Netherlands, was effectually restrained by the Dutch from delivering any smashing blow at the French, and therefore, with his invariable talent for making the

best of a bad business, devoted himself to securing the lines of the Meuse and Lower Rhine for future operations. Then Louis gathered strength for launching his great effort at the heart of the alliance, and a Franco-Bavarian army threatened Vienna in seemingly irresistible force. Instantly grasping the peril, Marlborough succeeded not only in outwitting the enemy, but his own allies, feinting at France from Coblentz, and then marching across to the Danube, where he drove the Bavarians from their lines at Donauworth. This success was followed by a decisive victory over the combined French and Bavarians at Blenheim. Marlborough, who knew all there was worth knowing about mental discipline, passed a great part of the preceding night in prayer, and then, on the morrow, calmly estimating the weakness of the enemy's position, held them firmly on both flanks while his cavalry smashed the centre and then, wheeling round, compelled the French right wing, with Marshal Tallard, to surrender. It was an irreparable military disaster for Louis, it knocked Bavaria out of the war, and was most damaging of all to French prestige. "*Oh, que dira le roi?*" wept the veterans as they laid down their arms, "*que dira le roi?*"

Marlborough, advancing to the Rhine, would have followed this up, had he been allowed his way, with an advance on Paris by the direct route through Lorraine. This, however, was beyond the mental scope of his allies, and he again had to make the best he could out of the orthodox routine of eighteenth century warfare. He was robbed of trouncing Villeroy, the most incompetent of Louis's marshals, on the field of Waterloo, the Dutch civilians crying "murder" and "massacre" when the thing was proposed. But next year the chance came again; he found Villeroy in position at Ramilles, and it was child's play to him to distract that courtier's attention by a furious attack on his left, and then to transfer a large enough force, behind a fold in the ground, to the other wing to deal such a blow, followed by such a pursuit, that the French were fairly hustled out of Belgium and behind their own frontiers.

Louis had at last the sense to see that the game was up. The war had been going as badly for him as it could; his country was threatened with invasion; the Austrian candidate for the Spanish throne had succeeded in establishing himself at Madrid. The exhaustion of his country was terrible; starvation stalked abroad, funds for the war were almost unobtainable. Louis therefore endeavoured to cut his losses by disowning his nephew's candidature for Spain, and granting the allies everything for which they could

reasonably have hoped. But the allies were flushed with victory, and the war and Marlborough had become the chief assets of the Whig party in England. The French overtures were therefore rejected; debt was to be piled up, the resources of civilization wasted, myriads of ignorant men condemned to death and Europe to years of misery for no intelligible object whatever, as far as England was concerned, though a very intelligible object indeed from the standpoint of the Whig bosses.

The war dragged on its course, and in 1707 the French rallied. Marlborough was faced by a very different adversary from Villeroy, Marshal Vendôme, who took care never to give him an opening, and meanwhile the most capable of all the French commanders, Villars, crossed the Rhine and penetrated into Swabia. Prince Eugene, the Imperial commander, who had in the previous September cleared the French from Lombardy, was repulsed in a joint British naval and Imperial military attack on Toulon. It also became evident that an Austrian candidate could not hold the Spanish throne against the will of the Spanish people, and the Allied cause in Spain collapsed as rapidly as it had risen, after a disaster at Almanza, caused, not as Macaulay would have it, by the incompetence of the Earl of Galway, the French commander of the allies, but by the disgraceful conduct of the Portuguese contingent.

So the war dragged on. Next year Vendôme, who had been saddled with an incompetent but royal colleague in the Duke of Burgundy, by a swift advance and connivance of the inhabitants got back Ghent and Bruges, but the hand of Marlborough was upon him. By a splendid forced march, Marlborough managed to catch the two French commanders trying to draw up their army in two different positions behind the Scheldt near Oudenarde, with the result that might have been expected. It was now Marlborough's plan to give the *coup-de-grâce* to exhausted France by marching straight on Paris. But this would have involved masking the frontier fortresses, and particularly the great fortress of Lille, and so terrible a deviation from orthodox strategy was too much even for Eugene. Accordingly Marlborough had to sit down with as good a grace as he could before Lille, where the brave old Marshal Boufflers surrendered for the second time in his career.

The situation was now desperate for Louis, and the proud old King offered terms that amounted to abject surrender. Everything that the allies wanted he would concede. But nothing short of his utter destruction would satisfy our allies, and the Whigs

were at the height of their power in England. To every other humiliation that France was ready to undergo was added the monstrous demand that Louis should join with his enemies in attacking his own allies, the Spaniards, in order to drive his own nephew out of his kingdom. The old King gave the only answer that any honourable man could have given to these proposals and threw himself on the support of the people whom his ambition had bled white. The national spirit of France, outraged beyond measure by the shame her enemies proposed to put upon her, rose nobly to the appeal. A ragged and starving but thoroughly patriotic army faced Marlborough under Villars, a commander almost, but not quite, worthy of his steel, and proved its quality in a desperate battle at Malplaquet in which, though Marlborough forced the French off the ground, he did so at the price of terrible losses, his Dutch contingent being so hard hit that it was crippled for the rest of the war.

That was the last big battle, but perhaps the most brilliant display of Marlborough's genius was yet to be seen. Though he knew that his home front had broken behind him, that his Duchess had fallen out of favour with her Queen, and that the Whigs, including Godolphin, who had given him the financial backing he needed, were fallen from power, he continued, within the limits prescribed for him, to show his superiority at every point to his great adversary. In 1711 Villars had fortified a line which he dared to describe as Marlborough's *ne plus ultra*, but the Duke, with inferior forces and almost incredible finesse, succeeded in turning and piercing these lines and putting himself within striking distance of Paris for the next campaign. But this campaign he was not to fight.

Meanwhile, in little regarded fields, England, or Great Britain as she became during the course of the war, was winning advantages that were to prove more important, in the long run, than victories in Flanders. Her sea power was undisputed, and she used it to establish a sure footing in the Mediterranean by the occupation of the Rock of Gibraltar, almost as much of an accident as that of Jamaica fifty years before. To this was added the hardly less important though less permanent acquisition of Minorca, whose importance as a naval base was one day to be put in the shade by that of Malta, but which may fairly be described as the Malta of the eighteenth century. Her Canadian conquests, the most important of all, were more the result of the peace than of the war.

6

The Tory Interlude and the Peace of Utrecht

It is now time to consider what had been going on in England itself. The monarch who succeeded William on the throne was a commonplace lady of a type only too familiar in country houses to-day. Wholly devoid of any interest in art or literature, a pious Anglican and a passionate sportswoman, her affections were divided between a husband even more commonplace than herself and the woman who at any particular time possessed the key of her confidence. Historians are perhaps apt to make the mistake of her contemporaries in estimating too lightly this stout, plain woman. For with all her insufficiency she had a will of her own and, when she was once determined upon any course, the obstinacy of a mule, or to put it more strongly, of her father.

Her importance lies in the fact of her being, to all intents and purposes, the last of our sovereigns by Divine Right. Though her nephew in France, who called himself James III of England, was, strictly speaking, the hereditary sovereign, Anne was an Englishwoman and a Stuart, and had the advantage of that sentiment which, in England, seldom fails to hedge a Queen. She was, by temperament and inclination, as much a Tory as William had been a Whig. The miracle of the Royal Touch was revived, and Dr. Johnson, on whom it somehow failed to work, retained "a confused but somehow a solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds and a long black hood". At the beginning of her reign her ministry, though inclining to the Tory side, was of no decided party complexion, and it must be remembered that at the time parties were still very fluid, and few politicians had any scruples about shifting their allegiance from one to the other, least of all Marlborough, who was the most powerful personage in England, especially in view of the fact that his wife had, or believed she had, Anne completely under her thumb.

Marlborough's great interest was in the war, and the Whigs were the war party. He therefore, and his friend Godolphin, who managed the national finances with unostentatious ability, found it convenient to incline gradually to the Whig side; popular sentiment was flowing in this direction, and Anne at last found herself confronted with the same disagreeable necessity that had faced William, that of appointing a party ministry. The Whigs, with bullying discourtesy, spared no pains to make the Queen of England

realize that she was no longer her own mistress. When her stupid but tenderly beloved consort was actually dying, she was forced to make concessions to save him from being attacked in Parliament, and hardly was he in his grave than the Houses tormented her with an almost brutal petition that she should marry again. The decisive moment was when in 1708 Marlborough and Godolphin forced their Tory colleague Harley out of the ministry, sorely against the Queen's will, by a simultaneous threat of resignation. Another Whig junto was now forced on the Queen, including, to her no small disgust, the infidel rake Wharton. The new ministers soon made it clear that the power and patronage that were supposed to belong to the Sovereign were now the prerogative of her servants. Anne said little, but she bided her time, and waited for the tide to turn in her favour.

She had not long to wait. The country was beginning to feel the strain of the war, which it was evident that the Whigs were prolonging beyond all reason. After the murderous affair of Malplaquet feeling began steadily to arise against the Dutch and Germans who, it was alleged, were using us as a catspaw, against the ministers who connived at their doing so, and even against Marlborough himself, whose Duchess at last began to find that she had come to the end of her mistress's patience. No nation was, and perhaps is, more susceptible than the English to that emotional bias which is comprehended in the word Tory. It was quite on the cards that an ingrained Royalism might have nullified the effects even of the Revolution, had not the throne been so consistently unfortunate in its occupants. As it was, even so stupid a woman as Anne was able to score a dazzling victory over the Whig constitutional oligarchs.

Hardly less strong than the affection for royalty was that for the Church, which seemed to be threatened by the tolerant and secular policy dear to the Whigs and to the broad-minded men of the world whom William had chosen for bishops. "Low Church is no Church" was a saying of the time. It is not surprising, therefore, that a spark was put to a long-prepared train by the Whig impeachment of a reverend self-advertiser called Doctor Sacheverell, who had let himself go, in a sermon at Saint Paul's, about the duty of non-resistance and the awful dangers of toleration. Perhaps the war had put the country's nerves on edge, but the delighted Doctor found himself the centre of an agitation as violent and unreasoning as that previously excited by the Popish Plot, and his three years' suspension from preaching, which was all the penalty the Whigs dared inflict,

was not to be compared with the glory of so magnificent an appearance in the limelight. The Queen, correctly gauging the national feeling, dissolved Parliament, and the Whigs were "snowed under". So the woman whom everybody thought a fool got her way and her Tories after all.

During the four years of Tory ascendancy which closed the reign, the dominating influence was that of Henry St. John, who soon became Viscount Bolingbroke—much to his disgust, for he had expected to be made an Earl. In his rationalist and non-moral outlook on life, this brilliant but futile politician was not altogether dissimilar from Marlborough. But he was cast in a smaller mould; he was a slave to his appetites in a way that Marlborough never was, he lacked patience and serenity of judgment and, if not actually a coward, was apt to lose his nerve in a crisis.

Bolingbroke has himself given a delightfully candid account of the mood in which the Tories accepted office. "I am afraid," he says, "that we came to court in the same disposition as all parties have done; that the principal spring of our actions was to have the government of the State in our hands; that our principal views were the conservation of this power, great employments to ourselves, and great opportunities of rewarding those who had helped to raise us, and of hurting those who had stood in opposition to us. It is however true, that with these considerations of private and party interest, there were others intermingled which had for their object the public good of the nation, at least what we took to be such."

To this shameless anticipation of Tammany, had the old Cavalier party of prerogative, Divine Right, and the Church of England now sunk. But if a knave, Bolingbroke had all his wits about him, and he succeeded in promoting the country's interests if not exactly her honour. For the Tories had come in as the peace party, and their object was to get England out of the war at the greatest advantage to herself and at any cost to her allies. It was the golden age of the political pamphlet, and the Tories had the services of that most redoubtable of all special pleaders, Dean Swift. He and his friend Arbuthnot were both concerned in the creation of a character which has gone down to posterity as the national representative, John Bull. He is a cloth merchant, who gets engaged in a lawsuit about the estate of Lord Strutt, or the King of Spain, which is claimed by Lewis Baboon, a delicate rendering of Louis Bourbon. The way in which John and Lewis, with self-righteous assurance, partition the estate

before the owner is dead, and John's naive indignation at his lordship's resentment of this procedure, are deliciously told.

But, so the title runs, "the law is a bottomless pit," and John, who is both greedy and credulous, allows himself to be dragged by neighbours sharper than himself into an interminable lawsuit, which is deliberately prolonged by a villainous lawyer called Hocus, in other words, Marlborough. So public opinion was prepared for the abandonment of both Marlborough and the allies, with whom, by the way, we were pledged to co-operate. Bolingbroke went about this work in the spirit more of a card-sharper than a statesmen. Negotiations were opened with Louis behind the back of the allies, Marlborough was dismissed from all his appointments and assailed with cries of "stop thief!" in the streets, and finally, after the Duke of Ormonde, the new commander-in-chief, had done all he could to thwart the efforts of the honest Eugene, the British contingent was withdrawn altogether, to the unspeakable shame of their officers. The effect was soon seen. Villars, instead of standing in the last ditch with his back to Paris, bounded forward, and the tide of war again flowed against the allies.

But the peace Bolingbroke arranged was, if we leave out of account its morality, a thoroughly smart piece of work. Philip was left on the throne of Spain, but this was better than the alternative of having a Hapsburg, the allied candidate, who was now Emperor into the bargain. England secured for herself the disgraceful privilege of the Asiento, or the monopoly of supplying Spanish America with negroes. The Stuart Pretender was banished from France, and the fortifications of Dunkirk, then as much a thorn in England's side as Zeebrugge during the Great War, were destroyed. A commercial treaty was concluded with France, that the Tories could not get ratified by Parliament, partly because it was in direct conflict with our previous engagements with Portugal. England kept her two naval bases in the Mediterranean, and the whole of the previously divided island of St. Kitts in the West Indies. Even more important were her acquisitions in North America.

Here France had been for some time engaged in a colonial enterprise which, if successful, would have given her the Empire of North America and left the English colonies a mere strip between the Eastern coast and the Alleghanies. Her colony of Canada, that sprang up along the St. Lawrence River, formed a striking contrast to the English group. Its numbers were always insignificant by comparison, being reckoned in tens of thousands when the English

had topped the second million, and whereas our colonies were a natural growth or overflow, the French were an artificial product kept alive by the strenuous efforts of the Home government. Autocracy and feudalism were the principles of Canadian rule, to which the inhabitants, not having the English law in their blood, took kindly.

But the colony had all the advantages of unity and centralization, and thanks to intelligent direction and patriotic energy, seriously threatened to cut off the British from the hinterland of what is now the United States. A glance at a map will show that the States are divided into an Eastern and a Western strip, bounded by the Alleghanies and the Rocky Mountains, and that between these lies the vast basin of the Mississippi with its tributaries. In 1682 a French explorer, the Sieur de Lassalle, penetrated from the great lakes down to the mouth of the Mississippi and established a claim on the part of France to the valley he had explored. In 1697 the French planted a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi which they named, after their King, Louisiana.

It is obvious that if the French could have permanently linked up this with their Northern possessions, and so gradually have spread out over the Mississippi basin, they would have effectually pinned the British to the coast, and made themselves masters of the great bulk of the North American Continent. But neither in men nor in wealth were their resources equal to such an undertaking. Louis, when he embarked on his series of wars for the supremacy of Europe and strained the resources of his country to breaking point, had crippled any chance of French expansion overseas. Nevertheless, considering their small numbers and lack of sea power, the French did surprisingly well. The greatest of all their colonial administrators, the Count de Frontenac, not only managed to strike terror into the formidable Iroquois Indian confederacy, but also, during the war that followed William III's accession, to carry on a vigorous struggle against our colonists, and to drive an English expedition from the walls of Quebec.

Frontenac died, and the War of the Spanish Succession proved disastrous to the French colony, though another English attempt to take Quebec was repulsed. But the peace gave the English Newfoundland and the Hudson Bay Territory, besides extending the English coast line Northward by the acquisition of Nova Scotia, and confining French Canada to the region of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. But though scotched, the French menace of

encirclement was by no means killed, and the threat of linking up Canada with Louisiana had the effect of making our colonies more closely dependent than they would otherwise have been upon the British connection.

The war was only gradually extinguished between the various exhausted combatants in a series of treaties at Utrecht, Rastatt and Baden. Louis had come out of it, thanks to the British defection, better than he had had any right to expect, but England had done well enough for herself. The best that can be said for her is that in an age of political swindling, she had swindled best. The Tories, who had forced the treaty through a Whig House of Lords by creating peers of their own complexion, obtained popularity and a fresh lease of power. They had at least stopped the reckless waste of England's resources and the profitless death of her soldiers.

Their record at home was what might have been expected from men whose own interests were their first consideration. Bolingbroke, though a Deist himself, was ready enough to join in persecuting Dissenters, and the character of the Commons was rendered more oligarchic still by the imposition of a stiff landed property qualification even on borough members. It is probable that had the Queen been spared much longer, she would have found that she had but have exchanged one set of tyrants for another.

As was only to be expected, the two Tory leaders, Harley, now Earl of Oxford, and Bolingbroke, were soon trying to get rid of one another. Both were at one in accepting the spoils system to its fullest extent; as Bolingbroke put it, the object was "to fill the employments of the kingdom, down to the meanest, with Tories." Bolingbroke was set on all or nothing. Oxford had drawn up a draft scheme, which still exists, for packing Church and army with his supporters, but he was more cautious and slow-witted than his colleague, in spite of the latter's frantic efforts to whip up his energies. It is now more than probable that Bolingbroke was playing to upset the Act of Succession on the Queen's death, and bring in the Pretender, James Stuart. He was keen witted enough to see that under a German-speaking King, Toryism would become an absurdity, and he knew what mercy he had to expect from the Whigs.

Whatever his schemes may have been, and to such an opportunist it is probable that more than one alternative may have presented itself, they were nipped in the bud. Bolingbroke did at last succeed in getting rid of Oxford, but only after a violent scene at the council board that sent the poor Queen's gout to her head. Before the week

was over, and before Bolingbroke had had time to consolidate his position, she was dead. One or two bold spirits were for proclaiming James III there and then, but Bolingbroke's nerve was not equal to so great a risk, and he stood passive. "What a world is this," he wrote, "and how does fortune banter us!" Elector George had deposited a list of Whig ministers in a sealed packet, and these proceeded to put forth all the resources of official and unofficial corruption to secure a Whig majority. Toryism collapsed, as its more far-sighted adherents had foreseen, like a pricked bubble.

The politics of Anne's reign form a sordid prelude to a sordid epoch. To talk seriously of either Tory or Whig principles gets more and more difficult as time goes on. Bolingbroke was about right when he said, in effect, that private and party interest came first, but that some considerations of patriotism or principle might exercise a minor influence on the politicians. The Whigs wantonly prolonging a murderous war and the Tories persecuting without even the excuse of honest bigotry are not parties but factions in the worst sense.

The whole atmosphere of politics was low and base. Statesmen like Harley and Godolphin, journalists like Defoe, changed their principles with their interests. The pamphlet literature of the time is certainly brilliant, but of a singularly unsatisfying nature. Controversialists like Swift were not, even ostensibly, trying to find the truth, but to bludgeon everybody on the other side and everything they did. The sordid game was played with merciless rigour. We know how Swift, a priest of God, could drag poor, distraught Mrs. Masham from her son's deathbed to her task of currying favour with the Queen. The triumph of a party meant the proscription of its enemies. An inconvenient satire could bring a journalist to the pillory, and the Tower was a recognized lodging for defeated statesmen. Even Marlborough had to take refuge on the Continent after his victories, and Bolingbroke probably just saved his head by a timely flight from Whig vengeance.

7

The Skin Game of Commerce

The conditions of life, among civilized peoples, and nowhere more than in England, were being transformed in a way that was little comprehended at the time, and even to this day has failed to attract the amount of attention it has deserved. It is not surprising,

therefore, that even the shrewdest contemporary minds failed to adapt themselves perfectly to the changed environment.

The root of the matter was that civilized man, to an ever increasing extent, was producing more than he had immediate use for. Not more than was needed, for the advantages of civilization were shared out among a small minority, but more than was immediately consumed by those fortunate enough to get hold of it. There was, in fact, something to put by, usually in the convenient form of money. The natural instinct of imperfectly civilized men was to follow the example of the unprofitable servant, and wrap it up in a napkin, or rather, hoard it in a strong box, as was the common practice of most families even in Restoration times. A better way than this had been discovered even in the Judaea of A.D. 30, and as wealth accumulated and internal security increased, so the opportunities increased of laying out the five talents in order to make more talents.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the uses of a homogeneous medium of exchange were still imperfectly understood, and it is not surprising that money and credit should have been treated as if they were not ordinary human makeshifts, but talismans or djinns of unlimited potency.

Money was regarded with a superstitious reverence as if it were a thing apart, the only kind of wealth worth having, and as if the whole object of governments and nations were to have as much of this particular commodity as possible. Spain had tried the theory in its crudest and stupidest form, and had made strenuous efforts to keep her stores of gold and silver from the Indies within the limits of her own frontiers, efforts that were so far successful as to inflate prices to the point of killing Spanish commerce and manufacture, and eventually ruining the nation. But the modified form in which the theory was adapted in England was more plausible. For there are undoubtedly occasions when a sufficiency of the circulating medium is of quite special importance. If not the be-all and end-all of commerce and industry, at times of transition from a barter to a money and from a money to a credit economy, it may have an importance of its own as a stimulant, though too much of it may act as a dangerous stimulant, to business enterprise.

The theory or, to put it more fairly, the tendency of thought most in favour, was that which regarded the business dealings between any two countries as an attempt to shift money from one side to the other. Thus if in our dealings with any country we exported goods to the value of a million pounds and imported others

to the value of two millions, we should have sent a million pounds out of the Kingdom, and be a million down on the balance. One commodity, which happened to be the medium of exchange, was singled out as if it, and it alone, counted in the sum of transactions, though it would, in fact, have been quite as reasonable, at normal times, to have estimated the results of trade by a balance of linen or brandy. To what results this fallacy could lead was amusingly demonstrated by Hume, writing in the middle of the eighteenth century:

"The writings of Mr. Gee struck the nation with a universal panic, when they saw it plainly demonstrated, by a detail of particulars, that the balance was against them for so considerable a sum, as must leave them without a single shilling in five or six years."

And yet, as Hume points out, though twenty years, with an expensive foreign war, have elapsed, England has somehow contrived to get on very well in defiance of Mr. Gee and his statistics.

We have called this a tendency of thought rather than a theory or dogma, because seventeenth century writers on economics were, as a rule, practical men of affairs and not doctrinaires, and the rigidity of their theories was softened in varying degress by their practical commonsense. But the peculiar fallacy of thought that underlay the idea of the balance of trade was blended with another, which was that of the French minister Colbert and his system. Trade between nations was not regarded as an exchange of benefits but as a duel, the winner being whichever combatant ended up with a surplus of gold and silver. It was the business of government to divert trade from those channels which yielded an unfavourable balance and to guide it towards countries that sent us most money and least goods. As it was expressed by John Mun, a merchant who had, during the reigns of the first two Stuarts, made his fortune in the Near and Far Eastern trade,

"The ordinary means to increase our wealth and treasure is by foreign trade, wherein we must ever observe this rule: to sell more to strangers yearly than we consume of theirs in value."

The trade most denounced by believers in the Balance was that with France, which was supposed to result in a dead loss of many hundred thousand pounds annually. Samuel Fortrey, who appears to have been both a merchant and a courtier, and a pamphlet from whose pen, in 1663, made a considerable stir, asserted that every year we were suffering a dead loss of no less than one million six

hundred pounds a year in our trade with France, and cited as his authority a secret and sinister report supposed to be in the possession of Louis. Eleven years later a number of City men who had submitted an exact profit and loss account to the Lords Commissioners of a commercial treaty with France, worked out the adverse balance at something a little short of a million. This outcry against France was not untinged by political motives, the Whig party being that of hostility to France. It is not surprising, therefore, that when anti-French feeling was at its highest, in 1678, the Commons should have passed a measure prohibiting altogether a number of the chief imports from France, a measure that remained in force till the reign of James II.

It was, then, especially the Whigs who were committed to the idea of the Balance of Trade, to commercial war with France, and that policy of protection which is somewhat vaguely known as the Mercantile System. There was much in this system that is at least defensible. It aimed, as indeed the Tudor policy had aimed too, at the sedulous nursing of British industry. The interests of consumers were sacrificed in one branch of industry after another, to foster production. It had taken centuries to build up a native cloth manufacture, and to end the dependence of England on the Low Countries for finishing the product, but at last it was done, even if the Long Parliament had to challenge Holland by prohibiting the export of raw cloth. From the nascent cotton trade, for a long time confined to fustian made half of cotton and half of linen, Indian competition was carefully excluded. In general the principle was not only to regulate the tariff so as to produce a favourable balance of trade with each country, but also so as to give the maximum of employment to British hands. Nor were the requirements of national security, in a strong population and a sufficiency of war material, ever lost sight of.

How far this policy was successful will probably always be a subject of contention among experts. The fact remains that, whether on account of it or in spite of it, British commerce did flourish exceedingly while the Mercantile System lasted, and production advanced with sure and rapid strides. But the danger it most involved was in the sordid and selfish spirit that accompanied it. The narrow view of trade which conceives of one nation's gain as another's loss, the perpetual struggle to weigh down the balance on one's own side, was fatal to any generous and idealistic view of international policy. Nations were like cardsharpers in a Western

saloon, all trying sedulously to cheat, and with hands never far from their hip pockets. This was bad enough where other nations were concerned, but it was ruinous when applied to our own fellow subjects and dependents. England's treatment of Ireland was that of a tough who insists on playing with an unarmed man whom he knows to be at his mercy, and so grasping was her spirit that she did not hesitate to turn a penny by squeezing Protestant Ulster. In Bengal the tyranny of her merchant governors created a record even in that land of many oppressions. And in America, where the sole hope for British rule was in the loyalty of our colonists, we tried to deal with them on business principles, and it went hard, but they bettered the instruction.

In justice to the Whigs, and to the protectionist system which they made peculiarly their own, it must be admitted that they had no monopoly of materialism. The Tories were generally opposed to the struggle with France, and produced a series of writers—notably Nicholas Barbon, son of "Praise God Barebones"—who qualified in varying degrees the Balance of Trade fallacy, relying on the example of Free Trade Holland, and adumbrating the truth that imports are paid for by exports. And yet of all the clever pieces of sharp practice that sullied our policy during the eighteenth century, England's part, under Tory auspices, in the Peace of Utrecht, is perhaps the most conspicuous.

8

A Credit Economy

The latter part of the seventeenth century saw the development of a business organization characteristically modern. The surplus wealth of the country, which was now rapidly increasing, began to seek opportunities for employment. The hidden and unfruitful hoards that prudent men were wont to accumulate against a rainy day began to go out of fashion—it was more profitable to invest. The Dutch, with their Bills of Exchange and their highly developed banking system, had shown the possibilities of a credit economy, and the mere fact that there was wealth to dispose of created a demand for its fruitful employment.

But in order that people may be induced to part with their treasured hoards, credit is necessary. Credit, as the name implies is nothing more nor less than faith, and faith, on the stock exchange no less than before the altar, is the substance of things hoped for,

'the evidence of things not seen. The modern miser finds as much pleasure in gloating over his pass-book as his spiritual ancestor in counting the coins in his strong box, and in fact considers his money much safer in the bank, though well aware that only a small part of the money which the bank holds for its clients has any concrete being except in the imagination of the faithful. But at the time of which we are speaking, credit was far from reposing on the firm foundation it does to-day. Macaulay cites the instance of Sir Dudley North, a gentleman of the old school who believed in keeping his money in his own house, a belief in which he was confirmed by his having once entrusted some of it to a Lombard Street man who broke. Charles II repudiated his debts to the goldsmiths, and even the security of the National Debt was threatened by the prospect of a Stuart Restoration. The Tory party was so gravely suspect in the City that, at the time of the Tory reaction in Anne's reign, the Governor and directors of the Bank begged, though vainly, of the Queen not to dismiss her Whig ministers. And, at best, the House of Commons was notoriously corrupt, and frauds on the exchequer were more than suspected.

Nevertheless credit was steadily increasing, even to the point of credulity, and the foundation of the Bank had a wonderful effect in heartening timid owners of money to take the plunge of investment. Along with the growth of faith went the perfecting of the organization by which faith might be made effective. In this work the Jew, by virtue of his inborn aptitude, plays a part whose importance can hardly be overrated. Cromwell's re-admission of the Jews into England, as the result of Manasseh Ben Ephraim's mission, was tacitly connived at by the government of Charles II. The Jew was, in fact, wanted so urgently that neither laws nor regulations could keep him out. Sir Josiah Child, governor of the East India Company and a distinguished economist, urged that they might be naturalized, and despite all laws to the contrary, they succeeded in getting represented on 'Change. Lucien Wolf[1] says that at this period they controlled more of the foreign and colonial trade than all the other alien merchants in London put together, and Addison writes of them as "the instruments with which the most diverse nations converse with one another and by which mankind are knit in a general correspondence."

The figure of the great Jew financier, on whom governments depend to solve their monetary difficulties, now comes into prominence.

[1] Quoted in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, article *Jews*.

Among the chief financiers of the time of Charles I and the Commonwealth was the great Jew Carvajal, who is said to have imported silver to the value of £100,000 yearly.[1] Some of the most prominent Sephardim families sent representatives to England in the train of Charles II's Portuguese Queen, and there was another considerable Jewish influx from Amsterdam at the accession of William III. In the two wars with France that ensued, a part curiously similar to that of the Rothschilds in the Napoleonic struggle was played by Sir Solomon Medina, or, as he was better known, the Jew Medina. This man, who was William III's banker, and was knighted for his services as army contractor, found it worth while, in the next reign, to put an annual tip of several thousands of pounds into the ever gaping pockets of Marlborough, in return for which he received first-hand information that probably enabled him to recover it many times over by dealings on 'Change. The next in succession is Sir Manasseh Lopez, and following him Sampson Gideon, a financier who rendered invaluable services to the governments of Walpole and the Pelhams, and who is described in the Dictionary of National Biography as "a man of remarkable amiability and generosity".

By William III's reign the mechanism of modern credit had been thoroughly established, and lists showing the prices of shares began to be regularly published. It was, in fact, a time of brisk and vigorous business enterprise, and every sort of scheme was floated for the possible or impossible employment of capital. One of the most familiar figures of the time is the projector or, as we should now call him, the company promoter. He is described by Samuel Butler, in the reign of Charles II, as "an artist of plots, designs and expedients to find out money, as others hide it, where nobody would look for it . . . The chiefest and most useful part of his talent consists in quacking and lying, which he calls answering of objections and convincing the ignorant." Defoe, writing in the year of Queen Anne's accession, with the avowed object of exposing such fraudulent practices, takes a more balanced view of the situation, and admits that among a multitude of sharks honest projectors of genuine schemes are also to be found.

The fact is that speculation and stock-jobbing—the word had just come in—was as yet a pioneer and little understood industry, and the Exchange attracted as many shady adventurers as the Australian gold mines of the nineteenth century. It is only when a profession is established and its functions understood that it is

[1] Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, p. 51.

possible for a tradition of honour to grow up within it such as pervades the modern bar or stock-exchange. Already some of the artifices, not necessarily dishonourable, of modern speculations were becoming familiar. Dr. Scott[1] tells us how bear operations and options had already become common, and how Sir Josiah Child and his son Francis had a regular express service from the South of Ireland to give them first warning of news from India. The Jew Medina, as we saw, went one better when he bribed the Commander-in-Chief at the front to act as his newsagent, and his compatriot, Sir Manasseh Lopez, succeeded in netting a prodigious haul out of a false report of the Queen's death. Nor were the Gentiles much behind in commercial "slimness", for when the Old East India Company was fighting for its life against the New, it deliberately engineered a run on the Bank as a move in the game.

All this time the structure of British business was being built up at a prodigious rate. This will be evident if we study Dr. Scott's[2] figures of the capital invested in joint stock companies. About the time of Elizabeth's accession this was somewhere in the neighbourhood of ten thousand pounds. By 1695 the figure had risen to five millions—in a dozen of years the five millions had become ten, ten years later still it had risen to twenty, and only three years later, at the height of the South Sea Boom, the nominal capital invested in these concerns stood at the prodigious total of fifty millions, not much less than a seventh of the total estimated wealth of the country.

It must not be imagined that the progress was even. On the contrary, it involved a series of more or less violent fluctuations—booms and depressions following on one another's heels. The drain on the national resources caused by William III's struggle with Louis XIV showed itself in a debt of seventeen and a half millions, adverse exchanges, the suspension of cash payments by the Bank and the necessity for a thorough recoinage. Towards the end of the Spanish Succession War there was another heavy slump, which was only ended by the prospect of peace and the Tory scheme for paying off the debt.

Nevertheless the figures we have cited tell their own tale of rapidly increasing commercial activity. There is good reason to believe that towards the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, both England and France had temporarily

[1] *Joint Stock Companies*, vol. i, p. 358.
[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. i, *passim*.

succeeded in realizing the ideal at which they so sedulously aimed, and were importing more of the precious metals than they paid out. This theory was first put forward by Herr Wernher Sombart,[1] and it certainly seems borne out by Dr. Scott's figures, so far as England is concerned. The three sources of this monetary stream, according to Herr Sombart, were the immigration of rich Huguenots, many of whom brought their fortunes with them, the influx of Dutch and Portuguese Jews, and the "favourable" balance of the export trade. This last item Herr Sombart attributes to the Dutch trade, the Spanish trade after our differential advantages under the treaty of Utrecht (which were perhaps not so considerable as might have been expected), and the famous Methuen Treaty concluded with Portugal in 1703, which acted as a pipe by which the coin of Brazil, at the rate—so it was computed—of fifty thousand pounds weekly, was passed to England.

Now the result of any large increase of money is to create a demand for its profitable employment, and hence to provide a golden opportunity for the speculator and company promoter. And it is certain, whether or not we go the whole way with Herr Sombart in his explanation, that this period witnessed a fever of speculative activity without example or precedent, culminating in France in the Mississippi Bank ramp, and in England in the boom and crash of 1720.

The history of this extraordinary outburst of human folly is complicated in the extreme, but it was the product of one simple fallacy on the subject of credit. The discovery of how to conduct vast transactions, with no more formality than the transfer of a little written or printed paper, made men rush to the conclusion that they had discovered a new talisman. But whatever may be true of religion, there is nothing more certain in business transactions than this, that faith, or credit, without works, is dead. Wealth cannot be called into being by a stroke of the pen, and credit that is not based on solid foundations of wealth and industry is a bluff, which is bound sooner or later to be called.

It is the neglect of this truth that accounts for the collapse of Law's vast schemes in France and of the contemporary South Sea Bubble in England. John Law was a clever Scottish adventurer, but a born plunger and megalomaniac, who succeeded in getting control of French finance shortly after the death of Louis XIV. He had dazzling schemes for relieving France of the crushing debt

[1] *The Quintessence of Capitalism*, p. 312 et seq.

bequeathed her by "*le Roi Soleil's*" wars. Unfortunately the sole foundation of this splendid superstructure was the profit to be derived by trading with the new colony of Louisiana, which happened to yield no dividends worth speaking of. The greatness of the crash was proportioned to the blindness of French faith in Law's promises.

In England the same ignorance and credulity led to very similar results. When the Tories came in, after the Sacheverell affair, they found themselves saddled with a large and unpopular Whig debt, mostly in the form of annuities. This, despite the fears of the City, they did not dare repudiate, but the shallow intelligence of Oxford was struck by the possibility of paying it off by a smart piece of finesse. In common with many of his countrymen, he saw visions of unlimited wealth to be derived from the trade with Spanish America, and accordingly turned to the South Sea Company, which was formed for trading with all lands lying between the Orinoco and Tierra del Fuego. The bargain he struck was to the effect that the company, in return for certain privileges, should take over part of the debt, for which the government would pay them a rate of interest lower than that which they would themselves have to pay to the annuitants, and decreasing after a term of years. It was the company's hope to get the creditors to exchange their annuities for the company's stock, which was deliberately inflated to an enormous premium, so that a hundred pound share would extinguish an annuity capitalized, say, at three hundred. In this they were, at first, conspicuously successful.

The Tory ascendency died with Queen Anne, but the scheme had fired the public imagination, and not only the Whig ministers, but even the King took it up. The means by which the ramp was maintained were complex, but the principle was the same. The company would make itself responsible for first a part and then a whole of the national debt; it would not only do this on most disadvantageous terms, but it was even ready to offer a bribe to the government of over seven millions for the privilege of obtaining them. Nor was this by any means the only bribe, for the crash, when it came, exposed a system of corruption extending even to Cabinet ministers. The whole scheme was, in fact, a gigantic swindle, for the profits of the Spanish trade were insignificant in comparison with the company's promises and liabilities, and were still further reduced by the war that broke out with Spain in 1717. Those who kept the thing going must have calculated on getting safely out with their plunder before the crash came.

The shares went up and up, until in 1720 they topped the thousand. Meanwhile a veritable madness had seized the nation. Men who had bought up South Sea Stock trebled and quadrupled their capital before they sold out; cool, experienced hands like the Duke of Marlborough and Sir Robert Walpole made sensational profits; a way had been discovered of getting rich quick, and everybody who had money to dispose of, many with lands to sell or mortgage, rushed into the market to plunge with it into any scheme that offered the prospect of quick returns. Companies of any and every sort were formed to meet the demand, companies for fattening hogs, for importing jackasses from Spain, for furnishing funerals, for extracting oil from radishes, and one even for an object not to be declared, but which was soon, on the disappearance of the promoter, too painfully apparent. A complete pack of cards was made with a different bubble company depicted on each of their fifty-two faces.

The pace was too killing to last. The South Sea Company, with shares at a thousand and dividends practically nil, could not, in any case, have lasted long. But it precipitated its own fall by taking legal steps to smash some of the lesser swindles. This was a fatal indiscretion, for it had the effect of shaking confidence. The shares, monstrously inflated, slumped with catastrophic rapidity; the credulous multitudes who had invested their all in South Sea and other bubble stock, found that their all had turned, as if by some black magic, into bits of unmarketable paper. A roar for vengeance went up that shook the throne, for George I had been governor of the company, and among those involved in corrupt practices were his hideous German lemans.

The government collapsed; the Chancellor of the Exchequer was expelled the House for "most notorious, dangerous and infamous corruption", one minister is believed to have committed suicide, and the two heads of the government were only acquitted by a majority of three. It was a fearful revelation of the depths to which political morality had sunk. Finally Sir Robert Walpole, whose section of the Whig party had, luckily for himself, been excluded from office, and who had done exceedingly well out of the ramp, was called in to clear up the mess. This he did with ingenuity and commonsense, remitting obligations to the government which there was never any prospect of getting paid, and recovering for the wretched shareholders some moiety of their vanished capital. It is satisfactory to record that the Directors, who had safely landed their gains before the crash came, found themselves compelled to

disgorge by an act of retrospective legislation, and their plunder was restored, as far as possible, to their victims.

So ended the first and greatest of commercial panics, and the system of credit, though still imperfectly understood, was never again, not even during the railway mania of 1847, made subject to such crude abuse. For good or ill, a credit economy had come to stay.

9

The Union of Great Britain

The period of transition between the Revolution and the Hanoverian succession was marked by events in Scotland and Ireland of a strangely contrasted nature. It would perhaps be an exaggerated but certainly a plausible statement that the best and worst events in our history were respectively the free Union with Scotland and the treacherous enslavement of Ireland effected by the Penal Code. The one brought a union of hearts so complete that it is difficult for anyone nowadays to imagine the possibility of separation, the other left a legacy of hatred and revenge that casts a shadow over the hopes not only of the British Commonwealth, but, to some extent, of civilization itself.

And yet, to all appearance, there was no reason why events should have taken such a different course in our two sister nationalities. When William III landed at Torbay, it would have been difficult to decide whether the sentiment of national independence burned more fiercely in Irish or in Scottish breasts. The Irishman certainly had the heavier tale of wrongs to recount, but the Scot was by no means without his own score against English aggression, and he had, what the Irishman had not, the proud consciousness of having maintained his independence of England at the sword's point. The sentiment of "Scots wha hae" was by no means the invention of Burns, but was as old, and older than, that minstrel of Bruce and liberty, John Barbour. There is little doubt that with wisdom and Christianity, England could have forged a chain between herself and Ireland, as strong as that which now binds her to Scotland. But in her dealings with Ireland she has been neither wise nor Christian.

Why should there have been this contrast between England's Scottish and Irish policies? Partly the cause may be sought in differences of temperament and natural sympathy, partly in the fact

that whereas England was fain to bargain with Scotland, she had Ireland at her mercy.

The Lowland Scot had enough English or Northumbrian blood in his veins to give him a certain bond of understanding with his Southern neighbours. He was, almost of temperamental necessity, a Protestant, though a Protestant of a more logical and thorough type than the comparatively easy-going Anglican. He was energetic, efficient, commercial. But the Irish Celt has ever been a strange and incomprehensible being to the Englishman. His incontinence of imagination, his unreliability, the dream world in which he loves to take refuge, are things calculated to arouse suspicion and antipathy in the English mind. And, worst of all from the point of view of the seventeenth century Englishman, he was a Papist, perpetually on the *qui vive*, so it was supposed, to subject freeborn Englishmen to the yoke of any tyrant who might arise at Whitehall, and of the Triple Tyrant who was perpetually plotting death and torture from his fastness among the Seven Hills. As the most popular of all political songs made the Irishmen say:

> "Now de heretics all go down,
> Lillibullero! Bullen-a-la!
> By Chrish and Saint Patrick de land's our own!
> Lero, lero, etc."

Perhaps the most unfortunate circumstance of all in our relations with Ireland was that there had never been anything remotely corresponding to an Irish Bannockburn. Massacres there had been and troublesome guerilla warfare, but no prominent instance in which an English army had taken a fair and square beating from Irishmen. The most deadly of all hatreds is one that is tinged with contempt, and such a hatred the English cherished for the "wild Irish" who were perpetually defeated and yet remained obstinately unconquered in spirit. It was different with the Scots, to whom the English Parliament had recently offered humiliating concessions in the hour of need, whose invasion of England had brought down the personal government of Charles I, and whose intervention had turned the scale in the first Civil War. And the Scots, it must be remembered, had intervened on what was, at least formally, the constitutional side, whereas an Irish army, whether raised by Strafford for Charles I, or Tyrconnel for James II, was the last resort of encroaching Royalty.

The English Revolution of 1689 had placed Scotland in a position of formidable independence. The Restoration had seen the Episcopal Church and Liturgy set up, and the terrible Presbyterian Kirk was

reduced, for the time, to the position of a proscribed and persecuted sect, like the various bodies of English dissenters. But the Church was too closely identified with Divine Right to be a safe support for a Parliamentary King, and William III had not long been on the throne before the Kirk was restored to its old predominance as the established Church of Scotland.

There followed a period during which it might have seemed that the two halves of the island were heading for inevitable separation. The Scottish Parliament had never before been so strong nor so assertive of its rights, and an intense and bitter nationalism was rising throughout the Lowlands. Such Cavalier loyalty as had centred round the House of Stuart was now all for the King over the seas, and the loyalty of the Scottish Whigs for a Dutch sovereign was but tepid. Perhaps the most original Scottish thinker of this time was a little dried-up laird, of unsullied honesty and atrocious temper, called Fletcher of Saltoun. This man had been of the most uncompromising Whiggism, he had come over to fight for the Duke of Monmouth against James II, and had had to retire from the expedition owing to his haste in pistolling a brother officer with whom he had had a difference of opinion over the use of a charger. When he came back to Scotland under the auspices of William III, it was not to support him or any other monarch, but to work for an independent Scottish republic, and he used the whole of his powerful influence to weaken the English connection.

But what was the determining motive of almost all politics of this time was not religion nor national sentiment, but the sheer covetousness of this world's goods. That motive had begun to affect Scotland as well as England, not altogether to her disadvantage, for it diverted her thoughts, to some extent at least, from the burning of witches in this world and souls in the next. The commercial situation provided the most powerful grievance of all against England. For Scotland was, after all, a separate nation, which happened to have the same King as her neighbour, and this situation England had no hesitation in exploiting to the full. Scotland was as yet a poor and backward country, her towns were small and her manufactures undeveloped, so that it was in the power of England to freeze her out by a policy of ruthless protection. By the Navigation Act Scotland was cut off from the lucrative colonial trade, and by the customs barrier from profitable intercourse with England.

The close of the century was marked by a commercial disaster which demonstrated once and for all how deadly to Scottish trade

was the jealousy of Englishmen, and what a handicap it was to the Scots to be ruled by one who was to all intents and purposes King of a hostile nation. The Bubble spirit which looked for immense returns from trade in distant seas, came to Scotland before it swept over France and England. A great Scottish company was to be formed, at first with the object of trading with the Indies, and the scanty capital of the Northern Kingdom was poured into a scheme so agreeable to national pride and private cupidity But the Scottish adventurers found themselves headed off everywhere by English jealousy, and the influence of their own sovereign. When William had made it clear to the authorities at Hamburg, which the company had hoped to make its headquarters, that he not only discountenanced but was actively hostile to the scheme, it became evident that the Indies were barred to Scotland.

Then, in an evil hour, the projector, William Paterson, conceived the idea of planting a Scottish colony on the Isthmus of Darien, which he took to be the nodal point of the world's commerce. Scotland went mad over the project, the national canniness was thrown to the winds, the country was stripped bare in order to plant three successive expeditions on a pestilential swamp within the Spanish sphere of influence. Everything went wrong; English colonial governors displayed a brutal indifference to the wants and sufferings of these Scots, and at last the Spaniards, in overwhelming force, came and finished off what the fever had left. Few indeed of the adventurers returned home; Scotland had been bled white for no advantage whatever.

It was this Darien fiasco that brought matters to a head between England and Scotland. The Union of Crowns was evidently an impossible arrangement from the Scottish point of view, so long as it merely succeeded in saddling Scotland with a monarch actively hostile to her interests. The accession of Anne, though she was personally more agreeable to Scottish sentiment than her predecessor, did not ease the situation. The Scottish Parliament soon made it clear that on her death they had no intention of holding themselves bound to the Hanoverian Succession, and extorted the royal assent to an act which gave them the choice of any sovereign who would preserve Scotland's independence of England. It only needed the death of a by no means healthy woman to undo the work of the past century, and, in all probability, to revive the old Franco-Scottish alliance, which would certainly have had the effect of keeping England too busy at home to allow of her overseas expansion. Meanwhile,

Scottish nationalism, inflamed not only by the memory of Darien but by that of the massacre of Clan Macian at Glencoe, a typical incident of Highland warfare but one in which the English government was implicated, had risen to a pitch of unprecedented bitterness. An English merchant captain and two of his company were executed on a trumped-up charge of piracy for no better reason than that they were Englishmen. The prospects of Union might well have seemed hopeless.

But in this seemingly desperate situation statesmanship and good will triumphed as they have seldom triumphed in history. In spite of misunderstanding and legitimate grievances on both sides of the Border, the more sensible and far-sighted members of both nations saw to what a disaster they were drifting, and determined that if by any reasonable arrangement it could be avoided, that arrangement should be made. After all, the Protestant interest bound them together, if only the Scottish mind could be relieved from the fear of prelacy and an Anglicized Church, and Scotland would have much to gain if the doors of English and colonial trade were opened to her. Besides, Marlborough's victories were a glory in which Scottish sentiment would be proud to share, and did not raise the prestige of a French alliance in popular imagination.

The sins of the English Whigs, and they are many, may well be condoned in view of the wisdom and tact which they displayed in handling this supremely important question. Without any pretence of haggling, they aimed consistently and with clear purpose at arriving at a large and generous settlement by which the two nations could be bound not only formally, but in heart and spirit. Two strong teams of commissioners were appointed, consisting of the most distinguished men of each nation favourable to a settlement, and they accomplished their work in astonishingly short time and almost without friction.

The effect of what they did was to annihilate the Border in temporal matters, but to establish it, as long as Churches should endure, in things spiritual. They made the revolutionary discovery that men could get on very well together, and yet differ in their methods of worshipping God. When the traveller took the road northward from Berwick-on-Tweed, he passed from under the auspices of a parson to those of a minister, and found the change, at least on six days of the week, quite tolerable. Church and Kirk were, in fact, to gang their ain gaits and wallop their own niggers for the future.

But it might have seemed an impossible task, in the inflamed state of Scottish feeling, to induce an ancient Parliament to transform itself into an insignificant group of political hangers-on at Westminster. But Parliamentary institutions had never struck any deep roots into Scottish soil, nor had Parliament played the conspicuous rôle in Scotland that it had in England. It was only after the accession of William III that it became a serious debating assembly, and ceased to delegate its powers to a committee. Even then, it could not rival the influence of that democratic and intensely national body, the General Assembly of the Kirk.

The root of its failure is, we believe, to be found in the fact that English law, which is the life of English Parliamentary institutions, had failed to hold its own in Scotland. The Parliamentary instinct was not there, and the plant of constitutional development withered as it had done everywhere else under the blighting influence of Roman law. The Scottish mind was too logical to adapt itself to the tenacious cult of established right and precedent, and Messrs. Dicey and Rait [1] have shrewdly pointed out that patriotic Scots, such as Hume, Sir Walter Scott and Carlyle, have seldom displayed either sympathy with or comprehension of Parliamentary institutions. Scots have delighted to dwell on the romantic loyalty of chieftains to a sovereign or the dour faith that redeemed the narrowness of Presbyterism, but few of them, unless, like Macaulay, they have been more or less Anglicized, could understand the veneration that Englishmen entertain for the name of Hampden.

It may truly be said that nothing in the life of the Scottish Parliament became it like the leaving it. Opposition to the treaty, as concluded by the Commissioners, was intense, and it was even stronger outside the walls. The balance in Parliament was held by a middle group nicknamed the "squadrone volante", and these threw in their decisive weight on the treaty side. There were, of course, the usual riots by which disgruntled nationalism is wont to relieve its feelings, but the treaty was passed, never to be rescinded. Its full advantages were not immediately apparent; a number of Scottish merchants, taking the advantage of the transition to circumvent the English customs, managed to flood the market with cheap goods, and, what was more serious, the Scottish textile industry suffered gravely from the full blast of English competition. It was only after the generation that had made the treaty had passed away, that its positive advantages began to be reaped, and Scotland

[1] *Thoughts on the Scottish Union.*

was started on her career of industrial prosperity. Perhaps it was not the least of the benefits she derived that, by the appeal from the Scottish Court of Session to the English House of Lords, the influence of the English Common Law was again brought to bear on Scottish Jurisprudence.

10

The Enslavement of Ireland

It might seem incredible that the nation that so triumphantly solved the problem of its relations with Scotland should have failed so shamefully and completely in its dealings with Ireland. All that matters in that wretched story is briefly told. The Restoration had not, on the whole, been a bad time for Ireland. Expediency had impelled the triumphant Cavaliers to a settlement which left the Roundhead adventurers in possession of most of their ill-gotten lands, and a policy of ruthless greed was inaugurated in the steps which England took to kill by legislation the all-important Irish cattle trade. But Ireland had her woollen industry to fall back upon, and under the rule of Ormonde, one of the noblest Cavaliers of the old school, her religion, if not formally tolerated, was, except during the hysteria of the Popish plot, generally winked at.

It was, however, the Catholic James who ensured the ruin of Ireland. This time the Popish plot was a real one, and England knew it. The man whom James selected to carry out his policy and eventually made Lord Lieutenant under the title of Earl of Tyrconnel was a reckless Irish adventurer, whose brother, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, had died in jail during the scare of the plot. Tyrconnel went about his work of preparing the triumph of Rome with the thoroughness but not the discretion of a Strafford. The figure of the wild Irishman who was to appear in arms to subvert English liberty and religion now became a veritable bogey, and with the deposition of James, all shadow of pretence was thrown off. The first thing that Louis XIV, whose persecution of Huguenots was still fresh in the English mind, did, was to send James, with French aid, to establish himself in Ireland with a view to making this eventually a secure Catholic base for the reconquest of England.

Two things now happened exactly calculated to inflame English indignation against Ireland. A Parliament met in Dublin, composed almost wholly of Catholics, which, although it showed itself capable of both sense and tolerance, was carried away by an unhappy though

easily understandable spirit of revenge. The whole settlement of land, to which, in the course of a generation, the country had shaken itself down, was reversed by a stroke of the pen, and an iniquitous and indiscriminate Act of Attainder was passed in which the lists of those ordered to return at once or suffer penalty of treason was not even promulgated. James grumbled that this had been rammed down his throat, and had enough honour left in him to reject a modest proposal of Louis's representative, the Comte D'Avaux, for the massacre of all Protestants in Ireland.

The second stimulant of English feeling was the siege of the Protestant garrison of Londonderry which, although the government was in no hurry to relieve it, focussed the attention of the English people by its sheer length and heroism, and in Ulster, ever since, has formed the basis of a veritable romance of Protestantism. Men who had no bowels for the wrongs and sufferings endured by Papists were profoundly moved when they heard how men of their own religion had kept on hoping against hope for relief to arrive, how the brutal enemy commander had driven poor Protestant countryfolk to starve under the walls in order to extort surrender, how the relieving ships had at last appeared, and how a cry of anguish had gone up from the garrison when one of them had grounded. And then followed a landing and an easy victory by William in person over a Irish army that sought, on the Boyne, to bar his southward march to Dublin, and a final battle of Aughrim, where the Irish, with victory in their grasp, fled in panic on the death of their French commander. English sentiment towards Ireland was, however unjustly, tinged with that cold ruthlessness that is born of contempt.

After Aughrim, the last hope of Ireland lay in the army which had taken refuge behind the walls of Limerick, a town which had already been distinguished by the bloody repulse of the Dutch King himself from before its walls. This time it was besieged by one of William's compatriots called Ginkell, and the situation was a critical one as, though the garrison did not know it, a strong French expedition was on its way to retrieve the situation. Ginkell wisely judged it best to end the war in Ireland by conceding terms to the Irish people as a whole, in return for the surrender of their army. The effect of this Treaty, about which there has been a good deal of not very creditable quibbling, is abundantly plain to any man of honour or impartiality, and it was that the Catholics should be restored to the position and rights they had held in the reign of Charles II. But feeling had been embittered beyond the point at which honour

counts in the affairs of nations, and to the everlasting shame of the English Parliament and nation, it was decided to regard the Treaty of Limerick as a scrap of paper, and the Irish as a conquered people to be stamped into the dust, plundered and persecuted, with a scientific thoroughness more worthy of the Old Testament Jews than of a Christian people.

The sickening story of the series of Acts known as the Penal Laws has been told so often that there is no need to do more than briefly allude to its more salient features. The Catholics were harassed and persecuted in every possible way. The law was turned into an instrument of minute injustice; in almost every transaction of life the Catholic found the scales weighed against him; he was not allowed to educate his children in his own religion; by pretending to be a Protestant an undutiful son could make him a tenant for life; if he died his children were torn away from their Catholic relations and handed over to a Protestant guardian; should he own a horse any Protestant who liked could ride off on it by simply giving five pounds in exchange. All ecclesiastical dignitaries and regular priests of the Catholic religion were liable to transportation. The Catholic was, in fact, something worse than an outlaw, he was, if we may coin the expression, an anti-law. When we hear of the proverb that the laws of Ireland are made to be broken, we must remember how long the Irish people were governed by a law which would truly merit the censure, applied by the English to the old Brehon law: "A damnable law that is no law, hateful to God and man."

Such was the covetousness of English policy that, in its lust to smash every Irish industry except those directly serviceable to Britain, it had not even the consistency to keep its hands out of Protestant pockets. By suffocating one industry after another and by cutting off Irish trade from the colonies and from the East, Britain was pressing no less hard on her own Protestant garrison than on the Catholics. To crown all this stupidity, the religion of this garrison was frowned upon little less than that of the Catholics themselves. Even the Toleration Act of 1689, by which the English Dissenters had obtained relief from the worst provisions of the Clarendon Code, was not extended to Ireland. As a consequence of these religious and material handicaps, sturdy non-conformists, in their thousands, emigrated abroad, and their descendants helped to stiffen that army of Washington which was to humble England's pride in the dust.

Ireland now entered upon a long period of misery. The Catholic peasantry, deprived of all incentive to profitable industry, sank into idleness and squalor, content for the most part to keep themselves alive on any terms whatever. The Catholic landowners, a dwindling minority with no security of tenure, tried to make quick profits on their land by turning it to pasture, and thus the hands that might have found employment in tillage were left idle. Recurrent famines swept over the island, one of them at least comparable to the Black Famine of 1849. Smuggling, now an honourable attempt to evade iniquitous laws, was practised on a vast scale; secret societies, murderous and cruel, were the natural products of such a soil. Gradually and unperceived, the last vestiges of the old Celtic culture flickered out; even the language began to fall into disuse.

And yet the Irish clung with a passive and unconscious heroism to their nationality, to their very soul. Perhaps the conquerors were not really anxious for conversions—a helot is for many purposes easier to deal with than a free man—but whether this was so or not, the Irish continued to support their priests, and in illegal hedge schools the old Irish love for learning found such satisfaction as it could. Emigration was not so common among them as among the Protestants except for one purpose, always dear to an Irishman, that of fighting. Gentlemen and peasants, they went abroad to France and, indeed, anywhere that military employment could be obtained. The population of Ireland at the time of the Revolution was something less than a million, and it is computed that, in the next sixty years, not far short of half this number took service under the *fleur de lys*. It was these men who, with cries of revenge for the treachery of Limerick, charged home on the devoted English column at Fontenoy, few of whose members, it may safely be asserted, had ever heard of the treaty or its violation. But such is ever the logic of revenge, even of just revenge.

11

The Passing of Mystery

When John Locke was acting as the first Lord Shaftesbury's philosophic mentor, a little party of friends assembled in the chambers allotted him by his patron at Exeter House. They had been discussing some subject without getting very much further, when Locke startled the company by the profound suggestion that before going on with this or any other discussion it would be as well to

take stock of their own understandings, in order to find out what the human mind was qualified to deal with, and how far its processes were valid as a criterion of truth. This resulted in Locke's jotting down some rough notes on the subject, out of which, taking his time and with characteristic caution, he built up, in the course of some twenty years, his most considerable philosophic treatise, the *Essay on the Human Understanding.*

That this should have been done at all was more important than Locke's way of doing it. The Whig philosopher was, in fact, carrying on to another stage the mental process begun at the Renaissance. The man-centred universe of the Middle Ages was still farther undermined, now that the godlike apprehension which had hitherto been taken more or less as a matter of course was itself called in question. The possibility that man might be looking at the world through distorted glasses, or that his ready-reckoner of logic might not even be applicable for the most important uses, was fraught with revolutionary possibilities. Not that Locke himself aspired to turn the Universe any more than the State inside out. In philosophy as well as in politics he was a typical Whig, respectable, compromising, non-committal. He had an aversion that was perhaps constitutional from pushing any train of thought to its logical conclusion, and thus he was continually blinding his eyes to consequences that bolder spirits were quick enough to see, and accept.

No useful purpose would be served, nowadays, by following Locke in his distinctions between primary and secondary qualities of objects, or between sensation and reflection, which is not sense but " very like it ", as the causes of ideas. These flimsy barriers have long ago been swept away ; they were beginning to disappear even during the philosopher's lifetime. The impetus that Locke had given to thought was scarcely affected by Locke's own efforts to check it. And he occupies a position whose importance can hardly be overestimated, representing as he does the culmination of one movement and the beginning of another. For he gathers up into his philosophy the spirit which had found expression in the Royal Society during the last half of the seventeenth century, and he may truly be described as the father of that French " Enlightenment " which was to transform the eighteenth. For the French mind has nothing of the Whig in it, and its clear-cut logic made short work of Locke's respectabilities. To Condillac, the psychologist, there was no nonsense about something " very like " sense as a secondary

cause of ideas; knowledge was sense and nothing else, and the human mind a machine for registering sense impressions. As one of the idealogues of Napoleon's day put it, "To think is to feel."

With the passing of Locke and Newton the leadership of the world's thought, as far as any definite meaning can be attached to so vague an expression, passes to French minds. The almost sacred enthusiasm which fired the little group assembled in Gresham College burns dim indeed during the cold times of Walpole and the German Kings. It is, however, a matter of indifference that where one plants another should water, provided that flower and fruit appear in due season, for the glory and benison not of this man or nation, but of all mankind.

It was not only in France that men were quick to convert Locke's Whig philosophy into the most drastic of Radicalism. However bold he might be in his suggestions, Locke had never wavered in a species of cold devoutness peculiarly his own. He was careful to reason himself into the certainty of what he called a God, but which the plain man would be rather inclined to characterize as the Supreme Conclusion of the mathematics. For all his tolerance he would have persecuted anyone who, not believing in this God, refused to be so great a liar as to say he did. He was also ready to swallow revelation and the Church, and, like Newton, he could drive an edifying pen along scriptural paths.

But there was a young literary freelance called Toland, who, being an Irishman, had less relish for the respectabilities of the mind, and proceeded to deduce consequences from Locke's speculations which proved exceedingly shocking to Locke, who hastened to repudiate any connection with so inconvenient a disciple. Locke had, however, himself written a treatise with the significant title *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and Toland was only following with somewhat greater freedom the same line of argument when he produced a small volume with the following long title:

"Christianity not mysterious, or a treatise showing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to reason or above it: and that no Christian doctrine can be properly called a mystery."

The conclusion from which the Whig philosopher had tactfully receded was thus proclaimed by the Irish freelance in all its naked impiety. To the Caesar of reason to which Locke had appealed, Christianity must go. It was, in fact, a theory of nature and conduct like any other theory, and might be right or wrong—Toland had at least enough prudence to allow it to be right. To him God was a

spirit and to be worshipped in spirit, and not with mysteries and priestly ceremonial, about the pagan origin of which he shrewdly anticipated the conclusions of modern criticism, though without the modern critic's wealth of evidence.

The ecclesiastical dovecotes were fairly fluttered by this daring assault, and official Christianity could find no better way of repudiating the jurisdiction of reason than by persecuting the man who appealed to it. His book was consigned to the flames by the verdict of a jury, who modestly confessed that they could not understand a word of it, and therefore prudently concluded that it must be something extremely dangerous. Pulpits were furiously belaboured by their outraged occupants, until it became inadvisable for respectable folk to be seen conversing with Toland in the streets. He was obliged to flee from his native Ireland, a triumph for the Church militant on which pious Doctor South comments to the Archbishop of Dublin in the following terms:

"Your Parliament presently sent him packing, and without the help of a *fagot*, soon made the Kingdom *too hot* for him."

This incorrigible Irishman, whose affection for orthodoxy strangely failed to be increased by such methods of persuasion, actually throve on the advertisement that such attentions procured for his subsequent publications.

Toland is the first and perhaps the most incisive of a group of thinkers whose activities extend over about half a century, and are known by the name of Deists. Their views were not wholly original even in England, for they had been anticipated to some extent by that very gallant Jacobean gentleman, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, nor were they by any means a united band like the Tractarians of the nineteenth century. Their general tendency was to substitute a natural for a revealed religion, to cut away from Christianity one after the other all its supernatural props, and to leave only a vague entity called God, which somehow or other contrived to weigh down the scales on the side of righteousness. "Christianity as old as the Creation," the title of a work by Tindal which came to be known as the Bible of Deism, is perhaps the best concise summary of its principles

The attack on orthodoxy was made from all sorts of angles. Anthony Collins set himself to demolish the argument founded on the miraculous fulfilment of prophecy; William Wollaston poured irreverent ridicule on the alleged Gospel miracles; Thomas Morgan showed a Voltairean disposition to question the morality of the Old

Testament; Peter Annet turned the searchlight of criticism on to the Resurrection itself. And yet Deism must, on the whole, be acknowledged to have failed. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century it had become a spent force, and as its protagonists died off they left no one to carry on their work. In 1790 Burke could write of them, in the spirit of an advocate, but not altogether without justice:

"They repose in lasting oblivion. Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through? Ask the booksellers of London what is become of all these lights of the world."

The true explanation of this failure would, however, have scarcely been palatable to that great opponent of all revolution, political or religious. For the weakness of the Deists consisted less in their having gone too far, than in their having not gone far enough for their own purpose. For, one and all, they were anxious to make believe that they were running with the hare of orthodoxy at the same time that they were hunting with the hounds of freethought. For this it is hard to blame them. The law was still terribly severe upon freethought, and in 1698 was reinforced by a statute specially directed at the new subversive doctrines, and imposing a penalty of three years' imprisonment on a second offence. Thus a direct premium was put not upon belief, but dishonesty, and the Deists were reduced to proving that in spite of appearances they were really the most respectable Christians of all, and that their criticism proceeded out of a pure love of Christianity. There is no doubt that some of them, at least, were sincere in their professions, if only from a subconscious bias in favour of the things most appertaining to their temporal peace.

The work of our Deists was, to a large extent, unnecessary, since the French thinkers of the *Éclaircissemen t*were destined to do it so much more thoroughly. We could produce no such drastic rationalists as Diderot and his group of encyclopaedists, no such ruthless criticism as that of Voltaire, no psychology so uncompromisingly materialist as that of Helvetius and Condillac.

12

Augustan Complacency

The age of Queen Anne was, on the whole, one of boundless self-complacency. The English navy ruled the seas unchallenged,

the army was a partaker in victories the like of which had never been heard of since Agincourt, money was accumulating in almost unhealthy profusion. And it seemed as if a new age of light and reason had already dawned to which every other age was, by comparison, barbarous. Literature was honoured as never before; statesmen did not disdain to solicit the friendship of authors, and a literary dictator, like Addison, might aspire to the hand of a Countess. The coffee house had become a place where ideas were freely exchanged and where intellectual cliques might foregather. A new type of periodical, represented by the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, diffused an atmosphere of enlightened civility, and the art of journalism, fraught with such vast and dangerous potentialities, found its first and most brilliant exponent in Daniel Defoe, whose nimble pen was at the service of any cause that it paid him to write up.

There is an unmistakable tendency among the men of this time to look upon themselves, their country, and their age, and pronounce all three very good. This is the serious message that lies beneath the delightful insouciance of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, his smile is one of conscious superiority, and the humour lies in the incongruity of modern polite activities being described in terms suitable to a ruder and less polished state of civilization. Even Homer, before he can be made acceptable to this society, must have his native roughness smoothed away and be forced to appear in a garb of neatly rhymed and scanned iambics, for all the world as if he were a Red Indian chief frilled and bewigged for a royal levée.

We can perhaps best realize what manner of gentlemen and ladies flourished at the beginning of the polite century from a study of their tombs. They are veritable monuments of self-importance, often dwarfing everything else in the church. There they stand, with perhaps an urn or a skull between them, on the one side a portentous big-wig, on the other his lady, both on their eternal dignity, and without the least attempt to look Christian or even amiable. They lived respected, as you are very likely informed, and provided you keep up that respect for their effigies, you are welcome to speculate that there must have been very disagreeable old gentlemen on the earth in those days. "And why, pray," they seem to reply, "should we condescend to be anything else for your benefit?"

The very church is expected to accommodate itself to the "Family". What once have been the chapels of saints are now

reserved for the squire and his party. In West Peckham Church, in the Maidstone district, you will see how the North East chapel has been transformed for the benefit of the great house hard by, shut off with delicately carved woodwork, and provided with curtains that could be drawn during the sermon, and under cover of which the squire could compose himself to sleep, by his own fire or, alternatively, make an unperceived escape by a thoughtfully provided private door.

Perhaps the philospher who most perfectly expresses the feeling of polite London Society in this so-called Augustan age is the third Earl of Shaftesbury, a grandson of Charles II's most formidable adversary, the founder of the title. Even had his talents inclined that way, the grandson would have found no scope for the close designs and desperate expedients by which the grandfather had earned the name of Achitophel. The cause of the oligarchy against the Crown had triumphed; the rich magnates, of whom the third Shaftesbury was one, had entered into the possession of the kingdom, and like Leo X with the Papacy, they had only to enjoy it.

Accordingly we find in Shaftesbury the urbane self-assurance of a class whose privilege it is to give the law not only in the State but in the realms of intellect. Not unnaturally he anticipates the conviction of Doctor Pangloss that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds—from the point of view of himself and his fellow-magnates. There was something to be said for this. The culture that he expounds in a series of lucid and never tedious essays is that of the great gentleman, and it must be admitted that he, at least, gives no encouragement to British insularity, reminding his countrymen that they have still a long way to travel before they have shed their native rudeness. But Shaftesbury has no doubts whatever that to him and to other people of equally refined taste the line between rudeness and culture is fixed and known.

"One who aspires to the character of a man of breeding and politeness is careful to form his judgments of arts and sciences upon right models of perfection. If he travels to Rome, he inquires which are the truest pieces of architecture, the best remains of statues, the best paintings of a Raphael or a Caraccio. However antiquated, rough or dismal they may appear to him at first sight, he resolves to view them over and over, till he has brought himself to relish them, and finds their hidden graces and perfections" . . . Caraccio!

The cultured man will, however, resolutely deny himself the enjoyment of anything that hails from India or Japan, or is executed

in the French or the Flemish style. And if anyone is weak enough to find pleasure in a nankeen vase or to prefer a Rubens to a Caraccio, he must reflect on the dangers of forfeiting forever his good relish.

"The art itself," remarks his Lordship sapiently, "is severe, the rules rigid."

Shaftesbury only illustrates the disposition that is common to most English writers of his time, to regard their culture as something final and almost static. The world, or at least the only part of it that counted, had ceased to be barbarous, and its scorn of the past was only tempered by the still powerful influence of Spenser, of Shakespeare, of Milton, and even of Chaucer, about whom Dryden had written discerningly, and who appeared in editions of 1687 and 1721. But these mitigations did not alter the tendency of Augustan England to regard its polish as the final achievement of civilization. The figure of Addison dispensing laws to his little senate and politely attentive to his own applause is symbolic of his age.

This intellectual and aesthetic pride constituted a danger to religion more deadly by far than the most searching criticisms of the Deists. Shaftesbury himself has too much good taste to denounce beliefs that he has too much good sense to take very seriously. He calmly suggests that the Jews would have been better advised had they substituted a little good-natured raillery for the clumsy expedient of crucifixion. Any form of too violent emotion, of enthusiasm—to use a favourite expression of that time—was scouted as a mark of ill-breeding. The wits who assembled in the coffee houses knew better than to give themselves away by exposing their emotions, as the Elizabethans had done. It is not surprising that the finer emotions soon began to perish by atrophy. A deadly blight descended upon poetry; the serious drama expired in the sonorous ranting of Addison's Cato. ("O liberty! O virtue! O my country!"), and irreligion became the fashionable talk of men who were too polite to care very much whether they were saved or damned.

How thin was the veneer of this culture it is hardly necessary to remark. Charming as it was in many of its manifestations, it was confined almost exclusively to London; in the country districts there were squires who could only read with difficulty and whose language was a hardly intelligible dialect. Witches had not yet ceased to ply their unholy activities, strange and even pre-Christian customs lingered on in remote districts, the devil had not ceased actively to haunt Dartmoor, and in the Isle of Man they still hunted

the wren for Robin the Bobbin and Jack of the Tan on Christmas Eve. Even in London the streets were unsafe at night by reason of gangs of fashionable young gentlemen, who made it their sport to torture and gouge out the eyes of innocent passers-by, to roll women down hills in tubs, and to practice even more unpardonable outrages at their expense. Dean Swift has lifted the veil from the grossness of habits and conversation even of polite people in this age of self-conscious politeness.

Dean Swift, at any rate, was under no illusions about his age. He looked out upon it, with his clear and merciless vision, and found it about as bad as it could be. He was a man singularly deficient in constructive ability, and in the days of his greatest influence he did no more than abet the worst schemes of the sordid faction to which he had attached himself. But as a destructive critic he was deadly, and had a message for his age that might have turned the course of history had it only been understood.

His masterpiece, *Gulliver's Travels*, is an indictment, not only of his countrymen, but of the human race itself. He was appalled by the stupidity with which the powers and energies of mankind were turned into perverse or suicidal channels. The moral of the book is that of Goethe's Mephistopheles,

> "Life somewhat better might content him
> But for the heavenly light that thou hast lent him,
> He calls it reason, thence his power's increased
> To be far beastlier than any beast."

"The bulk of your natives," remarks the King of Brobdingnag to Gulliver "appear to me to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the face of the earth."

It would have been well if, with the enormous increase of human power that was to come in the eighteenth century, men had been able to ask whether, with their habits of mind and notions of civilization, they were fit to receive it. Dean Swift would have answered, emphatically, that they were only providing themselves with the means of drifting to the devil at an accelerated pace; there must be a mental and spiritual as well as an Industrial Revolution if mankind was to survive. But by the time that the need became urgent, Dean Swift was dead, and Gulliver had passed, with Robinson Crusoe, into the category of amusing and instructive literature for the young. Mankind favoured the view of Shaftesbury, that civilization was on the whole an excellent thing, and God a genial power or potentate who could be trusted to make things come out right without undue fuss on the part of His creatures.

CHAPTER III

THE PROSE AGE

1

The Eclipse of Royalty

We now pass from a period of transition and conflicting ideals to one of comparative stagnation, or at least of the calm which characterizes some broad and level reach of a river, which flows with a sure but hardly perceptible motion. The struggle with France was settled for a generation; that between Divine Right and oligarchy had ended with the complete triumph of the latter, and this not so much on the merits of the case, as owing to what we can only describe as an overwhelming run of bad luck against monarchy. The people themselves, if we may draw any conclusions from the difference between the London mobs of Sacheverell's and Strafford's times, had certainly not weakened in their partiality for their Sovereigns, but no throne can prosper unless its occupants conform to a certain standard of acceptability.

Since the Restoration England had been governed by what was practically a Frenchman, then by a Roman Catholic, next by a Dutchman, and after him by an uninspiring respectable housewife. But the nadir of monarchy was reached by the accession of a German, whose one merit was to have been a fairly capable commander, but who was a boor, a snob, and almost certainly a murderer, who cared nothing for the interests of his new Kingdom, to which he greatly preferred his Electorate, and who had to talk to his ministers in dog-Latin because he could not understand English.

With the accession of such a monarch as George I it was clear that all was over with monarchy, as monarchy had been understood by the Tudors and Stuarts. But so strongly had the tide been flowing against the Crown that it is at least doubtful whether one of Anne's sons, supposing him to have survived and to have been a King of ordinary parts, could have retrieved the situation. The work of the Revolution was inevitably to transfer the executive from the control of the Crown to that of a party, though neither William nor Anne had been content to recognize this as constitutional practice. Anne's

very triumph in getting rid of her Whigs had but substituted the rule of one faction for that of the other.

Even before her death the reins of power had been silently withdrawn from her hands. She had never ceased to preside at the meetings of that inner council of ministers which had developed within the old Privy Council, and over this even George I, with his dog-Latin, continued to preside. But where ministers are all of one way of thinking, or have interests in common of which the Sovereign does not partake, no power on earth can prevent those of them who dominate their party councils from meeting together in secret, and reducing the deliberations held in the Sovereign's presence to a pre-determined formality. Given a party ministry, government by a party committee, or, as we now call it, a cabinet, follows as inevitably as night follows day.

George I had come in practically as a Whig nominee, and so long as the only alternative was, as most Englishmen would have put it, a Frenchified Papist, it was inevitable that the Whig party should hold the reins of power. For King and people alike there was no practicable alternative to the rule of the Whig bosses, so long as these could hang together. But even so, we must beware, as always in dealing with English institutions, of too sweeping generalization. The Crown, though it had lost the key of the position in the control of its ministers, still retained a good deal of power and prestige. For when a party has obtained so sweeping a victory that its power is not seriously threatened from without, it is seldom that its members contrive to hang together very closely, and this may give the Crown an opportunity to throw in its weight in favour of this or that minister with decisive effect. The first split in the party brought into power that section of the Whigs which was headed by the two Lords, Sunderland and Stanhope, who followed the King to Hanover and humoured him in his Electoral policy. And even the great Sir Robert Walpole had reason to tremble at the advent of a new and probably unfriendly sovereign in George II, and was fain to avail himself of the friendly support of Queen Caroline. Not only the King, but even the King's mistress, could exercise such influence as to make her favour a lucrative source of income.

Except for the coming into operation of the Act of Settlement, with its provisions reinforcing those of the Bill of Rights, the Crown retained its power formally unimpaired. In reality the Whig cause, that of an oligarchy though not altogether of a class, had triumphed so completely that the Crown had sunk to such unconsidered trifles

of power as the complaisance or disunion of its ministers might afford. For the first time, perhaps, in our history, the demise of a sovereign is an affair of such minor importance as hardly to ruffle the political surface. A dapper and strutting German has stepped into the shoes of a boorish and surly one—that is all. What royalty had been, and what it had become, is best realized from two pictures reproduced in Professor Pollard's *Evolution of Parliament*, each of a speech from the throne to the assembled Houses. In one Queen Elizabeth sits alone on a raised dais within whose sacred area not a Leicester nor a Burleigh dares to intrude; in the other little George II sits on the same dais, but this time quite a number of figures are crowding round the throne in the most familiar and matter-of-course way. So much for Divine Right!

It must not be imagined that this degradation of the Crown from its old dignity and prerogative was accepted as final by those who clung on to the Tory tradition. But the allegiance of the Tories was divided just where the sentiment of Divine Right was strongest, it centred not round a Hanoverian usurper, but round a legitimate sovereign of the Stuart line. Oxford, in particular, was a hotbed of Jacobite sentiment, eupeptic Fellows passed their port-glasses over the water-bottle when the King's health was proposed, and as Green informs us in his delightful *Oxford Studies*, "the 'freshman', who arrived at Oxford with a heart full of loyal traditions . . . saw the few Whigs outlawed, discountenanced, and jeered at, scouted by the society of their college, disqualified for preferment, visited with the utmost severity on the most trifling breach of discipline." All over the country there were squires who professed loyalty to James III, and in Lancashire, where they were particularly strong, some of them, both during the "fifteen" and the "forty-five", were ready to give their lives for the cause, but as a general rule, their professions were not to be taken much more seriously than Squire Western's desire to see "twenty-thousand honest Frenchmen" landed on our shores.

A more practical line was taken by Bolingbroke, who had bolted to France to escape the vengeance of the Whigs, had joined the Pretender and got snubbed and dismissed for his pains, and at last been permitted to return home through the tolerance of his opponents. He now saw clearly enough that the Tories, in supporting the Pretender, were putting their money on the wrong horse, and accordingly he sought to place a new and reconstructed Toryism at the service of any member of the House of Hanover with sense

enough to see its advantages. The sermon was preached, for want of a better disciple, to the emptiest and stupidest of them all, that Prince Frederick, of whom a lucky tennis-ball relieved the country.

Bolingbroke's idea was that the King should frankly accept the constitutional limitations imposed by the Revolution, and seek to establish his power on a basis of popular support. He saw in what the weakness of party government consisted. The ministry were the representatives of one faction, whereas the King, by virtue of his office, stood for the nation. Let the King, says Bolingbroke—who, by the way, had been a most unscrupulous party boss in the days of his power—let the King take full advantage of this position. Let him come forward as a patriot, let him resume his constitutional prerogative of choosing his ministers, and choose them solely for their fitness, without any regard for the calculations of party wire-pullers. Against such a King no party will be able to stand up, the business of government will be efficiently performed, prosperity and contentment will smile on the land, and the throne, secure in the support of the people, will be established more firmly than ever.

Bolingbroke was a bad man, but a very clear-sighted one, and his idea of a patriot King was one that had every chance of success, given a sovereign capable of carrying it out. For he aimed at bringing the practice of the constitution into line with its theory, of making it what such competent observers as Montesquieu and the founders of the United States constitution imagined it to be already. The King, under Bolingbroke's scheme, would have wielded much the same powers as an American President nowadays. But the patriot King, when he came, turned out to be a mere George III, who made at least enough of a success of the scheme to show its practicability, and incidentally managed to bring himself and his Kingdom to the brink of ruin.

2

Oligarchy in the Saddle

Under the first two Georges the country was not governed by the King but by the Whigs, and during the twenty years that followed the pricking of the South Sea Bubble its real ruler was that massive and good-humoured Norfolk squire, Sir Robert Walpole. Never was man more representative of his time. Though he had no gleam of sentiment or poetry in his nature, though his moral standard was no more delicate than his conversation, there was yet

a largeness and sincerity about the man that stamps him authentically as a hero—a prose hero. He was greedy of power, so greedy that he would suffer no colleague of conspicuous ability alongside of him in the ministry; he was unscrupulous in retaining power, he was by no means above feathering his own nest, and yet under his auspices the nation was about as wisely and prosperously governed as the conditions of the time would allow.

Walpole was thoroughly imbued with the materialism of an age that measured a nation's welfare by the prosperity of its commerce. But this was at any rate an advance on the ideals of military glory and religious uniformity that had deluged Europe in blood to so little purpose. Walpole had no high-flown enthusiasm on the subject of national honour, and he was never more scathing than when he was denouncing the cant of patriotism in others. It did not greatly perturb him, even, when the Spaniards started shelling Gibraltar, he was not going to be hustled into an unprofitable war by such a trifle, though when the Ostend company of our dear ex-ally, the Emperor, threatened to become a serious competitor to our trade, he did certainly contemplete war as a last resort. By the sacred ideal of the European Balance of Power he was stolidly unmoved. A great war, that of the Polish Succession, in which the French got Lorraine and a Bourbon Naples, obviously called for our intervention. But Walpole contented himself with the reflection that this war had been the death of fifty thousand men, but not of one Englishman. The various people whose interest it was to unseat him might, and did, rave themselves hoarse about the minister's lack of patriotism, and his bartering away the fruits of the great Duke's victories.

Walpole was not the man to be frightened or bullied into departing from what seemed to him to be the dictates of commonsense. At the same time he was by no means disposed to make himself a martyr to what he conceived to be the ideally best policy. When he would have reformed our fiscal system by introducing free storage of goods in bonded warehouses at the ports, he gave way to the unscrupulous agitation that his enemies raised against it. "This dance will no further go," was his comment. He was even ready, when the time came, to be pushed into a war with Spain, of which he thoroughly disapproved, rather than resign office. If Parliament and the country chose to insist upon a bad policy, that was their own business, and he must make the best of a bad situation. A good steward is not bound to resign because his master issues foolish orders.

The cornerstone of Walpole's system was his devotion to the Protestant succession. This he was determined to maintain, whatever else happened, and it was not without reason that George II burst into tears on parting from him. It is not often that we can think of pathos in connection with Walpole, but there is surely no more touching incident than that of the fallen statesman, dying of an agonizing malady, and yet being driven up to London, when every bump of the wheel was torture, to advise his sovereign in the hour of crisis and rebellion. Walpole thoroughly realized that it was in the best interests of his cause to keep the country out of adventures and to allow her to increase steadily in material prosperity —the first two Georges could never be a source of inspiration, but their continuance on the throne might easily become indispensable. This was exactly what proved to be the verdict of public opinion when the Stuarts made their last desperate bid for the throne in 1745. The country had no affection for its German King, but it had no wish whatever to get rid of him.

Walpole, by what he did and what he refrained from doing, guided Britain through a period of peace and solid prosperity. He simplified the tariff, winked at colonial evasions of our fiscal restrictions and, Whig though he was, gratified the Tory squires by reducing the Land Tax. He had no taste for abstract principles; the Dissenters, for instance, who were one of the supports of the Whigs, had to be satisfied with their position of civil inferiority because Walpole did not believe in making trouble unnecessarily, but they were, in practice, left alone. He had no idea of going to the root of constitutional and social problems; of the causes that were already operating to drive the peasant off the land and squeeze out the yeomanry it is probable that he neither knew nor cared, still less did he anticipate the enormous change in human conditions that was to be brought about by the increase of mechanical power. The contest with France for dominion overseas, which was only in abeyance, never troubled his head; it was enough for him to keep up friendly relations through his entente with a kindred spirit, Cardinal Fleury. He was content, like the typical member of the stock exchange, to carry on till next settling day, without taking too much thought for the morrow.

His power did not long survive the peace he had kept. The jealousy which led him to get rid of any colleague at all likely to prove a rival, had driven the ablest politicians into an opposition made up of Jacobite Tories and Whigs of all shades, united by nothing but

their hatred of "Robin". The Queen's death had robbed him of his most valuable ally, and the Spanish war, into which he had been forced against his judgment and which he waged without heart, rendered his position plainly impossible. These were the straws on the surface, whose drift told of the spiritual tide that had begun to flow against him and that which he stood for. For discreditable and humiliating as was the whole agitation for a mercenary war against a weak opponent, we may detect in it the first stirrings of that great reaction, which, in its later manifestations, we know as Romantic, against a commonsense and prosaic way of life.

Englishmen were vaguely conscious of needing something more inspiring, more charged with colour and emotion, than the earth-bound practicality for which Walpole stood. As yet their strivings after the new ideal were lacking in depth and delicacy, the eighteenth century trying to put off its drab garments of practicality and clothe itself with passion was at first as clumsy as a bear trying to dance. An immense amount of windy bombast was expended on the subject of patriotism, and with the prudence that nearly always tempers such fervour, great care was taken to find a conveniently weak enemy, with enough riches to give patriotism some chance of paying its way. The plain fact of the matter was that the trade with Spanish America had never quite come up to expectations, and our worthy smugglers and slave-traders had a way of falling foul of the Spanish revenue officers. The outrage, that in such cases turns every non-combatant's heart to steel, was duly forthcoming. A certain Captain Jenkins, of somewhat doubtful antecedents, laid on the table of the House of Commons an ear which he alleged to be his own (according to some accounts this was safely nestling beneath his hair), and which he said had been cut off by some villainous Spaniard, though, according to another account, an English pillory had been the stage on which the tragedy had been enacted.

"I commended my soul to my God and my cause to my country," said Captain Jenkins, and a roar went up for loot and vengeance that not even Walpole could disregard.

But when Walpole had been driven from office—and he contrived, contrary to all expectation, to fall on his feet—matters were certainly not improved by the advent of the patriots to power. The Whigs, of course, continued to rule the roost, but the party was in a state of decomposition, and during the fifteen years following the fall of Walpole our political history is a record of personal intrigues between different magnates, whose principles were usually comprehended

in a desire for power and for the loaves and fishes of office. Never was there a time more completely lacking in ideals, seldom one in which the country was governed with such woeful insufficiency.

Of the making of books about these men and their doings there is no end, but their historical importance consists mainly in what they failed to understand and to do. While they were playing at being statesmen, the country was drifting. It is perhaps too early to speak of a prime minister in the modern sense, but of the four successive politicians who came to the head of affairs the first was the

> "Old, dull, important lord,
> Who at the longed-for money board
> Sits first, but does not lead,"

and was called the Earl of Wilmington, but of whom not much else is worth remembering; the second was that laughing dilettante, who became Earl of Granville, and whose Hanoverian leanings and itch for Continental adventure ought to have landed our King and army in a pro-French Sedan on the Neckar; the third was Henry Pelham, a fairly competent bureaucrat of Walpole's school, and a stolid materialist; and lastly Pelham's brother, the Duke of Newcastle, whom no amount of historical whitewashing will depose from his pre-eminence as the most doddering and undignified nincompoop to whom the government of a great nation has ever been committed.

Newcastle's correspondence remains at the British Museum to damn him, with its ever-forthcoming fulsomeness, its muddle-headed failure to grasp the simplest point, and that peculiar ignobility for which there is no perfectly happy English word, but which is exactly hit off by Dante's "*basso*". If, however, Newcastle was amazed to discover that Cap Breton was an island, and was incapable even of understanding the advice for which he fawned on the Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, there was one branch of political art of which he was a past master. He was a matchless wirepuller; the lower and more dirty the task in hand, the more did his ability rise to meet it. Walpole was supposed—falsely—to have said that every man had his price, but this was so much the cornerstone of Newcastle's faith in human nature that he kept a tariff of his fellow politicians, with the price of every man's soul neatly docketed for use. And yet it is the one good thing we know about Newcastle that, by some strange paradox, he had not his own price. It was for his party and not his pocket that he prostituted honour and dignity. So far was he from making politics pay that he ended his career a comparatively poor Duke.

Government by oligarchy was now at its height; Parliament was a close corporation of rich men, many of them, if they were Commoners, the nominees of men still richer than themselves. The King was reduced to a cipher and the Pelhams brought him to heel when he showed some signs of independence in his choice of ministers, by threatening to resign in the hour of crisis, when the Highland clans and Prince Charlie were threatening London. Corruption and her twin sister incompetence reigned supreme. The Glorious Revolution was fully consummated, the whole effective power of the State was in the hands of Parliament, and the result was . . . Newcastle!

3

An Age of Artifice

Such an arbitrary division of time as that comprehended by this or that century might seem to be wholly valueless for historical purposes. And yet popular phraseology, in speaking of the eighteenth century, is referring to a phase of human development of unusual distinctness and importance. Naturally when we talk in this sense, we are not referring to any exact period of time, and if it were necessary to define it, we should take the eighteenth century as covering the years between the death of Louis XIV (or in England of Queen Anne) and the outbreak of the French Revolution. It is to this period that Carlyle is referring when he talks of the "swindler century". It is, in Europe, an epoch of much stability in domestic politics, of a vast superficial complacency, and of revolutionary activity beneath the surface. To regard it from another point of view, it falls between the age of the Grand Monarch and the triumph of the Romantic movement.

Of the outward and visible eighteenth century the true spiritual father was Louis XIV. Civilized Europe, from Lisbon to St. Petersburg, was trying to realize the ideal of culture and well-being that had had its birth at Versailles, and this in despite of the fact that the Versailles of Louis XIV had ceased to exist, and what had come into the place of its large and ceremonial magnificence was a court and a nobility in a state of luxurious decay, divorced from every kind of reality and posturing gracefully down the thickly carpeted path at whose end was the guillotine. But from the upper class of Europe, now at the zenith of its power and security, all these things were hidden. What Rome was to the medieval Christian, Versailles

was to the ladies and gentlemen of the eighteenth century, a spiritual centre, so far as the word "spiritual" can be used at all of that godless time.

Such a thing as religious sentiment, of any intensity, would have been highly improper in such a *milieu*. Here in England it was probably a sense of humour that prevented us from following the German precedent of representing Christ in a wig, but it was considered the height of praise to record on a lady's tomb that she was "pious without enthusiasm". Even that was more than could have been said for many of the comfortable Whig bishops who flourished under the aegis of Walpole.

Despite the fact that Christianity—*soi disant*—was everywhere the official religion, the eighteenth century spirit represented a veritable triumph of Antichrist. In intellectual and polite circles, Christianity was less a belief than a convenience, an excellent expedient for keeping the lower class as well as their betters in their proper places. The Deist Collins admitted that he sent his servants to Church in order that he himself might be neither robbed nor murdered, and Gibbon was only slightly accentuating the opinion of his time when he laid it down that all religions were equally true in the eyes of the people, equally false in the eyes of the philosopher, and equally useful in the eyes of the magistrate. Christianity at its best was a creed of human brotherhood and of equality in the sight of God, and we have seen with what a very real democracy it informed the feudalism of the Middle Ages. The eighteenth century ideal was, more or less unconsciously, a reversion to paganism. In France, where it achieved its purest expression, a gulf was fixed between the aristocrat and the *canaille*, and even the *bourgeoisie*, as profound, spiritually, as that between the Greek citizen and the barbarian slave.

The privileged minority, which was all that counted in its own estimation, was aiming at the goal to which Aristotle had pointed, in so far as it existed in order to live well, though its conception of life's possibilities was anything but Grecian. Nature was, to the Greek, a thing to be developed and perfected; his very gods were transcendently human men, naked and unashamed. But to the exquisites of the eighteenth century, nature was the arch-enemy. Life was to be fashioned in accordance with an enlightened will, and the more consciously artificial it could be made, the more perfect it would become. Thus the eighteenth century had conceived of a conquest of life, a noble and necessary ideal in itself, but one which

it rendered impossible by the narrowness of its application and its perverse breach of continuity with nature.

When Louis XIV, after glancing at some pictures of Teniers, exclaimed: "*Enlevez moi ces grotesques!*" it was no blind Philistinism that impelled him. The spectacle of common people engaged in their common avocations really disgusted him as much as certain passages of Rabelais would disgust a modest woman of our own day. And Louis XIV was closer to reality than the men who came after him. His Versailles has a real if pompous dignity. The furniture of Boulle, though overloaded often with decoration, does not cease altogether to be furniture, like those Louis Quinze chairs whose distinguishing characteristic is "little ease", and those various articles of domestic uselessness whose motto might well be "*Noli me tangere*".[1] The delicious frivolity of Lancret's triflers in silk or Boucher's alabaster goddesses, the apple-green and Dubarry-rose vanities in Sèvres porcelain, the light jest with which even death is robbed of its sting and defeat of its disgrace—all these things testify to a life divorced and cut off from reality.

And there was cruelty in this trifling—the almost innocent insensibility to which the sufferings of those without the pale are as unreal as, and much less interesting than, things acted on the stage. France might starve without affecting one detail of the polite nothingness that was all in all to Versailles. One day a poor madman tried to stab Louis XV, and an afternoon's amusement was provided for the court by a programme of tortures, carefully arranged to correspond with those of Ravaillac, who had, long ago, murdered Henri IV. This afforded the ladies a touching opportunity of displaying the new humanity that was coming into fashion with the writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Four horses were at last attached to the prisoner—he proved tough, the whip had to be used, and the ladies exclaimed, "*Oh, les pauvres chevaux! Les pauvres chevaux!*"

We are aware that this is but the outward and most conspicuous aspect of the eighteenth century, and that the French noblesse displayed a thoroughness of artificiality that no less logical upper class could rival. But all over Europe, except where the Turk still maintained the rule of the Crescent against the Cross, it was the heyday of the privileged few, distinguished from the many over whom

[1] This aspect of Louis Quinze furniture has been dwelt on by March Phillipps in his *Works of Man*. This author, so far as I am aware, nowhere pointed out the significant contrast with English furniture.

they held sway by a sedulously inculcated convention of polite living. Outside the pale ignorance and brutality were rampant.

There are, of course, gaps in this exclusiveness, even in France. The eighteenth century was the golden age of the adventurer, the man with no principle save that of making a career by his brains. Such was Casanova, son of a Venetian actor, by turns gambler, *abbé*, scribbler, rake, and spy; such were those two arch-magicians, the obscure Italian and the Portuguese Jew who created themselves Counts Cagliostro and Saint Germain; such, in England, was Beau Nash, the uncrowned King of Bath, to whose behests the greatest in the land were fain to bow. And the eighteenth century, with that honour for individual talent which was one of its redeeming features, could find scope for the more enduring gifts of a Voltaire, a Diderot, a Johnson, a Reynolds. Its well-bred fastidiousness was at least more favourable to true genius than the indiscrimination of a twentieth century mob, debauched by cinema and journalese.

Thus it came about that the eighteenth century fostered the seeds of its own ruin. Voltaire, the acid of whose criticism prepared the whole structure of an artificial society for collapse, Rousseau, whose disciple in action was to be Robespierre, all the humanists of the new enlightenment, were alternately persecuted and fêted; despots competed for their friendship, to them the noblest threw open their doors. When the crash came, when the Bastille had fallen, the pink of the noblesse furnished some of the most liberal advocates of reform. Such men may not have known what they did, they may have played with ideas as children with new toys, but at least it cannot be charged against them or their age that they were insensitive to ideas.

The Spirit of the Laws

It is a comparatively easy task to appreciate the leading part played by France in the creation, and eventual overthrow, of that narrow and aristocratic social system by which the eighteenth century is most clearly distinguished. To describe the English attitude is a task of more difficulty, and to comprehend it in any clear cut generalization an impossibility. There is one sense in which England may be said to have succumbed, like the rest of Europe, to the spirit of the age. The polish of fashionable London and Bath may have been of somewhat inferior quality, but was not essentially

different from that of Versailles. Throughout the century the oligarchy, which the "Glorious Revolution" had put into power, was tightening its grip on the nation; Parliament was becoming less and less representative and more and more autocratic. It would be possible for a one-sided critic to consider the whole century as one of steady decline from the comparatively generous ideals of Locke and Somers to those of the Eldonian Tories, from the rude prosperity of roast beef and plum pudding to the sordid misery of the new factories and despoiled countryside.

But there is another and perhaps more vital sense in which we may consider England's part in the eighteenth century to have been one of unacknowledged but steady resistance to the prevailing spirit, and the struggle with France to have been one not only of fleets and armies, but of ideas. For something England possessed that France had never had, and never desired to have, that which from Plantagenet times supplies the distinctively English element of our history, and runs through it like a guiding thread. This, which had kept the rule of the Tudors in legal bounds and had proved too strong for Stuart Divine Right, now prevented what Disraeli knew as the Venetian Oligarchy from achieving a final triumph, and England from going the way of Venice. For even the eighteenth century was not strong enough to extinguish the tough spirit of the Common Law which is the life of the Constitution, that obstinate clinging not to abstract justice, but to concrete rights and liberties as by law established.

The Whig Revolution may be regarded with equal truth in the light of a triumph for oligarchy and that of a triumph for law. No one will be tempted, at this distance of time, to regard English law in the eighteenth century as a conspicuously rational or humane system. Indeed, there is sometimes a temptation to regard it as an engine of brutal tyranny. Parliament, which had now got the whole government of the country under its control, sought to bring the law into harmony with its interests by constant legislation. Where there was but the most rudimentary government staff, much had to be done by statute that would now be a matter of administrative routine, and eighteenth century statutes were both complex and verbose. Too often they were savagely biassed in favour of the class that enacted them.

Thus was built up a Draconic criminal code, directed especially to the protection of property, and denouncing the penalty of death where nowadays a short term of imprisonment would meet the

severest requirements of justice. Batches of victims, men and women, regularly provided public entertainment by their last agonies, and even as late as 1816, when Romilly was moving the third reading of his bill to abolish the death penalty for shoplifting beyond the value of five shillings, one poor little fellow of nine was under sentence of death for this very offence. On the other hand, the law evinced a toleration that might be thought sympathetic towards crimes of brutality and violence. The blackest injustice passed unrebuked and almost unnoticed. Innocent men, acquitted at their trial, might be consigned to a living death because they could not pay the fees demanded by the ruffians who had charge of the prisons. Debtors for comparatively small sums were herded sometimes with common criminals till death or even starvation put an end to their miseries. And the justices of the peace, who exercised an almost despotic sway in their counties, were frequently petty tyrants, ignorant of any law whatever, and chiefly concerned with keeping the poor in a state of due submissiveness to their betters.

In view of these facts, it may seem paradoxical to speak of the Common Law as being in any sense a bulwark of English liberties. And yet there is good reason for affirming that now, as in Tudor times, it was the law that alone stood between England and despotism, nay more, that the spirit by which it was informed was that which enabled England to expand beyond her petty limits into a Commonwealth of Nations the like of which the world had never yet seen.

It is no insignificant fact that during this century England began to get the reputation, even amongst other peoples, of a home fo ordered liberty. It is remarkable to what an extent the French humanists, who prepared the way for the Revolution, were influenced by English ideas. Against this tendency not even the animosity engendered by a great national struggle could prevail, and it was remarkable that when, in the middle of the century, France was suffering an unexampled series of defeats, intellectual circles in Paris were pervaded by a veritable Anglomania.

A young Frenchman, of humble birth and with the hyper-sensitive rebelliousness of spirit that is sometimes engendered in delicate children who grow up in mutual antipathy with their fathers, landed on our shores in the year 1726. The name by which he was to be known to posterity was Voltaire, and he came smarting under a sense of humiliating injustice. He had snubbed a young nobleman who had insulted him, for which he had been caned by that nobleman's

servants, and when he had had the impertinence to demand the satisfaction due to a gentleman, he had been clapped into the Bastille, without any pedantic nonsense about *Habeas Corpus*. When he had cooled his heels for six months, he was generously released, and told to clear out of Paris. Voltaire was too much of a Frenchman and too much imbued with the Latin tradition of administrative despotism, ever to sympathize with the stubborn individualism of English law and constitutional principles, but he could very keenly enjoy their effects, and appreciate the unwonted atmosphere of free speech and discussion in which he found himself.

Contrasting England with Rome, he observes that the fruit of civil war was slavery in the latter but liberty in the former. "The English nation," he says, "is the only one in the world that has managed to control the power of its Kings by resisting them, and which by repeated efforts has at last established that wise government where the prince, all-powerful for good, has his hands tied for evil; where the lords are great without insolence and without vassals; and where the people shares without confusion in the government." He adds yet higher praise, especially remarkable for that hard age, when he describes the English people as being not only jealous of their own liberties, but of those of others.

Voltaire is particularly struck by the just and equitable system of taxation in which everybody contributes according to his means, by the will of his elected representatives, and from which nobody is exempt. "The peasant," says Voltaire, who had seen a very different state of things in France, "has not his feet destroyed by wooden shoes, he eats white bread, he is well clothed, he has no fear of increasing the number of his stock nor of covering his roof with tiles, because his taxes would be raised next year."

This is high praise, and perhaps too rosy a picture, but Voltaire is one who is entitled to be listened to with respect, and his eulogy of English institutions is even surpassed by that of the witty and learned Montesquieu, who saw in our system of laws and government the ideal pattern for a free state, though he is careful to qualify this opinion by stipulating that it is to the theory and not necessarily the practical working that he refers. Montesquieu especially praises the separation of powers by which the executive, legislative, and judiciary bodies are kept independent, and a permanent check on each other. Any dabbler in Constitutional history is of course able to demonstrate that no such separation ever has existed or could exist in practice. But there is enough truth in Montesquieu's estimate

to give it value. The separation between executive and legislature had been a fact of the Constitution for two centuries until the Revolution, and the independence of the judiciary, if not so complete as Montesquieu thought it, was real enough to provide a strong bulwark for the liberty of the subject.

The clause in the Bill of Rights, by which judges were made practically irremovable, enormously strengthened the hands of the law not only against Kings, but against ministries. It enabled Chief Justice Pratt [1] to defeat such an act of administrative tyranny as the issue of general warrants. And it also contributed to the formidable power exercised by judges of so interpreting the endless new statutes as to weave them harmoniously into the general fabric of the Common Law.

An even more valuable privilege, and one especially valued by Englishmen, was the independence of juries. Bushell's case had settled once and for all the right of juries to return any verdict they chose, and though so great a legal authority as Lord Mansfield was inclined to restrict their privileges in the matter of libel, giving the jury the right only to decide on the fact of publication and not on the alleged libellous nature of what was written, public opinion was dead against him and his decision was eventually reversed by statute. The hanging power of judges was likewise curtailed by juries persistently declaring the value of goods stolen, irrespective of the facts, as less than the fatal five shillings. Blackstone was only voicing the feeling of all Englishmen when he referred to the right of trial by jury as "the most transcendant privilege that any subject can enjoy or wish for."

The third pillar of liberty, as by law established, was the subject's freedom from arbitrary imprisonment as secured by the writ of *Habeas Corpus*, a process that had been defined and strengthened during the brief Whig triumph in the reign of Charles II. How jealously this safeguard was cherished is shown by the debates in Parliament in 1758 on a Bill to extend the application of the writ to men impressed for the services, which was indeed thrown out on the advice of Lord Chancellor Hardwicke, but on the plea that the Bill as it stood was rather calculated to curtail than to advance the liberties of the subject.

It is evident that, with all its defects, the law was a very present bulwark of English liberties, and was a constant preventive of oligarchy from degenerating into sheer arbitrary despotism. The great

[1] Afterwards Lord Camden.

gild of lawyers possessed something of the power and independence that had belonged to the Church in the Middle Ages, and, like that Church, provided the easiest ladder by which a comparatively poor man, a Mansfield, an Eldon, a Thurlow, could rise to the highest dignity. The law might be honeycombed with abuses and clogged with delay, but it was at least the master of its own soul, and had a life and independence of its own. It was so little of a respecter of persons, that when Lord Ferrers brutally murdered his steward, his own peers, in spite of a very plausible defence on grounds of insanity, sent him to the gallows, and all his noble blood could not save him from the indignity of being dissected like any common footpad.

It is one of the paradoxes of this time that, despite every appearance to the contrary, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the great majority of Englishmen in their belief that they lived in a free country and under a constitution well-nigh perfect. Even fastidious aristocrats like Horace Walpole talk quite seriously about Whig principles of freedom, though posterity is rather tempted to talk of the Whig practice of corrupt oligarchy. The corruption and the oligarchy were all too genuine, but the freedom was genuine also, after its kind, and its citadel was the law.

Even at the height of the eighteenth century oligarchy, it produced some striking decisions in the English Lawcourts. It was Lord Northington who, reversing a previous decision by Lord Hardwicke, laid it down that as soon as a man sets foot on English ground he is free, and Lord Mansfield who declared the state of slavery to be so odious that nothing can support it but positive law. An even more remarkable decision of the same great lawyer was in the case of a Minorcan patriot who had sued General Mostyn, the English governor of the island, for damages, Noll Bluff, as the general was called, having taken upon himself to imprison and banish the poor man on the ground that patriotism, though admirable in an Englishman, would injure our commercial interests if it were encouraged in Minorcans. Lord Mansfield vindicated the principles of British justice, by ruling that an action for damages lay against this red-coated apostle of Empire.

The commons might be enclosed, the people degraded to pauperism and driven into factories worse than jails, but trial by jury and Habeas Corpus remained, or were only suspended as an avowedly temporary expedient, and in the darkest times of reaction the constitutional spirit of ordered liberty smouldered unquenched, with

hope for the future. And this strangely inconsistent spirit of liberty had an influence far beyond the land of its birth. It was the soul of the United States Constitution, it tempered and ennobled our rule in India, it gave its distinctive character to the British Commonwealth of Nations.

5

The Cultured Minority

The oligarchy of the eighteenth century was thus unable to conquer, however far it might drive below the surface, that which was most essential in the English spirit and Constitution. In spite of corruption, in spite of plunder, in spite of the steady depression of the poor man's status and prosperity, there is a fundamental difference between the elegant absentee landlords who courted the smiles of Pompadour and made it a point of honour to be past masters of court ceremonial, and the Whig aristocrats who wasted their sustenance in political intrigue and talked of the Bill of Rights and Magna Charta.

It is the comparatively small class, which constituted fashionable society in London and at Bath, which is most in the limelight at this time, and which reaped the richest fruits of the Revolution. It is they who set up a standard of culture modelled to a large extent on that of Versailles, who delighted in surroundings as elegant as their manners, whose patronage fostered the second great school of English portrait painting, and who built for themselves mansions of classical stateliness if not of classical chastity of proportion. Outside this class stretched the wide vista of the squirearchy, men who only came to town on occasional legal business and who remained to a large extent unaffected by urbane standards, and of the rich middle class who had scarcely, before the coming of the East India "nabobs", showed any notable disposition to break down the barriers of wealth and breeding.

If we want to realize what manner of folk were those who set the standard of taste and governed eighteenth century England, we should do well to visit the town in which their ideal of life is recorded for all time in fair, white stone. We refer, of course, to Bath, which was, so many centuries before, the fashionable centre of Roman Britain, and was only in the seventeenth century beginning to regain its old fame as a watering place, a large village of mean streets and villainous accommodation. It was Queen Anne whose patronage made Bath the centre of fashion it was to remain

throughout the eighteenth century, and the slopes that crowned the Avon were clothed with a new city fashioned by two architects of genius, the elder and younger Wood, and fostered by the generous enterprise of Ralph Allen, one of the best type of eighteenth century gentlemen, a man of business and a philanthropist, gifted in both capacities with something of the old Greek virtue of magnificence. Allen's beautifully placed mansion of Prior Park, the masterpiece of the elder Wood, with its conscious yet refined dignity of aspect, forms a fitting crown to the pride, pomp and circumstance that is Bath.

To walk about these streets and crescents and to surrender one's own spirit to their still living message, is to realize better than any history can teach, what the governing class aimed at, what it stood for, in the eighteenth century, and what it was that gave it an enduring quality that the French noblesse so conspicuously lacked. It is not an aspiring architecture, like Gothic, nor luxurious, like that of Venice in the decline, nor merely frivolous, like the Rue de Rivoli. There is in it something of aristocratic reserve and perhaps heaviness of imagination, that repels sympathy. The satisfaction it inspires is derived first and chiefly from its complete self-sufficiency, a confidence in its own strength and rightness that is too sure to be assertive. These lines and curves of buildings stand as firm on their foundations as the hill itself, with something, perhaps, of the old Roman *gravitas*. Men who could build thus may have had little poetry in their composition, and have been strangers to introspection, but they possessed a massive concentration of purpose that make the old baths of Aquae Sulis, recently discovered and to some extent restored, no inharmonious addition to the pleasure city of a later imperial race.

It is this impression that we everywhere derive from eighteenth century architecture before it loses its distinctive character under the softening influence of the Romantic movement. Everywhere we behold the same deliberate seriousness of purpose, the same feeling for the essentials of construction. It is not only to the mansions of the great that we have to go for proof of this. There is, significantly enough, practically no cottage architecture of the eighteenth century—the time was past when poor men could be provided with habitations possessing a soul of their own. But often, in some remote country parish, next to a Gothic church rich with the mingled aspirations of centuries, rises a four-square, red-brick parsonage, the very embodiment of comfortable, unpretentious worldliness,

Or walk with open eyes through some part of London, say Bloomsbury or Westminster, where it is still possible to study eighteenth century street architecture, and mark the same strength and the same almost stolid complacency.

The tradition of Wren lingered on, but Wren's delicacy of handling was no longer there. Indeed the almost religious cult of science for its own sake, the delight in the attainment of the maximum of result with the minimum of effort, which had fired the energies of the Royal Society, was dying down. The taste of the early Georgians was for massiveness; they delighted in bold, and even pompous effects. The man who carried this principle almost to the point of extravagance was Vanburgh, the designer of the Duke of Marlborough's Blenheim House, and for whom Pope composed the epitaph:

> "Lie heavy on him, earth: for he
> Laid many a heavy load on thee!"

Indeed it was the besetting sin of architecture, during the first half of the century, to run not only to weight but to pretentiousness, and this was aggravated by the too common tendency of noble amateurs to dictate to their servants the architects just what they should or should not do. As a result we get such petrified freaks as Mereworth Castle, in Kent, put up by Colin Campbell on the model of an Italian palazzo, admirably designed to shield the inmates from whatever rays of the winter sun might happen now and then to shine, and to keep the house cool and dark from the first September mists to the last spring frosts. That poor Campbell, when he had a free hand, could build well and truly, may be seen from the admirable parish church that he put up in the neighbouring village. But then the dignity of the Almighty was not a thing to be so strenuously insisted upon as that of the local lord.

James Gibbs, a Scotsman who studied in Italy, is the true successor of Wren, and indisputably the best of a group of fine architects. His masterpiece of ecclesiastical architecture, St. Martin's in the Fields, is a bold and aristocratic piece of work that looks scornfully on the mean little dome of the National Gallery beneath. Its massiveness is perhaps apt to lie a little heavy on the spirit and it is as innocent of religion as the pyramid which Wren's pupil, Hawksmoor, made instead of a steeple for St. George's, Bloomsbury, and crowned with the effigy of the far from saintly George I of England and Hanover. But to see the best of Gibbs's work it is necessary to go to one or other of the old Universities. The Radcliffe Library at Oxford, and, in a less ambitious style, the Fellows' Buildings in

King's College, Cambridge, show the eighteenth century spirit at its best, at once sincere and decorative.

It is in English furniture that the contrast between the English and French ideals is most plainly apparent. The English upper class loved to surround themselves with beautiful things, but they wished at the same time for something useful, for a visible adjustment of means to ends. It is only necessary to compare Chippendale furniture with what was being turned out at the same time for the Court of France. There is certainly a delicacy in Chippendale's work that was lacking in the somewhat ponderous Dutch style that came in with the Revolution; he lived long enough to experiment in sham Gothic; he tried his hand at every sort of style, but even at his most ornate he never ceased to be, first and foremost, an honest workman at his trade of cabinet maker—his furniture was for use first and for show afterwards.

About the men who ruled England at this time and set the standard of taste there is at least something of this spirit. Lord Chesterfield, who is sometimes taken to be the typical *flaneur* of society, and who introduced into our language the words *etiquette*, *friseur*, and *persiflage*, insisted on his son making himself acquainted with the politics of every country he passed through, and was himself a keen politician and an admirable Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Horace Walpole, that born trifler and dilettante, nevertheless followed every move of the political game, as the nine volumes of his memoirs are enough to show. As for Newcastle, he would have been a fool in whatever country he had happened to be born, but we may reasonably conjecture that a French Newcastle would have been an altogether different kind of fool, one whose fortune and petty ingenuity would have been devoted to ends infinitely more trivial than that of advancing and maintaining the Whig cause. Corruption, lack of sympathy, brutal insensitiveness to ideals were rife enough among the English magnates of the eighteenth century to bring England to the brink of ruin, but even at their worst, these men were not wholly out of touch with reality nor incapable of solid work for their country.

So remote are we from the point of view of these men and their age that we are sometimes apt to overlook a good deal of solid but uninspiring virtue. We see the brutality everywhere rampant, we note the general coldness of sentiment and religion, and are apt to forget that the period following the Revolution may be said to have witnessed the rebirth of organized philanthropy in England.

It was for the most part a patronizing and lukewarm attempt of a class consciously superior to improve the conditions of a lower kind of human animal with which it owned little in common. Some of it took a form too officiously tyrannical to be dignified with the name of grandmotherly. Numbers of worthy persons were ready to placate the Almighty by persecuting any unfortunate barber or publican caught violating the taboo that He was supposed to have placed on the first day of the week, or by whipping the Magdalenes with whom He had been pleased to associate on earth, until, in the genial formula of the time, " their backs were bloody." These most Christian censors were largely drawn from the commercial and even the shopkeeper class.

And yet we should be displaying hardly less intolerance were we to dismiss the whole of this singularly prosaic philanthropy as a mere sham. In the solid and deliberate fashion of the time much was accomplished. The charity schools, for which collections were levied at various praying societies that sprang up, gave a smattering of education—one designed to give the pupils just enough knowledge to make them useful to their future employers—but they were a move in the right direction. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, a genuine effort to cope with the prevailing irreligion, was incorporated in 1701. Subscriptions were constantly being raised to alleviate every known form of human misery, and " every hand is open to contribute something ". Between rival hospitals competition for funds was often acrimonious.[1]

The noblest monument of eighteenth century charity is the Foundlings' Hospital, which was conceived in the great heart of Captain Coram, the bluff, kindly sailor who could so wisely provide for the needs of others and yet was so careless of his own affairs as at last to be reduced himself to subsisting on charity. For this Hogarth, another kindly soul, whose very pencil became a rod to chastise cruelty, painted some of his best pictures, while Handel conducted concerts and contributed an organ. There were not a few gentlemen of like spirit with Captain Coram. Edward Colston, whose name is to this day honoured in his native city of Bristol, died, full of years and good works, in 1721, a high Churchman and a Tory of the narrowest school, a little touchy, perhaps, about his dignity, but a friend of man on the most munificent scale. Perhaps the most moving work of contemporary sculpture is his recumbent effigy by Rysbrack in All Saints' Church, the strong features suffused

[1] Dr. Johnson in *The Idler*, no. iv.

with a light of beautiful pity. We have only to mention the names of James Oglethorpe, who founded Georgia to provide a refuge for poor imprisoned debtors, of Ralph Allen, the "man of Bath", who was as lordly in giving as in building, of John Kyrle, the "Man of Ross" in Herefordshire, whose philanthropy Pope has immortalized, of philosophic Bishop Berkeley, with his plan for making Bermuda a centre of religion and learning, and of Doctor Johnson himself, the representative Englishman of the century, whose charity to the most unprepossessing objects was not the least heroic trait of an heroic nature. There is no commoner sight in an English parish church than a board recording the various legacies to charitable objects bequeathed by men and women of this most prosaic time in our history.

Take it for all in all, the first half of the eighteenth century witnessed a certain slight but perceptible refinement of manners, at any rate in the upper class. Two judgments from such keen observers as Goldsmith and Johnson show that they neither of them had any doubt on this point. Goldsmith, in his life of Beau Nash, casually remarks concerning that adventurer's feat of riding naked through a village on a cow, that this, which was then thought a harmless frolic, would now be looked upon with detestation, while Johnson, relating, though with incredulity, the story of a revolting joke practised by some young rakes on the corpse of Dryden, remarks, in his most authoritative style:

"Supposing this story true, we may remark that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this time, a young drunken lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he should be jostled out of the way and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into a house, he would be sent roughly away; and, what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe that those, who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for so small an accident, have withdrawn their contributions."

6

The Mob

Refinement and even civilization, below this upper crust of gentility, were sadly to seek. All accounts concur in depicting this as a time of considerable material prosperity and almost unqualified

spiritual degradation among the poorer class of the community. We hear abundant talk about roast beef and plum-pudding, about the free-born Englishman, particularly as contrasted with the half starved, frog-eating, "French dog."

Whatever else the lower class Englishman may have been, he was, at any rate in the towns, endowed with an almost aggressive independence. Even the servant wenches seem, if we may trust Swift and Defoe, to have displayed a spirit calculated to horrify a mistress of to-day, and the levy of tips, or "vails", as they were called, was a form of blackmail that was the terror of poor visitors to great houses. It is from Fielding, himself a magistrate, that we derive the most vivid information concerning the ways of the mob which he styles, not without reason, the fourth estate of the realm.

From this acute, though certainly not sympathetic critic, we derive an impression of popular manners which is borne out by abundant contemporary testimony, and not least by the pictorial satire of Hogarth. The average man of the people seems to have been a coarse and aggressive rough, with a strong sense of his own independence and rights as an Englishman.

"It is very usual," says Fielding, "when a carter or drayman is civilly desired to make a little room, by moving out of the middle of the road, either to the right or the left, to hear the following answer:—'D—— your eyes! who are you? Is not the road, and be d——d to you, as free to me as to you?'"

St. James's Park, on a Sunday evening, was, for some reason, considered by the people to be their exclusive pleasance, and woe betide the unfortunate lady of fashion who presumed so far to transgress mob law as to promenade therein! The bargees and watermen on the Thames were a peculiarly aggressive fraternity, a smartly dressed person being liable to a deluge of Billingsgate and even to be deliberately run down. It was a bargee who called forth from Johnson his immortal retort:

"Your mother, under pretence of keeping a bawdy house, is a receiver of stolen goods."

Another engaging habit of the mob consisted in insulting funerals, that of George III's mother being hailed with delighted huzzas, and the room in which Lord Baltimore had lain in state being sacked the moment the body was removed.

One of the most potent factors in the degradation of the common people was the steady deterioration in the quality of their drink. In the sixteenth century everybody, from the Queen to the peasant,

had drunk good, full-bodied ale, not only a drink but a food, a builder of strong bodies and healthy minds. The seventeenth century had seen this largely replaced by beer, a less sustaining and gloomier beverage, whose effect was less to exalt than to dull the five wits of the drinker. But it was only in the reign of George I that gin began to be distilled in sufficient quantities to be a common beverage, and the effects were disastrous. The concoction acted as sheer poison both to the body and the mind, and led to a fearful increase of crime and misery. In vain Parliament endeavoured to check the mischief. In 1736 an act was passed, in the teeth of Walpole's opposition, to strangle the distilling trade by prohibitive duties, but the people did not choose to obey it, and when they had thoroughly made up their minds on a subject, it was generally useless to legislate. The act was evaded, and by the middle of the century the figures of yearly consumption had reached the appalling total of eleven million gallons.

Nothing is more remarkable, in fact, than the general atmosphere of lawlessness in which free Britons of this time revelled. Such a thing as an effective police force had not come into existence, nor does it seem to have occurred even to the ruling oligarchs to create one. In an old print of Billingsgate we see a picture of a highwayman riding through the market waving in triumph a stolen jewel box. Indeed these worthies not infrequently might be seen riding about with their followers in the light of open day. The elaborate duties that were imposed under the Mercantile System were, to a large extent, evaded by organized smuggling, a trade which has acquired a certain posthumous halo of romance, but was really in the hands of ruffians who would stick at nothing in its pursuit. The fate of any unfortunate revenue officer or informer was frequently too horrible to contemplate. In one celebrated case two of these were entrapped at an inn, and were tortured to death—one of them after a confinement of some days—with a thoroughness worthy of Red Indians.

The brutality of the populace was, in fact, unrelieved by the least spark of human feeling. No amusement was so popular as that of watching an execution, and its piquancy was increased when the chaplain's last ministrations on the scaffold were accelerated by a shower of stones and mud. Before the Foundlings' Hospital was instituted, the spectacle of babies exposed to die in the streets was quite common, and only appeared extraordinary to so sensitive an observer as Captain Coram. To dumb animals the brutality

of man was something that even now we prefer not to think about, and we confess that our pleasure in turning over the leaves of a Hogarth is considerably marred by the fear of accidentally lighting on one horrible incident in the life of Tom Nero. Even Horace Walpole was revolted at a general massacre in 1760, under a panic fear of rabies, of the London dogs :

" One drives over nothing but poor dead dogs ! The dear, good-natured, honest, sensible creatures ! Christ ! how can anybody hurt them ? Nobody but those Cherokees the English, who desire no better than to be haloo'd to blood : One day, Admiral Byng, the next, Lord George Sackville, and to-day, the poor dogs ! "

Fielding was not exaggerating when he spoke of the mob as the fourth estate. The London mob, which had, for centuries, acted in an irregular way as the representative of English democracy, and had more than once succeeded in imposing its will on the constituted authorities, was still as formidable as ever. It was they who rallied to the support of Sacheverell, and fairly terrified the Whigs who wished to make an example of that singularly insignificant windbag ; it was they who called halt to Walpole at the height of his power, and even went so far as to molest him personally ; it was they who roared for the blood of Admiral Byng.

Disgruntled politicians appreciated the power of the fourth estate quite enough to see the advantage of stirring it up in their own interests. At the time of the Gin Act some Jacobite gentleman had the brilliant notion of distributing enough of the beverage to move the populace of London to rise against a dry and usurping government.

No one can fail to note the contrast between the power exercised by the mob during the reigns of the first two Georges, and its comparative impotence by the close of that of the third, when, in despite of misery and desperate resentment from end to end of the country, Castlereagh, Liverpool and their colleagues were easily able to suppress every attempt at a rising. The key to this problem is to be found in a sentence of Fielding's, which is remarkable for the clearness of its insight :

" There are two sorts of persons of whom this fourth estate do yet stand in some awe, and whom consequently, they have in great abhorrence : these are a justice of peace and a soldier."

It is, in fact, the red coat of the British regular soldier that has been the danger signal for King Mob. And that coat had come under an enduring suspicion since it had clothed the backs of the devout

gospellers who, under Cromwell's major-generals, had held the country under martial tyranny. The constant denunciations of standing armies, and exhortations to rely on the almost useless militia, sound strange enough in the mouths of the doughtiest patriots, and even of the elder Pitt at the beginning of his career. The poor regular, who had fought so gloriously under Marlborough and was to prove his worth at Fontenoy and Minden, was not in the most happy position. Treated like a slave, subjected to a ferocious and merciless discipline (though mild as judged by Russian or Prussian standards), he was the object of a good deal of obloquy among his fellow citizens. And such was the universal distrust of military tyranny that, in spite of the Riot Act, it was not till the reign of the third George that we have an instance of the troops firing on the people.

So that, for the greater part of the century, the Fourth Estate, as represented by the London mob, formed a powerful, though unrecognized check on the power of the oligarchy, as represented by Parliament. It cannot, however, be said that the use the people chose to make of this power showed them to have been in any way capable of governing themselves or the nation. There had been a time when they had been capable of enforcing a reasoned policy, as when they frightened Charles I into signing the death-warrant of Strafford, and gave their steady support to the Long Parliament until, in their Trained Bands, they turned out to the relief of Gloucester. But during the eighteenth century, their action—apart from that of the Lincoln mob who, in 1727, successfully rioted against the removal of the spires from the Western towers of their Cathedral[1]—was generally merely blind and brutal. Bigotry was one of their strongest passions, and the obsession of the Popish Plot had created an evil precedent. It was a sad fall from Pym and the Bible to Divine Right and Sacheverell, and thence to No Popery and Lord George Gordon. In 1753 there swept over the country an epidemic of the strange mental disease known as Anti-Semitism, the immediate cause of the outbreak being a modest Bill to permit the naturalization of Jews. Not in London only, but all over the country, people went mad with excitement and looking after dire things to come, and the Jews were in some strange way connected in the popular mind with the wooden shoes worn by the French peasants. "Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?" wrote one devout Christian, while others

[1] In 1808, the restorers did succeed in perpetrating this vandalism, apparently with unbroken heads.

demonstrated their devotion to their Master by ostentatious pork banquets.

Walpole was a particular *bête noire* of the mob. The opposition to his Excise scheme, though nominally a demand for a free breakfast table, was much more of a pro-smuggling agitation, and four years later Demos was almost as powerfully exercised at the prospect of losing his gin. The agitation for a war with Spain, which set all the London bells ringing, was the jingoism inspired by the prospect of loot and a weak enemy.

It was at the beginning of George III's reign that mob violence rose to a climax. Lecky has collected several instances of the kind of thing that was becoming normal among the brutalized and gin-sodden populace of London. The theatres at Covent Garden and Drury Lane were wrecked because of an attempt to raise the price of seats; the coalheavers, who were on strike, besieged a certain Captain Green in his house for nine hours, eighteen of them being killed, and though the Captain got away when he had exhausted his ammunition, his sister was shortly afterwards dragged out of her house and murdered; the Spitalfields weavers also on strike, who had had two of their number hanged for destroying the looms of blacklegs, amused themselves for about two hours by stoning the informer to death; men exposed in the pillory were on more than one occasion killed by the ill-usage to which they were exposed, while, in compensation, an attempt made to rescue a man sentenced for the agreeable crime of rape at least succeeded in delaying his execution till eight in the evening. And yet even as late as 1765, when the weavers, furious with the Upper House for rejecting a measure for the protection of silk, tried to terrorize the Peers, and even to storm the mansion of the great Duke of Bedford, the redcoats, though called out, did not venture to fire.

Matters came to a climax in 1768, the first time, curiously enough, for many years that the mob, by any stretch of imagination, may be said to have had some right upon its side. This was over the attempt of George III's ministers to persecute John Wilkes, a witty and fascinating scoundrel who, somewhat incongruously, was made to figure as a democratic hero. It was perhaps a sound instinct that made the mob overlook the character of the man, and see only a course of shameless tyranny, an attempt to strain the law to crush one whose real offence was that of having made himself obnoxious to the statesmen in power.

The Fourth Estate had every reason to resent the encroachments

of the other three, and the attempt to make Parliament what it was fast becoming, an assembly dominated by a handful of magnates, sitting in secret and so averse from the influence of public opinion that it refused even to allow its debates to be published. Wilkes had published in his paper, *The North Briton*, a criticism of the King's Speech, or rather, the official manifesto of his ministers which the King had to read. Thereafter every means, fair or foul, were employed by the government to smash Wilkes.

A crack shot named Martin was put up to kill him in a duel, and all but succeeded. Wilkes fled to the Continent, was outlawed, but came back after five years as game as ever, to stand first for the City of London, for which he was rejected, and then for the county of Middlesex, for which he was repeatedly elected, and repeatedly thrown out of Parliament in defiance of the electors' will. Lord Sandwich, the arch lecher of his day, compared with whom Wilkes was a Galahad, now had the impudence to rake up some smutty production of his old bottle-mate's private press in order to get him laid by the heels for obscene and impious libel.

The judges throughout this crisis acted with an independence characteristic of the English Bar. Pratt, who decided on the illegality of General Warrants issued by ministers, and Mansfield, who reversed Wilkes's outlawry on a technical point, but sentenced him to twenty-two months' imprisonment and a fine for seditious libel and blasphemy, appear to have acted neither in the interests of ministers nor in fear of the mob, but with an honest desire to interpret the law as they understood it. Indeed Mansfield, a naturally timid man, when the mob surrounded his court shouting for Wilkes and liberty, broke off in the midst of his decision to make one of the noblest declarations of judicial independence of which we have any record :

"None of us . . . had anything to do with the present prosecution. It is not in our power to stop it, it was not in our power to bring it on. We cannot pardon. We are to say what we take the law to be. If we do not speak our real opinion, we prevaricate with our own conscience."

But the mob's point of view was different. At the best of times, respect for the letter of the law was not their strong point—they only saw the fact of tyranny. For two days London was on the verge of revolution. Houses of various unpopular magnates were attacked, members of Parliament mobbed, the windows of the Mansion House smashed. But the government had its back against the wall and was, at long last, determined to use the redcoats against the people.

The Riot Act was read, and a whiff of musket shot settled the accounts of some half dozen rioters and wounded more. A young man, believed to be innocent, was killed by a Scottish soldier who had pursued into a house some one else who had been pelting him with brickbats. The decisive step had been taken, and for awhile the result was in doubt. The indignation of the populace was at boiling pitch, the very loyalty of the troops was doubtful; Mansfield was talking of a revolution within ten days unless something firm were done. But the government and military had decided once and for all to stand no more nonsense from mobs. The Scottish soldier, when acquitted of murder by a jury, was presented by his colonel with thirty guineas on behalf of the government, and a general order was issued by the Secretary of War thanking the soldiers, and promising them protection on any future occasion of a similar kind.[1]

The spell was now broken which had withheld the government from employing powder and ball against rioters, and the power of the Fourth Estate, as represented by the London mob, was fatally impaired. It was, however, necessary by one terrible example to prove how completely the tables had been turned since the days of Walpole's Excise Bill. This time it was not liberty that the mob came out to uphold, but the most degraded intolerance. An act had been passed to relieve the Catholics from some of the petty persecutions from which they had suffered so long. This was enough to unchain the blackest devils of Protestant fanaticism, and in 1780 a riot took place more terrible than any that London had witnessed for centuries. To such heights did the piety of the mob rise that they burnt down Newgate and let loose all the criminals, and amid other acts of violence they burnt the furniture, pictures, library and priceless manuscripts of Lord Mansfield, who was known to have done justice on behalf of a Catholic some time previously. After some days of terror, the authorities took decisive action; a sufficient force of troops arrived on the scene and shot down the rioters right and left. There were at least 450 killed and wounded, and the power of the mob was broken, only to revive on the eve of the first Reform Bill.

7

Rule Britannia!

Whatever defects our own more sensitive intelligences may discover in the eighteenth century, it was a time when the majority

[1] See Lecky, *England In The Eighteenth Century*, vol. iv, pp. 319–322.

of Englishmen were profoundly satisfied with themselves and their country. Never had there been so much talk and cant of patriotism, and its shameless abuse led Doctor Johnson, himself the most sturdy of patriots, to describe patriotism as the last resort of a scoundrel. The Duke of Marlborough's victories had confirmed John Bull's belief in his own superiority to foreigners in general and to Frenchmen in particular. It was, indeed, no uncommon experience for a Frenchman to be insulted in the streets on account of his nationality, and then challenged to fight if he showed the least resentment. The rude prosperity of the English lower classes was contrasted with the poverty and frog-eating that were supposed to prevail the other side of the Channel. Even Hogarth, who was well enough acquainted with the seamy side of English life, contrasts the burly and well-fed appearance of the English soldiers with that of the half-starved scarecrows who dare to think of invading our shores.

The state system of Europe during the eighteenth century was scarcely calculated to inspire any very exalted ideal of patriotism. Most of the Continental states were centralized despotisms whose sovereigns used them as pieces in a game of chicanery. To remove a neighbour's landmark, or to score an advantage over him by any means, fair or foul, was the object of the tortuous diplomacy, of the ever-shifting alliances, that figure so largely in the history of this time. Seldom had European politics been less the expression of any general or constant national aspirations; the horrors of war would be let loose to provide comfortable principalities for the relations of a strong-minded queen or to avenge a too ungallant innuendo about a harlot. When the states were not openly at war, they were engaged in a commercial struggle which was regarded by all concerned as an international beggar-my-neighbour.

It is not surprising, under these circumstances, that the swelling and boisterous patriotism of early Georgian times has bequeathed little of literary value. This was certainly not due to any lack of goodwill on the part of authors. They waxed lyrical on the slightest provocation, they were never tired of asserting the monopoly of Britannia in the rule of the waves, they could dissolve in raptures about triumphs that nowadays are considered more fit for blue-books than anthologies. Young, the somewhat depressing author of *Night Thoughts*, was prolific of economic ecstasies, and the return of George II to England in 1729 moved him to a long poem entitled *The Merchant*, consisting of a Prelude, five Strains, a Moral, a Close, and a Chorus, all in honour of trade and the House of Hanover. He becomes

positively breathless at the combination of two such inspiring themes:

> "Trade, Britain's all, our sires sent down
> With toil, blood, treasure, ages won,"

is his interpretation of our history, and he continues:

> "Swear, by the great Eliza's soul
> That trade, as long as waters roll—
> Ah! no; the gods chastise my rash decree:
> By great Eliza do not swear;
> For thee, O George, the gods declare:
> And thou for them. Late times shall swear by thee!"

One or two patriotic songs have, however, achieved immortality, doubtless by virtue of the full-blooded assurance that accompanied their eighteenth century lack of introspection. *Rule Britannia* and *God Save the King* are both products of this time, and we have *The Roast Beef of old England*, and—to celebrate the "wonderful" year, 1759—*Hearts of Oak*. They will always awaken an echo in the breasts of those who like their patriotism ready-made and egotistic, without any nice intellectual or moral qualifications. England is the greatest and richest and most powerful nation in the world, the mere fact of belonging to her gives us a comfortable superiority over outsiders of less fortunate nations, and as she is always in the right the question of my country right or wrong does not arise. The patriot is the man who merges his individual in a collective egotism, who cultivates a Catonic virtue in order that his country may rob, profiteer and swindle by his aid with the better success.

This was undoubtedly the rule of English patriotism, but it must be conceded that even at its beefiest and most thick-skinned, the age was capable of producing noble exceptions. Bolingbroke himself, whose intellect was capable of apprehending that which his conduct too frequently belied, laid it down that patriotism should be founded on great principles and supported by great virtues, and that he who would live for his country must identify himself with his country's highest ideal. This, to Bolingbroke's mind, is the maintenance of liberty, and though it is no doubt his immediate object to get even with Walpole and the Whigs, Bolingbroke is taking his stand for the principle the neglect of which was to lose us America. A more respectable authority is Bishop Berkeley, who, in a series of noble aphorisms, shows that before a man has any right to call himself a patriot he must first be good, that patriotism is, in fact, as high and holy a thing as religion itself.

One of the most notable features of this age is the practically

unanimous way in which its more sensitive spirits, born out of due time, react against it. If to the average man all was for the best in the best of all possible Englands, to a minority—say—of one in a myriad the age was everything that was bad. And as this minority comprised the most sensitive and eloquent spirits of the time, it became vocal in a continuous stream of Jeremiad and lamentation over the degeneracy of the times. Sometimes this attitude is implied rather than expressed by a thick and dogged gloom such as luxuriates in the atmosphere of Young's *Night Thoughts* and Blair's *Grave*. Sometimes it expresses itself in the form of satire and denunciation, of which Pope set the example in his *Moral Essays*. So long as Walpole remained in power, it was the fashion to load all the sins of the time on to his ample shoulders, but things seemed to be improved very little by his fall.

It is, of course, by no means inconsistent with the most fiery Jingoism to abuse and blackguard the whole mass of one's countrymen by way of demonstrating one's affection for one's country. The cry of degenerate England was raised by none more lustily than the patriots who were trying to push England over the brink of a foolish war with Spain on behalf of Captain Jenkins and the smugglers. Poets who laid about them furiously at the expense of Spain could not refrain from landing one or two blows of the tomahawk on the tough pate of John Bull, for the good of his soul.

Apart from this merely conventional stuff, there is sufficient evidence that in the opinion of those most competent to judge, all was not well with England. The philosophers Hartley and Berkeley are both agreed as to the lowering of ethical standards and the decay of virtue constituting the gravest of all possible dangers. To Fielding, the successes of the Highlanders in the "forty-five" seemed like a direct judgment upon English wickedness. And it is evident that Hogarth had eyes almost exclusively for the vice and brutality he saw around him, the feeling that we get from his pictures being usually one of profound relief that we were born into any age and country rather than eighteenth century England.

All these discontents with the times find concentrated utterance in the "inestimable Estimate", as Cowper sarcastically called it, of a literary clergyman named John Brown. This Estimate, which created something of a sensation on its appearance, has since been dismissed with an unjustly summary contempt because Brown wrote it in the opening year of the Seven Years' War, in which Britain was to gain such splendid success. The book is, however, despite

one or two eccentricities, on the whole an interesting and not unbalanced criticism which touches on genuine faults, and is so far from unrelieved denunciation as to make generous allowance for our still remaining virtues, the most important being that self-same love of liberty, to foster which, Brown, like Bolingbroke, would have the patriot devote all his dearest energies. "In the reign of James II," he says, with a fine grasp of essentials, "Great Britain was free, though a despotic prince was on the throne. At the time when Caesar fell, Rome was still enslaved, though the tyrant was no more."

What troubled Brown about the condition of England was no more than had attracted the attention of more famous and considerable men before him—the irreligion and materialism that were everywhere rampant, the artificial effeminacy of upper-class manners that we had picked up from Versailles, and the selfishness and corruption that were sapping the vital energy of the nation. These were real dangers, and the triumph over France, which was even more affected by them, did not end them, nor prevent them from bringing England to dire disaster some fifteen years later.

8

Chatham and Victory

The long and prosperous peace which (leaving out of account one or two minor contentions) England had enjoyed under the House of Hanover, had produced the usual effect of such mercies on an unblooded generation in the shape of a vague desire for excitement and carnage, preferably at the expense of an opulent and weak neighbour. Such an ideal opponent the patriots had discovered in Spain, a pompous old dotard—so it seemed—among nations, who had only to be knocked down with all possible heroism in order that we might run licensed hands through his pockets. This hopeful plan was frustrated less through any recovered prowess of Spain, than through our own muddling, corruption, and unpreparedness. The war did indeed start with the capture of a Central American trading centre by a political Admiral, a feat which is still commemorated in Portobello and Admiral Vernon inns, but an attempt to repeat the performance at Carthagena ended in half the expedition dying of fever, and the incompetence of the "brave and happy Vernon" being demonstrated to the world. The war dragged on for some years after this, but the heart had gone out of it, and nothing of much interest occurred beyond Admiral Anson's voyage round the world.

A more formidable opponent than Spain had to be reckoned with, and it must have been obvious that, with English and French ambitions clashing all over the world, these powers, in an age when great issues were decided not by reason but by force, would sooner or later come to fighting it out. Both in the East and the West, France was making a powerful bid for Empire. The Peace of Utrecht, in spite of England's territorial gains, had left matters undecided in North America, and, ever since, the French had been making headway. Hopelessly out-numbered as they were, they had yet the advantage over our disunited and often disloyal colonists, in intelligent direction and the discipline, almost, of a military garrison. The French colonies had, in fact, the pick of the gentry, men who preferred to get away from the enervating atmosphere of the court, and strike out a line for themselves and France in a world of reality. The same thing happened in India, where the showy and pushing bourgeois governor, Dupleix, re-discovered a secret which had long ago flashed on the mind of his compatriot Bernier, who had practised medicine at the Mogul court, namely, that the mastery of India might go to him who first introduced Indian troops to European discipline.

While England was making vain attempts to plunder the decrepit Spanish Empire, a confused, shifting, and unprincipled war had broken out among the Continental sovereigns owing to the fact that France and Prussia, both of which had solemnly guaranteed the intact succession of the Austrian domains to the girl queen, Maria Theresa, lost no time in taking advantage of her youth and sex to scramble for their plunder. Into this war England eventually drifted, and found herself once again face to face with her old adversary, France. But such mighty protagonists as *Le Roi Soleil*, Villars, Marlborough and Eugene were no longer to be found, and indeed the one combatant who knew just what he wanted and was desperately in earnest, was the sinister Frederick the Great of Prussia, who, now on one side, now on the other, fought and plotted for every inch of land that by fair means or foul he could add to his dominions.

This War of the Austrian Succession, as far as England and France were concerned, amounted to little better than marking time ankle deep in blood. Neither at home nor in distant seas was either combatant capable of striking a decisive blow. From the very first, it ought to have been apparent that England had a winning advantage, could she but devote her whole energies to using it. France neither could nor would devote her main attention to expansion overseas. She faced on two fronts at once, and while her right hand wielded

the sword against her Continental foes, she had only her left free to grasp the trident. On the other hand, in spite of all the safeguards devised against such a contingency, our German King's Electorate of Hanover was like a millstone round our necks, and laid upon us a moral obligation to divert resources to its defence.

This necessity of defending Hanover came within an ace of involving us in disaster. Lord Carteret, subsequently Lord Granville, who held the reins of power for a brief period, was a brilliant amateur diplomatist who won the King's heart by being an out and out pro-Hanoverian. As a result of his schemes, a mixed Anglo-Dutch-German army, commanded by Lord Stair, and accompanied by George II and Carteret, attempted to bring off a strategical coup by dividing a French army in Bavaria from one marching to its support. As a result, the whole force was pinned and surrounded in the valley of the Neckar, and if the French Generals had understood their business, would have been destroyed. As it was, the allies succeeded in fighting their way out and getting clear away, abandoning their wounded, in what was known as the victory of Dettingen.

The war then settled down on orthodox lines in Flanders, and the French, having found a commander of genius in Maréchal de Saxe, gradually made good their hold on the country. They were assisted by a strange and romantic diversion, when Charles Edward Stuart, grandson of James II, landed in the Scottish Highlands and roused a certain proportion of the clans to fight for him. With a mere handful of wild Highlanders he occupied the town, but not the castle of Edinburgh, destroyed in ten minutes the scratch force of recruits that was all that could be brought against him, and dashed Southward by the Carlisle-Lancashire route as far as Derby. It was the romance, almost, of a fairy tale, seen for a moment against the sordid background of the pudding age—the Highlanders, whose dervish rush could strike panic into hard-bitten English veterans, were gentlemen in a sense that few of the old knights errant had been. As they went by, the people lined the roads without fear to watch the unaccustomed show, nor did the Highlanders offer them harm. The end was inevitable; Charles Edward's undisciplined generals refused him the one slender chance he had of rushing London; English veterans were hurried back from Flanders, and the clans were followed up North and shot to pieces at Culloden. The rebellion was drowned in blood and the Highland menace removed once and for all. But the French, to whom Charles Edward had been a mere pawn in their

Flanders game, had secured their object by getting the British regiments sent from Flanders to Scotland.

Elsewhere the war ran an inglorious and indecisive course. An invasion of a nearly undefended England was defeated by a Channel gale; in the Mediterranean our chance of smashing the Toulon fleet was lost by the insubordination, or worse, of the second-in-command and certain captains, and the man to be cashiered was the unfortunate Admiral, who had contrived to fall foul of the politicians. In India the French turned us out of Madras, and in Canada we seized their fortress and naval base of Louisberg on Cap Breton Island at the mouth of the St. Lawrence. An inconclusive peace with France and Spain brought matters back to much the point they were before the war, the French, with amazing ineptitude, letting slip from their grasp the rich prize of Flanders.

The next round could not be long delayed and, indeed, the muskets and scalping knives got busy in North America without any formality of declaration. This time France was not only fighting for her Empire, but shortly became involved in an alliance with Austria, Russia, and the minor German states, to crush, once and for all, the power of Frederick the Great, who, with a morality not markedly inferior to that of his neighbours, was imparting an element of inconvenient reality into the finesse and artifice of international politics. England found herself committed to the support of this seemingly doomed ally, who yet, in spite of overwhelming odds and overwhelming disasters, managed to hold his own against a Continent in arms and maintain, to the last, his ill-gotten gain of Silesia.

Even in the few years since the last peace the French aristocracy had been going down-hill, and Versailles had touched its nadir of glittering degeneracy. How far this decline had gone was shown when the main French army in Germany ran like hares before a third of their number of Prussians, a disaster which, as Napoleon quite correctly divined, sealed the fate of the Bourbons among a people enamoured of glory. But at the beginning of the war it was an open question whether England herself, with the egregious Newcastle at the head of the ministry, was much better off than her adversary. Readers of Brown's *Estimate* must, as one disaster after another was recorded, have asked themselves whether after all the gloomy parson had not understated the case. Our naval base at Minorca fell at the beginning of the war, and the Admiral of the Mediterranean Fleet, Byng, a selfish and spiritless officer who had tamely thrown up the attempt to relieve it after the pretence of an action at long range,

was justly and properly condemned to be shot on his own quarter deck,[1] though the indecent eagerness of ministers, who ought to have joined him, to use him as a scapegoat, has ever since put a certain amount of sympathy on his side. In America the French, perfectly united and gallantly led, started by getting the best of it in spite of their inferior numbers. To crown it all, the army which, under that royal and bloated butcher, the Duke of Cumberland, was defending Hanover and covering the flank of our ally, collapsed, and, to the infinite indignation of Cumberland's peppery little uncle, George II, concluded a shameful capitulation at Closterseven, which seemed to extinguish the last faint spark of hope for Frederick.

The change of success that followed is one of the most dramatic in history, the more so because, in so far as the expression can ever be used with propriety, it appears to have been the work of one man. The character of William Pitt, subsequently first Earl of Chatham, is one that, like that of Cromwell, has always proved a subject of contention for historians, every one of whom, in so far as he produces an intelligible portrait at all, throws on the canvas such a Chatham as his spirit is capable of conceiving. There is, unfortunately, an unconscious desire in the breasts of ordinary mortals to bring to a common denomination with their own those few exceptional spirits, sympathy with whom would demand a painful elevation of mind, and who are apt to suggest a subconscious echo of Iago's,

> "There is a daily beauty in his life
> That makes mine ugly."

Thus a biographer's account of a base or commonplace Chatham or Cromwell may tell us less of the biographee than of the biographer.

There is certainly something about Chatham's personality to which, however little we like the word, no expression applies quite so well as "miraculous". A power seems to have emanated from him whose effects we could hardly have believed possible, were they not on the most circumstantial prosaic record. A corrupt and Philistine House of Commons trembled beneath his glance. One member, a Colonel, once got up to attack him as he was walking out of the House. Pitt, as he then was, turned round and looked at him. The Colonel hesitated, stammered, and sat down. On another occasion some

[1] The Articles of War had been stiffened up. There had been too many incidents in the last war like that of Captain Savage Mostyn, who had been hooted out of Portsmouth dockyard for refusing to engage the enemy, and subsequently jobbed into the Comptrollership of the Navy. Nothing of this sort happened after the example that was made of Byng, which did, in the most literal sense, encourage the others.

member laughed on Pitt's beginning a speech with the word " sugar ". Pitt slowly repeated the word three times, and then asked if anybody dared laugh at sugar now. It is more than probable that if any other member, at any period of the Commons' history, had tried a similar method of disposing of a laugh, the whole House would have been in uncontrollable agonies for the next five minutes. As it was, no one stirred, the humour having quite departed from sugar.

The secret of Chatham's personality is, we believe, to be found in his face, which, once beheld in portrait or marble, stamps itself unforgettably on the mind. The chiselled, hawk-like features, the enormous nose, the deep-set, glowing eyes, all bespeak a nature in which the will and vital energy are abnormally developed. Such natures are tormented by a superabundance of power for which no ordinary circumstances ever give them scope—it is like a fire which, if it does not burn up the world, must burn themselves. But we must not scan them too closely for moral scruples or intellectual consistency. It is only in books that the hero finds the straight path open to genius; in actual life he is, more often than not, presented with the choice of flickering out virtuously or making some sort of a moral compromise. The choice is seldom a conscious one.

The young Pitt, like Napoleon, started his career with all the odds against him. He had neither birth nor riches at a time when these were all in all to the aspiring statesman. His one chance was to attach himself to the group of young patriots who were beginning to make a stir by baiting Walpole. Between these two men, the phlegmatic, humorous old cynic, and the glowing young idealist, there was a natural antipathy that was bound to find expression. Walpole's policy of peaceful and prosaic commonsense seemed to Pitt nothing less than treason, and, as for Walpole, he was capable of paying a compliment to the power of this noisy young man by growling, as he deprived him of his commission, " we must muzzle this terrible cornet of horse."

The cornet of horse had yet twenty years of strenuous endeavour before his genius found that scope to which he instinctively felt it to be entitled. During all these years he was involved, to a greater or less extent, in the sordid maze of political intrigue, out of which he emerged, in spite of unworthy connections and occasional lapses from consistency, wisdom and common fairness, with hands surprisingly clean and honour unsullied. That he, a poor man, should scorn to accept the lucrative and recognized perquisites of his office of paymaster of the forces was, by the standards of the time, an almost

quixotic gesture of political purity. For the love of country, which with too many of his associates was merely a convenient cant, was with him a religion. He lavished on England all the passion of which his mighty nature was capable; as some men delight in loading their brides with costly jewels, so did he desire to see England adorned with splendid possessions and opulent with the fruits of trade. To express the greatness of his devotion he strains the resources even of *his* eloquence.

Chatham was a Whig; for the dry pages of Locke he cherished a reverence which is surprising in a man of his ardent temperament. But unlike the peers and placemen to whom Whiggism was a means to patronage and class-ascendancy, Chatham's imagination was capable of realizing the element of democracy that was latent therein. Without the slightest leaning towards social reform, he was yet capable of courting and capturing the support of the people, and this at a time when Parliament was tending more and more to become a class oligarchy. For his patriotism was not of that imperfect but all too common order that limits its aim to the mere externals of wealth and dominion. He loved England not only for what she achieved, but for what she was. It is true that every political hack had abundance of lip-service to the Constitution and liberty, but to Chatham the Constitution was a priceless heritage of ancestral wisdom, whose very soul was liberty.

He had little patience with the legal subtlety that would have dwelt merely on the forms of that Constitution, and gradually stifled the reality. He may have had no more historical knowledge of Magna Charta than the rest of his contemporaries; it was to him a sublime myth and John's barons as much the creatures of imagination as the traditional St. George. But he was speaking the very language of the Constitution when he said of them in one of his great speeches in the House of Lords: "when they obtained from their sovereign that great acknowledgement of National rights contained in the Magna Charta, they did not confine it to themselves alone, but delivered it as a common blessing to the whole people. They did not say 'these are the rights of the great barons' or 'these are the rights of the great prelates' . . . No, my lords, they said, in the simple Latin of the times, *nullus liber homo*, and provided as carefully for the meanest subject as for the greatest. These are uncouth words, and sound but poorly in the ears of scholars, neither are they addressed to the criticism of scholars, but to the hearts of free men."

Chatham has been described by his latest biographer as an opportunist. This is a vague and facile word, and may find some superficial colour in his compromises with Newcastle or his dealings with George II's mistress, efforts at all costs to find scope for his genius in the service of his country. But there was never a statesman who in all essentials was more thoroughly a man of principle. The doctrines of the Whig Revolution, which he had imbibed in his boyhood, were his guide throughout life, and he only differed from his contemporaries in treating them as living principles, capable of unlimited development. Never did he lose sight of the fact that the social compact is made by the people and for the people, that the Constitution is made for the whole body of free men and not they for the Constitution. Hence he was always looking beyond the walls of Parliament to the people themselves, as the substance of which even the Commons themselves were, or ought to be, the shadow.

"What, my lords, are all the generous efforts of our ancestors . . . reduced to this conclusion, that instead of the arbitrary power of the King we must submit to the arbitrary power of the House of Commons? . . . Tyranny my lords is detestable in every shape, but in none so formidable as where it is assumed and exercised by a number of tyrants. But, my lords, this is not the fact, this is not the Constitution."

Long before the words were uttered, the people had discovered in William Pitt the man of their choice, and under the wand of his magic influence, succeeded for once in asserting the power that was slipping from their hands. When things were at their blackest at the beginning of the Seven Years' War, they insisted on having Pitt, although the King, not without some just cause, detested him, and his fellow politicians had little use for an upstart who was not prepared to play the game according to the rules. But when his first brief ministry was wrecked by a combination of wirepullers, an outcry went up for his recall that neither King nor Parliament could withstand. "It rained gold boxes," conferring the freedom of city after city on the popular hero. And so Pitt, though he was forced to make terms with corruption by turning over the dirty work of his government to Newcastle, got the chance he had confidently awaited of saving the country.

The titanic energy that was the driving force of his career was by no means inconsistent with the most minute application to points of detail. He had, in fact, studied for years every problem with which

he now had to deal, and his correspondence shows the care and balanced judgment which he brought to bear even on the minor tasks of his administration. But the magic of his personality was all the more potent for the exactness and economy of its application. The nation, sunk in apathy and, as some had plausibly maintained, in degeneracy, roused itself as a strong man out of sleep. From being unable to defend its own possessions or support its ally, it had found the secret of victory, and began to rain a succession of knock-down blows on its amazed and almost paralysed adversary. The very generals and admirals seemed to take fire from Pitt's genius and, indeed, there is one most significant story of how this extraordinary man's presence was capable of producing an exhilaration almost akin to drunkenness. It was when the young Wolfe, one of Pitt's happiest selections, went to dine with the minister before going out to take up his command of our forces on the St. Lawrence. Though Wolfe had been strictly abstemious during the meal, after it he amazed even his host by flourishing his sword and walking about the room calling himself Hannibal and Caesar. And yet Wolfe was one of the most brilliant and accomplished men of his time.

With such furious yet forethoughtful energy was the war carried on, that two years after the darkest hour of Cumberland's Closter-seven surrender, the bonfires were blazing, night after night, for the most astonishing series of victories recorded in our history. Pitt's plan was, in its outlines, simple. It was to exhaust all the energies of France on the Continent, and while she was bleeding to death, to annihilate her sea communications, and fall with overwhelming force on her isolated garrisons overseas. Very cleverly did he, once the opponent of any Hanoverian adventure, contrive, with the expenditure of comparatively small British forces, to keep the French busy in Western Germany, and at the same time to immobilize as many enemy troops as possible by striking now at one point, now at another, of the French seaboard. Hawke and Boscawen successfully accomplished the naval part of the programme, the former dashing after the French fleet through a gale and uncharted rocks with a light-hearted gallantry that had suddenly become natural to English commanders.

The fate of the French overseas, cut off from the possibility of reinforcements, and attacked with the relentless energy that England was now putting into all her operations, was inevitable. The Marquis de Montcalm, as fearless and reproachless a gentleman as ever fought under the lilies of France, put up a heroic resistance, but the odds were

now overwhelming, and he met his equal in Wolfe. The French Dominion of North America, which had threatened to pin the English colonies to the strip of land between the Alleghanies and the coast, was wiped off the map. Her African and island settlements it was easy to capture. And in India John Company had discovered, in Robert Clive, a genius scarcely inferior to that of Chatham himself. Here, also, England swept the board, and not only did we end the war with the Company an Indian power and masters of the rich province of Bengal, but we so defeated the French, capturing their main stronghold at Pondicherry, that they ceased henceforth to count seriously in Indian politics, though they were allowed to retain a few unfortified factories, and by no means relinquished their ambitions.

Spain came into the war, only to receive a rude lesson in the difference between the England of Walpole and that of Pitt. Pitt would have anticipated her by destroying the treasure fleet, and it was the refusal of the Cabinet to support him in this step that led to his resignation. But the impetus he had given to our national energies outlasted his removal, and Manila in the East and Havana in the West were rapidly added to the list of British conquests. But by this time England was getting tired of war, surfeited even with glory. Pitt's expenditure of the nation's money was on the same grandiose scale as his military operations, and people marked with alarm the unprecedented figures of the national debt, and the fast and furious rate at which they were increasing. So that the peace, concluded by Lord Bute's incompetent administration, though it left England on a towering and even dangerous pinnacle of glory, let off both our enemies more lightly than either had any right to expect, France retaining her fishing rights on the Newfoundland coast, her foothold in the West Indies, and some factories in India. But in North America and India the hands of England were free from serious rivalry by European powers. The boasts about Britannia ruling the waves had come true ; neither in the East not in the West had any rival been able to stand up to her. She had become not only an imperial power, but, *par excellence*, *the* imperial power. It remained to be seen what she would make of these opportunities.

9

Feet of Clay

There was little in the record or spirit of eighteenth century England to show any measure of fitness for the vast responsibilities

of a world-wide Empire. Deep down in her soul, it is true, glowed or smouldered that spirit of liberty which was ultimately to become the life and justification of her rule, but the heavy frost of eighteenth century materialism had fallen upon it and overlaid it with a hard crust of selfishness. Even from the great mind of Chatham the old Adam of materialism was not quite expelled; wholly devoted as he was to England's greatness, and sensible as he was of her traditions of free government, he does not seem to have thought out thoroughly the problem of what the Empire ought to stand for in regard to other nations and to subject peoples. As far as the Anglo-Saxon stock was concerned, he desired to see a great and prosperous people, governed on Whig principles interpreted in so generous a sense as to make them better fitted to the name "liberal". The British Isles he desired to knit in bonds of sympathy; he pushed forward the scheme, first suggested by the Duke of Argyll, of converting Highlanders from rebels and raiders into the loyal soldiers of King George, and if he did nothing to strike at the roots of Ireland's slavery, he at least tried all he could, within the limits of the existing system, to remove her grievances.

Chatham's genius was, indeed, vast enough to illuminate every subject upon which it shone, and there is no doubt that it was sensible to the new and humane influences that were already beginning to transform the spirit of the age into something which, if not stronger, was at least sweeter. But even he was not strong enough to shake off the mental limitations of his time. It was beyond him, even, to appreciate the commonsense, as well as the Christianity, in the plea of the Duke of Bedford, that in arranging terms with a defeated France we ought to do as we should be done by. Here Chatham's very strength was his weakness. The Titanic energy, unlocked by the opportunity of the Seven Years' War, was not lightly to be checked or guided into other paths. Having once got his adversary down, his instinct was to beat the life out of him, to render him incapable of ever giving trouble again. Having once started to conquer territory, we must not let go an inch of it. Pride of Empire had, in fact, become an obsession with him, and made him capable of urging his countrymen to plunge into a fresh war with Spain over some dispute in the remote Falkland Islands too trivial to be worth recording.

This imperial megalomania made him blind to dangers which had been perceived by men in every other respect his inferiors. He did not allow for the certainty that, as in the times of Louis XIV and Philip II, the overweening greatness of one power would create a

tendency in the rest to combine against it. And he frankly disbelieved in the forboding that the real test of our Colonial system would come when the danger from Canada and the West had vanished, and the need of protection which had bound the colonies to the Mother Country was removed. However liberally he interpreted it, he was fundamentally a believer in the Colonial system of the eighteenth century, and does not seem to have considered that the complete overthrow of France would, even with the wisest statesmanship, have the effect of straining this system almost to the breaking point.

It is only in recent years that anything like adequate justice has been done to England's part in her dealings with her American children. The control over trade which she exercised has been represented as a tyrannous or at least a one-sided system, in which the unfortunate Americans found their trade hampered and their manufactures nipped in the bud, solely in the interest of the Mother Country. It has fallen to one of our most distinguished modern economists, Professor Ashley,[1] to examine these charges in detail, and the conclusion at which he has arrived is that, on the whole, the benefits of the system were real and mutual, and that England was ready to make as substantial sacrifices as she imposed, in order that the Empire might be, as far as possible, a self-sufficing unit. Of course it was impossible for such keen traders as the Americans not to suspect, with however little justice, that where one of the partners had absolute control of the business, arrangements would be biassed, to a greater or less extent, in that partner's interests.

But those who argue the question of the Old Colonial system on purely economic grounds are in danger of missing the most important point about it. England had no doubt ordered her relations with the colonies on a reasonable and probably a sound business footing, but it was the fatal weakness of the system that it placed the Empire on a business footing alone. With the deeply ingrained materialism of the eighteenth century, England valued her colonies for just as much as she could make out of them, and the colonies returned the compliment. Prior to the Seven Years' War, sentiment on either side had been conspicuous by its absence, the highest to which the patriotism of the ordinary Englishman could rise culminating in panegyrics on the increase of trade and treasure. Of any deep bond of affection uniting the mother to the daughter communities, that bond which Burke was to characterize as lighter than air and stronger than iron, the prosaic spirit of England under her first two Georges

[1] In *Surveys Historic and Economic*, pp. 309-335.

could not so much as conceive. It is even said that in William III's reign an Attorney-General, who was asked to prepare a charter incorporating a religious college in Virginia, had exclaimed, on being reminded that Virginians had souls: "Souls! Damn your souls! Plant tobacco!"

Nor were the colonies any less material in their sentiments towards the Mother Country. They had adapted themselves fairly comfortably, though not without a good deal of occasional friction, to the easy restrictions of English sovereignty, because it suited them fairly well economically and above all because they needed the might of England to protect them from the formidable threat of encirclement by France, not to speak of the ever present danger of Indian raids. But separated as they were from England by the whole distance of the Atlantic voyage and almost cut off from any communication with friends at home, it was only natural for them to drift further and further apart in sentiment from a country which few of them had seen, and which was known to them principally by the restrictions that it from time to time imposed on them.

Ever since the first settlement the colonies had been getting more and more alienated from England in blood, in sentiment, and even in language, for the Yankee dialect was beginning to take forms surprisingly familiar to us to-day. Numbers of emigrants came over, particularly from Germany, who sensibly diluted the British blood that ought to have been thicker than water. In the North, the New England colonists, who had fled from intolerable conditions in England to enjoy the privilege of making conditions equally intolerable for those who disagreed with them in America, had never had any particular temptation to wax sentimental about the connection with England, and indeed, long before the final disputes that led to the Revolution, had given plain evidence of their willingness to cut the painter if provoked too far. The old Puritan spirit, in all its intense earnestness and gloomy bigotry, persisted into the eighteenth century with little less strength than in the days of the pilgrim fathers. There was a gulf wider than the Atlantic between the typical Massachusetts man, and the stolid English governing class to which any form of religious enthusiasm was an exhibition of bad taste verging on insanity. The old loyalty to the throne which had been genuine and ardent in Virginia in civil war times had, meanwhile, gradually faded almost out of memory, and in fact, no colony proved stronger for independence than that of George Washington.

A development had taken place of ominous but little

comprehended import, in the fact that while England had contracted her government into a privileged and corrupt oligarchy, the colonies had realized the democratic ideal to an extent unknown in Europe. However the governor and council of each province might be appointed (and in more than one instance they were elected), the real power resided in the hands of assemblies genuinely representative of the whole body of freeholders. These assemblies showed themselves adepts in applying the power of the purse, and the wise governor was he who refrained from kicking against the pricks of popular authority. The colonies did, in fact, order their affairs pretty much according to their own inclinations, except in so far as concerned the regulation of imperial trade. That they accepted English regulations in the main, gives, as Professor Ashley shrewdly suggests, reason to believe that they were not very hard hit by them.

Confronted with this situation, Walpole had dealt with it according to his own worldly wisdom. He realized that the best way to avoid trouble with the colonies was to leave them alone, and to let matters glide on comfortably in the old grooves. Even when an act was passed for the plausible object of making the colonists buy Jamaica instead of French West Indian molasses for their manufacture of rum, he quietly allowed the act to become a dead letter. But Walpole's policy of keeping out of trouble with the colonies also involved keeping out of trouble with the rest of the world. At present they cost us little, but nobody realized better than Walpole that great wars are followed by the presentation of great bills and the question of who is to foot them. He, the child of this world, was instinctively (for it was not his habit to formulate principles of policy) wiser in his generation than that child of ardent genius, Chatham.

Had not Chatham been intoxicated with the glory of England, he must have perceived that victory itself would create a situation incomparably more difficult than that created by the threat from Canada, a problem to which the wisest statesmanship would find itself at a loss for a solution. The two wars with France showed how very little there was either of loyalty or common purpose among the colonists. Had they showed one-half the determination of the handful of French settlers, whom they outnumbered by ten to one, they must have crushed them easily. Good work (particularly in the capture of Louisburg in the first war) was certainly accomplished here and there by the levies of whom a fair number were ultimately raised in various proportions by different colonies.

But our soldiers found themselves starved, profiteered off, and continually left in the lurch by the very people they had come to defend. The work of Wolfe and Amherst would certainly have been anticipated had not individual Americans sedulously kept the French resistance alive and their own pockets at bursting point by furnishing the enemy, at a price, with munitions and supplies, a form of traffic which the Home authorities had the utmost difficulty in suppressing, and whose very suppression was regarded as a grievance by these honest traders. And even in the presence of the most imminent danger, nothing could persuade the colonials to combine for any united action whatever. A scheme of mild federation for purposes of defence, that was proposed and carried by Benjamin Franklin in an assembly of delegates that met in 1754 to treat with the Indians, was thrown out by every one of the colonial assemblies to whom it was referred. It was fairly evident, too, by the marked slackening of colonial efforts, that once the French were out of Canada, there was an end of interest in the war as far as Americans were concerned.

This then was the situation created by the Peace of Paris—the supreme danger that had threatened the colonies of encirclement by France had vanished, once and for all, thanks mainly to British seapower, British blood and British money, that had been poured out like water. The most that they had to get out of England the Americans had already secured—the French were gone. But the bill for this deliverance, a staggering one according to the notions of that time, was chargeable to England. And the victors in the Seven Years' War were confronted with the almost universal and always unexpected discovery that dazzling conquests very seldom bring security in their train. The French people, even the Versailles courtiers, were not of the stuff that accepts defeat without preparing sedulously for *la révanche*. Besides, though the French were gone, the Indians were still prepared to dispute the possession of their hunting grounds, and it was not long after the war that one of the most formidable of all Indian risings, provoked by the profiteering and land-grabbing of the Westward-expanding colonists, broke out under a chief called Pontiac. In short, taking all considerations into account, there could be no return to the piping times of Walpole —a garrison of ten thousand men must be maintained in America.

The mere fact that individual colonists were constantly encroaching on the Red Man's hunting grounds, and thereby involving the Mother Country in an expenditure of blood and treasure in which its beneficiaries did not propose to share, had the indirect effect

of creating another American grievance that was resented as bitterly as the trade regulations. For the home government, spurred to an already determined course of action by the struggle with Pontiac, took what seemed to everybody at home the obvious and statesman-like course of fixing the boundary between the two races on the watershed between the Mississippi basin and the rivers flowing westward to the Atlantic, a boundary to be enlarged not by land-grabbing and violence but by peaceful and regulated purchase.[1] Incidentally the right of disposing of these lands furnished one of the few means that England possessed of making money out of the colonies, and recouping some small part of her outlay on their account. But for all that, the attempt to set limits to the westward expansion of the white man was the policy of Canute, and the waves were soon breaking angrily about the monarch's feet.

More and more insistently it began to be asked—who was to foot the bill? The sobriety that follows the intoxication of war had descended upon England, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, one Francis Dashwood, whose connoisseurship of women, wine, and blasphemy did not extend to finance, not only applied the whip of taxation, which had to be done, but applied it in so stupid a way as to produce something like an incipient rebellion among the cider growers of the West Country. Under these circumstances it must have seemed outrageous that the groaning taxpayers of England should be expected, as a matter of course, to go on finding the whole expenses of American deliverance in the past and American safety in the future. And yet what was to be done? Was it likely that the people who had refused to combine to defend themselves, even in the presence of the enemy, would now come together to do the straight and generous thing by the Mother Country? Was it likely that the men who had supplied the enemy, for gain, with the sinews of war, would hail with much enthusiasm the idea of supplying England, at a loss, with the means of defence? And, supposing that the colonials could by no means be persuaded to contribute of their own free will, was it likely that communities so jealously sensitive of their own privilege of taxing themselves, would for one moment submit to dictation on this subject from an English ministry?

That English statesmen met the situation with appalling

[1] Is it proper, asked George III in one of his private memoranda, that this nation should be at the charge of maintaining forts and garrisons when the Americans contribute nothing to their maintenance?

ineptitude ought not to blind us to the fact that the problem was as well-nigh insoluble as any problem could well be. Chatham had the most hopeful solution when he sketched, in private, a scheme similar to that of the Union with Scotland, of uniting England and America in a common Parliament. One wonders whether, assuming the obvious physical difficulties of this plan to be overcome, this idea would have particularly commended itself to those assemblies that only recently had thrown back the scheme for a defence congress into the faces of their delegates, and who were quite shrewd enough to be aware that federation was only an honourable stepping stone to increased taxation, or whether the sheer magnetism and force of will of that extraordinary man might not, under favourable circumstances, have accomplished the miracle of miracles. . . .

It would be as futile as it would be offensive to hold a brief for America against England or England against America of the eighteenth century. The situation had arisen, almost inevitably, as the result of principles common to both. So long as the only motives of association were pride of power and lust of gain, so long as the implied contract between England and America reposed upon no loftier a basis than that of a mere business speculation, it was certain that whenever it paid one partner to dissolve the partnership, that partnership would be dissolved. To England's plea that she had delivered America at the price of blood and treasure, America might quite fairly reply that the mother nation had done all this, not for the daughter's *beaux yeux*, but as a speculative investment in the hope of advantages to come, in exactly the same spirit in which the daughter now proposed to set up house on her own account. As for honour, kinship, and the rest of it, that was not a matter of business but of sentiment, and as to the place of sentiment in practical politics, both were agreed.

It was the nemesis of the eighteenth century spirit that the colonies, in the time of their maturity, should break away as the old Greek colonies had done, or like the young of men and animals in their season. Something nobler than self-interest must kindle the idealism to which the life of a people is more than meat, and its benison to humanity than power. But such wisdom would have been foolishness to the men of the eighteenth century. The beginnings of Empire were selfish and even sordid. If we were fair to America, it was not because we loved her, but because it paid us—the tragedy of Ireland showed what would be the fate of a people

whom we considered to be absolutely at our mercy. The first result of our glorious victories in India had been that John Company, that was out as a corporation for maximum dividends and whose servants were out to feather their own nests at the expense of John Company, fastened like a malignant vampire on the fair province of Bengal, and fleeced and oppressed its unhappy inhabitants with a thoroughness that would have put to shame an Allah-ud-Din or a Tughlak Shah. Nor did the Christian people of England and America hesitate to rear the fabric of economic prosperity on the sufferings, that baffle imagination, of multitudes of unoffending negroes, men, women and children, who were dragged from their villages to undergo the horrors of the Middle Passage, and, if they survived, of hopeless, life-long slavery. For this blood-guilty prosperity, America at least has had to pay a heavy reckoning—and the end is not yet.

With what grace could England demand from her colonies the things that are Caesar's, when both alike had long forgotten to render the things that are God's—self-sacrifice, vision, imaginative sympathy! It has ever been what is low and material in both peoples that has planted the seeds of discord between England and America, and even now delays the union, not of political machinery, but of heart and soul, that is among the highest hopes of threatened civilization.

CHAPTER IV

THE EMOTIONAL REVIVAL

1

The Romantic Dawn

The cultured materialism of the eighteenth century never was able to obtain so exclusive a sway, even over the class to whom it most appealed, as to exclude the possibility of a reaction. There was never a time, however large the wigs and however exacting the conventions, when stirrings of the spirit somewhat unhappily nicknamed "Romantic" might not have been apparent. The figure of Sir Roger de Coverley, for example, is thoroughly in harmony with the as-yet-unformed Romantic tradition. But such manifestations are, for a long time, too scattered and casual to possess very much significance. It is not till the fourth decade of the century that we can speak of any widespread tendency to challenge the sceptical and complacent philosophy that was assumed as the basis of educated thought and discussion.

The eighteenth century had pinned its faith to a one-sided, and therefore unscientific rendering of human nature. It had, in fact, treated man as if he were solely a thinking and not at all a feeling animal. When it was absolutely necessary to deal with so universal and primitive a passion as love, the polite and therefore the right thing to do was so to conventionalize its expression that it ceased to excite any emotional reaction whatever. Thus we hear of "lively transports", "endearing charms", and "pleasing flames" without the least disposition to be either warmed or transported—the whole thing has become as much a game as the "courted", "engaged", "banns up", and "married", of the Christmas party card table. The men of the eighteenth century showed an almost inquisitorial thoroughness in eliminating from life anything in the least likely to excite their emotions. The beauties of the open landscape, of mountainous or ocean scenery, were not allowed to exist, the spectacle of anything wild or uncultivated was merely disgusting, as showing that here the civilizing touch of man had yet

to be applied. In the same way the whole time between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Classical Renaissance of the fifteenth century was looked upon as an interlude of barbarism, more or less under the influence of priestly swindlers.

But, at least among peoples so vigorous as those inhabiting Western Europe, it is impossible to set a seal on the whole of human emotion without its sooner or later finding itself an outlet. Increasingly, towards the middle of the century, we perceive signs of a spirit the exact opposite of that which we are apt to associate distinctively with the eighteenth century, and everywhere in revolt against it. As yet the revolt is fitful and sporadic, and the aristocratic culture of the time is still, for the most part, proof against it. But the progress of the new spirit is not to be judged by the grotesqueness and even absurdity of its earliest manifestations.

"Sentimental" is the word one most naturally applies to these firstfruits of what we must, for the want of a better word, call the Romantic spirit. The blind urge towards tenderness and passion, towards a warmth and colour which the true eighteenth century was incapable of supplying, had as yet no forms of its own through which to express itself, and strove, awkwardly and incongruously, to adapt the conventional forms it found ready to hand. The new wine not unnaturally played havoc with the old bottles, and spilt itself in wild gush and bombast.

We can see something of the new spirit in tomb architecture, particularly in the sheer sensationalism brought into vogue, towards the middle of the century, by the naturalized Frenchman, Roubillac. The peace of Westminster Abbey is not proof against the noisy dispute between Time and some other allegorical figure on the tomb of Field Marshal Wade, nor the apparent efforts of General Hargrave to divest himself of his shroud beneath a toppling wall. Nor is any shilling shocker capable of vieing with the Nightingale tomb, on which an agonized husband tries in vain to protect his young wife from the dart of a grinning skeleton, who emerges from the vault beneath, a device that is plausibly reputed to have made a burglar drop his tools and bolt incontinently out of the Abbey. A taste for horrors is a sure accompaniment of Romance, and Roubillac is of the kindred of Wiertz in painting and Edgar Allen Poe in literature. Even in country churchyards the tombstones of this time are more prolific than ever of skulls and crossbones, not to speak of more ambitious ventures like one at West Malling, where a fat cherub blows his trumpet into the face of a struggling corpse.

It was an incipient Romanticism that started the ridiculous agitation about Captain Jenkins and his ear, and the rest of our grievances against Spain. It is easy to show that, so far as we can talk of a right and wrong in the matter, Walpole was right in urging his countrymen not to burn their fingers in an unnecessary broil with Spain. But the real weakness of his position was not that there was anything wrong about his arguments, but that the country was experiencing a vague yet unmistakable boredom with the whole system of caution and money-making for which he stood. It wanted the coloured and passionate things of life, military glory, the sacking of strange towns and the spoils of golden argosies, and it was ready to listen to any thundering bombast that gave promise of something more exciting than a comfortable balance of trade at the end of the year and perhaps another penny off the land tax. All that was emotional in the English nature had begun to cry out against the intolerable commonsense of Sir Robert and his system.

It was just about this time that a successful printer, already well advanced in middle age, and seemingly the last man from whom anything out of the commonplace might have been expected, published a book that was destined to be a landmark not only in English but in European literature. The elderly printer was called Samuel Richardson, and the title of his book was *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. It is a long and leisurely account of the trials undergone by a good young servant girl in the defence of her honour, and of her ultimate union in lawful wedlock with an eminently desirable young gentleman. It is a book which very superior people profess to be able to read with enjoyment to this day, but which we have never yet beheld out of its place on their shelves. Such as it was, however —and its power of minute observation and frequent insight into character are not to be denied—it took its own generation by storm, and its success was even eclipsed by that of its seven-volume successor, *Clarissa Harlowe*, a young lady of the longest drawn pathos and respectability.

Richardson's novels attained no less of a vogue on the other side of the Channel, and this English influence feeds the stream of thought that is ultimately to sweep the French upper class down the tide of Revolution. It was almost exactly in the middle of the century that Jean Jacques Rousseau was to fling his startling challenge at eighteenth century culture by asking whether the primitive savage might not after all represent a nobler type than the educated and refined gentleman. It was not Richardson's placid way to

thunder challenges of this kind. Very decorously and unobtrusively, he put the eighteenth century aside, by taking for heroines a common kitchen wench, like Pamela, and a middle class Miss of no special attractions, like Clary Harlowe, and by treating his function as a novelist as that of a specialist in the emotions. His rival, Fielding, who leaned to the old, plain-sailing view of human character, was quick to perceive the challenge, and the first of his great novels starts as a skit on Pamela. The issue between Fielding and, still more decidedly, Smollett, on the one hand, and Richardson on the other, is whether the novel is to be a straightforward account of what people do, or an exhaustive analysis of what they feel.

The discovery of the sick soul was no monopoly of the novelist. It was in 1738 that John Wesley, an unbeneficed clergyman of missionary aspirations and boundless energy, who had just returned from the new colony of Georgia, underwent the experience of conversion, and placed himself at the head of a movement that was destined to kindle some of the old fire, long dormant, of Puritan enthusiasm. In spite of the scandalized disapproval of the official clergy, this new Christianity spread like wildfire among the poorer class. It was its strength that its appeal was almost entirely to the emotions. It was enough to convince the sinner that he had hitherto been in a state of potential damnation, and that he could now enter into one of secure and blissful salvation. "Oh, the wrath to come," the preacher Whitefield had cried to his terrified audience, "the wrath to come!" and if even worldlings like Chesterfield were capable of being mildly thrilled, it is no wonder that poor and ignorant people were often thrown, literally, into convulsions.

A greater contrast could not be imagined than that between Wesleyanism, or Methodism as it was called, and the calm and subtle arguments by which philosophic bishops like Butler and Berkeley sought to persuade a presumably educated audience that Christianity had after all a solution for the riddle of the Universe more satisfying than that of Deism. "A horrid thing, a very horrid thing, Sir," was Butler's retort to John Wesley's claim of direct inspiration. Where the new evangelists tried to think, their arguments were generally childish and the spirit in which they were urged too often ill-tempered and unchristian. John Wesley himself was gloomily superstitious and bigoted, and his attitude towards all amusements, however innocent (and he would not have admitted that the word innocent could apply in such a connection) was that of Gilbert's Sir Macklin, who

" Could in every action show
A sin, and nobody could doubt him."

One of his most eloquent sermons is a counterblast to that new-fangled Chinese decoction called tea ! The programme of instruction devised for some wretched schoolboys on whom Wesley got the opportunity to experiment was one from which play and holidays were rigidly excluded, and in which the whole time from four in the morning (the hour of rising, summer and winter) till bedtime, was devoted to one awful round of cramming and godliness. It is comforting to think that Wesley's rules were turned to a dead letter by the negligence of the staff, and the evangelist himself discovered that, in spite of all his efforts, the general tone of the boys remained obstinately Satanic.

The best of Wesleyanism is undoubtedly contained in its hymns, and if the movement had left nothing else but the "*Jesu lover of my soul*" of his brother Charles, which must have brought comfort to tens of thousands of storm-tossed hearts, it would fairly have justified its existence. Scarcely less powerful is the appeal of Toplady's "*Rock of Ages*"—it was the same Toplady, by the way, who characterized John Wesley, in a pamphlet, as "an old fox tarred and feathered", to which Wesley's Christian counter-barrage of "chimney sweeper" and "exquisite coxcomb" seems inadequate. The growing sympathy of the new emotional spirit with nature is shown by the circumstances in which this hymn is said to have been composed, for the idea of the cleft rock was suggested by one in Toplady's own West Country parish at Blagdon, under which he had taken refuge from a passing storm.

What principally distinguishes new Methodism from old Puritanism, is its lack of the Old Testament fighting spirit which had made the gay riders of Rupert like stubble before the swords of the Ironsides, and had set Colonel Rainborow laying down the law as to the right of every "he" in the land to have a voice in his own government. There was never a less democratically inclined person than John Wesley himself, a born disciplinarian and a stickler for the letter of the law. Coming to Jesus was, with the Wesleyans, a personal and spiritual affair; to have obtained shelter in the Rock of Ages was happiness here and salvation hereafter. There was no particular reason, in the nature of things, why the movement should have taken on this peaceful complexion, unless it is to be sought in the fact that such persecution as it encountered was never sufficiently severe or organized to arouse the flame of resistance.

But in the whole Emotional Revival of the eighteenth century we shall find a certain lack of strength and virility as its besetting weakness.

Some aristocratic observers of the revival were not slow to detect a dangerous democratic tendency in the idea that everybody's soul was of equal importance before God. "This religion," said one great lady, "is highly improper, it teaches the wretches to crawl above their sphere." Her alarm was, as far as her own century was concerned, groundless. If Wesleyanism taught poor people that they had souls, it quite failed to teach them that they had rights, and probably had no small effect in diverting their interests and energies from the channels into which another very different type of revivalist, Jean Jacques Rousseau, was guiding the passions of Frenchmen. It was only in the nineteenth century that the spiritual democracy of Wesleyanism triumphed over the anti-democratic bias imparted to the movement by its founders, and that the little chapel communities, especially of miners, became hotbeds of advanced political doctrine.

While Methodism was yet in its infancy, a deeper though less audible chord was struck from the soul of William Law, a non-juring clergyman, who had acted for a time as spiritual guide to both John and Charles Wesley. He is most celebrated for a rather gloomy manual of devotion whose purport is sufficiently explained by the title *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, in which Law expresses his contempt for not only the pleasures but also for the scholarship of this world. But what, in the very midst of the eighteenth century, is his truest title to fame, is not this popular and almost commonplace appeal, but the fact that in some of his less known writings he may be said to have brought the mystical view of religion back to England.

He was a diligent student of that master initiate, Jacob Boehme, and the result of his investigations was to convince him that all the argument about form and dogma that employed so woeful a proportion of pious energies was mere vanity and illusion, and that religion was nothing more nor less than the art of love. "You have the fullest proof," he pleads earnestly, "in what your salvation precisely consists. Not in any historic faith, or knowledge of anything absent or distant from you, not in any variety of restraints, rules or methods of practising virtues, not in any formality of opinion about faith and works, repentance, forgiveness of sins or justification and sanctification, not in any truth or righteousness that you can

have from yourself, from the best of men or books; but wholly and solely in the life of God, or Christ of God, quickened and born again in you." Nor does Law leave us in any doubt as to that in which the life of God consists:

"Love," he beautifully says, "is the Christ of God . . . Through all the universe of things, nothing is uneasy, or unsatisfied, or restless, but because it is not governed by love."

Here we breathe an atmosphere calmer, more serenely spiritual than that of Methodism, with its barnacle coating of superstition and its noisy quarrels about the trivialities of dogma. But Law was ahead of his age in this conception of religion, and his mystical writings remained unmarked—dumb witnesses to what heights the Emotional Revival of the eighteenth century, even in these its early days, was capable of transporting one receptive spirit.

For the rest, the Emotional Revival was too vague, too elusive a thing, to merit any such definition as is implied in the expression "the Romantic movement". It is apparent as a gradual change of atmosphere, and it would be a futile inquiry whether this or that prominent figure in life or letters is to be classed as a child of the old or of the new age. In Chatham the Romantic spirit seems striving to clothe itself in the forms of the eighteenth century, and the result is that almost grotesque magnificence of phrase and pose that make honest Macaulay characterize him as lacking in simplicity. James Thompson supplies an instance of one who is, in the main, a correct and uninspired poet of the "classical" school, but whose verse is here and there lit by a gleam, if not of pure, at least of genuine inspiration caught from nature herself. But such is the tyranny of the eighteenth century that, before the coming of Blake, inspiration is almost afraid to clothe herself in her proper and self-appointed forms—the best of the poets, even Collins and Gray, are hampered by the strait waistcoat of correctness that it seems unthinkable to discard. All but their most inspired lines have a strange quality of coldness and distance, they are further from us than the Elizabethans and Carolines.

And yet the movement, if we may give it so definite a name, was all the while going forward, and, elusive though it was, working a decisive transformation in the spirit of the nation. Men's eyes were opened to things that had scarcely been suspected before. The Middle Ages grotesquely, fantastically, loomed out of what had, but recently, been a deliberately forgotten past—a time, not of thought, at least in the perspective of the eighteenth century,

but of faith and loyalty, of coloured and mysterious adventure. The countryside, and most especially where it was most uncultivated and barren, took on an air no longer of savageness but of beauty, and was found responsive to certain hitherto unsuspected yearnings of the human soul. A new spirit of tenderness and humanity, feeble at first, but gradually accumulating strength, began to melt the hard frost of the eighteenth century. Strange things became suddenly obvious to a few sensitive souls—that the slave trade had spiritual disadvantages that might overbalance its material gains, that the condition of our jails was a scandal and the severity of the law an outrage, that even animals had feelings to be respected, and a score of similar discoveries. We must not over-estimate the magnitude or swiftness of the change that was taking place, but such as it was, and with all its weakness and lack of direction, it is scarcely too much to say that the highest hope for the future was in its triumph.

The Mysticism of Pangloss

We have already had occasion to remark upon one aspect of the eighteenth century, and particularly of eighteenth century England, that was destined to be of great importance in shaping the revolution in human affairs that was in full swing towards its close. In spite of many artificial conventions, it was yet an age of adventurers, of great individualists carving out their own destinies and those of their country. The founding of our Indian Empire was hardly more than an incident in the commercial operations of the East India Company, and was largely due to the genius of one of its subordinate officers, Robert Clive. The future Australian Commonwealth was made possible by the enterprise of Captain Cook, one of the noblest in the long line of English adventurers. The spirit of commerce was impelling vigorous minds to explore every avenue to wealth and prosperity; there was no co-ordination of purpose nor any end in view except for each man to snatch any advantage he could in the general competition.

This was thoroughly in harmony with the philosophy of the time. Nothing is so characteristic of the eighteenth century as a vague and cheerful mysticism—if the term can be applied to anything so stolidly prosaic—to the effect that all was, if not entirely for the best in the best of all possible worlds, at least so ordered by the

Deity as to work out tolerably right in the end. The eighteenth century God was not an indwelling principle, nor an omnipotent and omnipresent Being about everyone's path, spying out all his ways, but a somewhat nebulous power that could be invoked to explain what would otherwise have been inexplicable and to join up, as it were, the loose ends of the universe. He was the God who, according to the faith of improving novelists like Richardson, saw to it that virtue was rewarded and vice punished; He was the "Jehovah, God or Lord", who so arranged matters as to justify Pope's comfortable assurance that "whatever is, is right"; He was, again, the convenient power that Berkeley invoked to give an assurance of reality to an otherwise illusory universe begotten of the thought of each individual thinker.

Such speculations and such a Deity may seem harmless enough until we look a little closer into the consequences they involve. It is not an unreasonable conclusion that, where God or nature may be trusted to guide human affairs, in the mass, to some vaguely desirable conclusion, any human effort to master or control the situation is likely to prove useless, if not positively mischievous. "Look after the pence and God will take care of the pounds" was the spirit in which mankind was prepared to face the enormous transformation in the conditions of life that was shortly to be accomplished. *Laissez faire! Laissez passer!* Full speed ahead all round! Providence was working, through human effort, to great ends. The best we could do was to let her work unimpeded.

This strange belief in a power, indifferently described as God or nature, controlling the larger issues of human activity and thereby superseding human effort, had not a little to do with determining the philosophy of Adam Smith, whose *Wealth of Nations*, given to the world in 1776, had an immense influence over thought and policy during the most momentous economic transition of our history. Smith had already established his reputation by a treatise on the Moral Sentiments, in which he had pinned his faith to a God of the most genial eighteenth century type, who so ordered His universe as to produce the maximum of happiness all round, and with whose benevolent intentions all that we had to do was to fall in harmoniously. This philosophic optimism is less explicitly postulated in *The Wealth of Nations*, and Smith, despite Buckle's opinion to the contrary, was too well-informed and judicially minded to hang his whole system on a chain of deductive reasoning. But the idea of a natural, and therefore beneficent order of things, is obviously

at the back of his mind, and is largely responsible for the conclusions at which he arrives, the general effect of them being that the State, as representing collective human effort, ought to stand aside in all but a few exceptional instances, and that God or nature has some mysterious alchemy by which the selfishness of every individual man will, if allowed free play, work together more effectively for the common good than the most strenuous altruism.

We have, then, to realize two facts of the utmost importance about England at the opening of that period of headlong transition known as the Industrial Revolution: firstly, that there was an immense amount of individual energy seeking to realize itself through commercial channels; secondly, that the general opinion of the time held this energy to be a good thing in itself, and one which, given free play, would undoubtedly tend to the common good. To give each man's selfishness its head and to trust to God and the chapter of accidents, was the utmost of which humanity, in the mass, believed itself capable. Certainly the attempts of the State to regulate commerce gave some ground for believing that the less it interfered in economic matters the better.

Sinews of Progress

The tremendous advance in man's power over nature that proceeds with steadily accelerating pace during the second half of the century, and dwarfs into insignificance the wars and political convulsions that fill so large a place in history, might easily have been anticipated by anyone capable of reading the signs of the times. What was lacking to the progress of invention was not so much brain power, as the economic conditions in which brain-power could find scope and stimulation. The idea of the steam engine was as old as Hero of Alexandria, an effective stocking frame had been invented in the reign of Elizabeth, but such inventions had hung fire because the time was not yet ripe for them. It is necessary for mechanical progress to march on a broad front; it is no good for instance to have a power-loom unless you can spin yarn rapidly enough to feed it; a railway will be impracticable before you have abundant supplies of coal, and before you have attained a certain proficiency in the smelting and manufacture of iron. Above all, to use any of these inventions successfully you must have a liberal backing of capital.

We have already seen how the comparative prosperity of England, with her unique commercial position and her absence of land frontiers, had led, up to the time of the South Sea Bubble, to a steady accumulation of capital—that is to say of wealth in the possession of individual owners in excess of their immediate needs—and how, with the growth of this excess wealth, the opportunities for profitable investment had grown too. The collapse of the South Sea ramp, as well as of Law's Mississippi Bank, had taught an elementary if necessary lesson that capital, if it is to bring in permanent profits, must do real work in creating fresh wealth, and can in no way be increased by the inflation of shares on the stock exchange. The lesson, though it was far from being finally digested, never had to be repeated again in so crude a form; the peaceful years of Walpole's administration were a time of steady and solid progress, and if the wars of the forties had the effect of all wars in wasting wealth, we were at least in a more favourable position than our principal rivals on the Continent.

Some idea of the extent of our material progress may be gathered from the figures quoted in the most recent edition of Porter's *Progress of the Nation*, figures which have the sanction of that greatest of all statistical experts, Sir Robert Giffen. Between 1720, the year of the South Sea collapse, and 1750, the population is estimated to have increased by half a million to seven millions, while the amount of the nation's capital had advanced from £370 million to £500 million or from £57 to £71 per head of the population. In the next half century, according to the same estimate, the amount of that capital was to be trebled, and its amount per head of the population considerably more than doubled.

Making every allowance for the wide margin of error that is natural in such statistics, we are at least safe in affirming that there was a large amount of disposable wealth seeking any profitable outlet, as well as an invisible fund of human energy keenly intent on seizing every opportunity for getting rich. A scientific spirit had long been abroad that had suggested unlimited possibilities of man's command over nature. But for a long time science had shown little disposition to harness herself to the chariot of commerce. The first members of the Royal Society, on the whole, had displayed a singularly pure enthusiasm for knowledge for its own sake, and utilitarian motives had played little part in their proceedings. This pure enthusiasm, however, had gone the way of most other enthusiasms during the Pudding Age, and the leadership of European science departs from England with the passing of Wren, Newton,

and their peers. Respectable British work is done throughout the century in enlarging the frontiers of human knowledge, but there are no British names to compare with those of Linnaeus, Euler, Buffon, Laplace and Lavoisier in what we may describe as the realms of pure science.

It was in the strictly utilitarian sphere that the most striking English work was to be accomplished during the eighteenth century. A new generation of practical scientists arose, men whose whole energies were bent on the attainment of some lucrative result, and who were, as a rule, of limited education, and sometimes almost illiterate. "Rugged Brindley," for example, could never learn to spell to his dying day, and Arkwright, the "old shaver", made strenuous efforts in his prosperous years to teach himself how to write decent English. Many of the greatest inventors were practical workmen, who were shrewd enough to hit upon ways whereby labour could be shortened. The idea of the spinning jenny, for instance, came to James Hargreaves, originally a carpenter and weaver, by the accident of a spindle falling on the floor and continuing to revolve, which set Hargreaves thinking out the idea of a multiple spindle, spinning several threads at once.

The Agricultural Revolution

This spirit of inventive enterprise was by no means the monopoly of workmen and mechanics. The English upper class of the eighteenth century was distinguished from the devoted French aristocracy by nothing so much as its enterprise and business ability. The name of the Duke of Bridgewater will forever be associated with the improvement of inland water communication; but it was most of all in the business of agriculture that the average English nobleman or squire found scope for his energies. The traditional open field system of cultivation, whatever its advantages in maintaining the freedom of the cultivator, was, from a productive standpoint, hopelessly out of date, and with its wasteful and antiquated methods, was a barrier against any sort of progress. Nor were the small cultivators and yeomen, who eked out an exiguous livelihood with a minimum of capital and education, likely to depart from the traditional methods, even if they could have afforded to do so. The impulse for improvement must come, if it was to come at all, from above, and come it did. From quite an early date in the eighteenth

century a passion for agricultural improvement began to manifest itself, and no magnate was too proud, and no statesman too preoccupied with public affairs, to take an expert interest in the improvement of his estate. Even royalty was not above an interest in farming; Queen Caroline, the accomplished wife of George II, subscribed to the publication of *Horse Hoeing Husbandry* [1] and George III, Farmer George as he was called, found time to write an occasional article himself over the signature of his own shepherd.

The genuineness of this reforming ardour must in justice be taken into account, in recording the lamentable story of the enclosure or pillage of the common lands during the eighteenth century. Looking back, as we do, in the dry light of statistical knowledge, surveying the virtual annihilation of the sturdy yeoman freeholders and the reduction of a comparatively free and prosperous peasantry into the landless and pauperized labourers of the early nineteenth century, we are apt to regard the whole process of enclosure as one of cynical and deliberate plunder of the poor by the rich. This was certainly not the spirit in which the great landowners regarded the matter, even in their most secret confabulations. There is, on the contrary, every evidence that they looked upon enclosure as a beneficent and necessary process, and themselves as benefactors of society for promoting it. They saw that the land was not producing one half or one quarter of what it might; they deplored the spectacle of huge tracts of common waste, roamed over by a few half-starved sheep or cattle, and serving as a refuge for a disreputable type of squatter. Conscious of the much better use to which that land might be put by their own enlightened methods, they hurried forward the process of enclosure by all the means in their power.

Of course they were biassed; the eighteenth century was not remarkable either for disinterestedness or delicacy of conscience, and the main power of the State was concentrated in the hands of the larger landowners. Under such circumstances, human nature being what it was, it was inevitable that only one point of view should be taken into account, and that the one most favourable to the big landowners. But that they were, as a rule, consciously unjust, or that a rough fairness was not aimed at in the process of enclosure, is far from being proved. Even Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, whose fascinating book, *The Village Labourer*, puts the case against the

[1] R. E. Prothero, *English Farming Past and Present*, p. 173.

promoters of enclosure in the blackest colours, fail to convict them of anything more than gross lack of sympathy and consideration. One instance, cited by these authors, is that of a bill which was promoted by Lord Bolingbroke with the object of restoring his depleted fortunes, but this bill was thrown out by a decisive majority of the Lords, including the Prime Minister, Lord North, a fact that goes to show that even the landowning magnates of that House did make some attempt, according to their lights, to see fair play.

Whatever the motives of the protagonists, the enclosing of the common fields did take place by a series of Acts of Parliament, slowly at first, but at a much greater pace after the accession of George III. The productivity of the land, both for crops and pasturage, was increased out of recognition, to such an extent that its resources were able to keep pace with a rapid increase of population, and to sustain the country during the struggle with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Two of the greatest innovators were farmers, both originally in a small way of business, Jethro Tull, who invented a drill for sowing seed, and Robert Bakewell, who revolutionized the art of stock-breeding. One of the first of a notable series of improving landlords was Lord Townshend, long the colleague and rival of Walpole, who retired from the contest with that great but overbearing man to introduce Tull's scientific principles on his own estate, and to substitute, for the old clumsy rotation of two years' crop to one year's fallow, the Norfolk four-course rotation, by which the land is kept in profitable use the whole time. An even greater than Townshend was Coke of Norfolk, who flourished at the end of the century, worked in a smock frock among his own labourers, and forced the most unpromising land to yield abundantly.

Such was the agricultural revolution of the eighteenth century, and true to the principles of the time, full play was given to individual enterprise in the simple faith that all things would work together for good for those who loved money. It would have been utterly alien to contemporary habits of thought to have made a serious effort to estimate, much less to control, the social reactions of this increase of productive capacity. The peasantry and yeomanry, who were so hard hit by the process of enclosure, were at the same time crippled by the rapid development of the factory system, and the consequent loss of the domestic manufactures which had helped them to eke out a living. But quite apart from either of these handicaps, the small man, in this age of rapid innovation, was at a hopeless

disadvantage against superior capital and education. Gradually the big estates began to eat up the small ones, and the poor man, with all the odds against him, was silently edged off the land by encroaching capital.

5

The Conquest of Power

From the twilight of history, man's advance in material prosperity had been conditioned by his command over metals. After a lapse of more than two millenniums, we were still in the iron age ; progress in the craft of Wayland Smith had been less considerable than it was now to be during a twentieth of that time. In the first quarter of the eighteenth century we were actually on the down grade. Iron had hitherto been smelted in charcoal furnaces, and the continually increasing demand for wood had started an orgie of indiscriminate tree-felling, in the course of which so much forest was cut down as to cause a veritable timber famine. In consequence, despite the abundance of our own resources, we were having to import iron from Sweden.

For the transition from an age of handicraft to one of power-driven machinery, the scientific treatment of iron was the first thing needful. Such an invention as that of a steam engine would remain a mere academic *tour-de-force* so long as iron could not be forged of a sufficient strength to stand the required strains, or so long as the parts of a machine could not be made or replaced to minute specification. It does not need a trained engineer to imagine the horrible clanking and rattling of the first steam engines, their reckless consumption of fuel, their constant breakdowns, the cursing and swearing of illiterate mechanics who had neither the skill nor the materials to get the thing to start again.

Iron then, with its attendant craft no longer of the smith but of the engineer, was the key to mechanical progress, and the Industrial Revolution may be said to have started when, in the thirties of the eighteenth century, coke was substituted for wood charcoal in furnaces. This was no new idea, for an illegitimate scion of the Dudley family had discovered the method some century previously, but like so many other inventions born prematurely, it never got a fair backing, and its secret perished with the inventor. But now that capital was calling out for a substitute for the vanishing charcoal, its rediscovery by one of a family of Worcestershire Quakers, called Darby, was assured of success as a business proposition.

Once started, the tide of invention set in with ever-increasing strength. The main problem of applying coal to the smelting of iron was successfully mastered, and it was almost exactly half a century after Abraham Darby, the second, had shown the way, that Henry Cort's invention of the reverberatory puddling furnace made it possible to combine the maximum of heat with the minimum of carburization. Meanwhile the blast furnaces had been steadily increasing in height and effectiveness.

The great ironmasters of the eighteenth century were fired by that go-ahead energy that was possessed even by its squires, and it was only to be expected that the art of practical engineering should have kept stride with progress in the utilization of iron. It was in 1779 that the Severn was spanned by an iron bridge, and a new era in shipping was foreshadowed by the appearance on its waves of iron barges, the property of an ironmaster called Wilkinson. What was an even more important though less showy achievement of Wilkinson's, was that he was able to supply accurately bored cylinders to James Watt, for his improved steam engine.

The idea of harnessing steam power to the service of man is as old as the Ptolemies. But until the middle of the eighteenth century the conditions had not materialized to make it a business proposition. Just at the close of the seventeenth century an inventor called Savery patented a practicable though very wasteful machine for pumping water out of mines, and this was superseded some ten years later by the slightly improved model of Newcomen, which held the field until Watt's epoch-making invention in 1769, which he himself described as " my method of lessening the consumption of steam, and consequently fuel, in fire engines ".

This seemingly humble function of pumping water from mines was, in fact, of vital importance for the development of industry. The ever-increasing demand after the thirties, of the iron industry for coal, called for a revolutionary change in mining practice, which had hitherto amounted to little more than scratching the surface. The pumping engine opened the deeper seams to the pick, and rendered it possible to unlock those stores of solar energy that had been gathered up, through long ages, in the warm and swampy forests of the carboniferous age.

It was not only in the working of iron that the seventeen-thirties saw the beginnings of revolution. This decade saw also the invention of the flying shuttle, that enabled a loom to weave two pieces of cotton cloth for every one that had been woven before, though it

was some time before it came into general use. This created a demand for thread with which the old hand spindles could not cope. The balance, however, was redressed in the seventies by the great spinning inventions of Hargreaves, Arkwright and Crompton, and now it was the spindles that turned out yarn at a greater pace than the looms, even with the addition of the flying shuttle, could keep pace with. So urgent was now the demand for an improved loom, that in 1785 a clergyman called Cartwright, who had never seen a loom at work in his life, nevertheless put together a model, a clumsy contrivance, which practical experience developed into the power loom. In the same year, thanks to the inventive genius of Watt, steam power was first applied to the manufacture of cotton.

We must not let the word "Industrial Revolution" deceive us into exaggerating the rapidity of a change that was destined to transform civilization. Increase of output during the half century between the invention of the flying shuttle and that of the power loom was certainly rapid beyond all previous records. For instance, the quantity of iron produced in England and Wales was, in 1788, four times as much as in 1740,[1] and in 1781 imports of raw cotton were about twice what they had been in 1741, though in the next year they increased from slightly over 3 to nearly 12 millions of pounds. The combined official value of all imports and exports rose from over 8 millions in 1740 to close on 14 in 1783,[1] a solid but not staggering record. In 1800 they were destined to have passed the 34 and in 1850 to be approaching the 200 million point.

A very old man, who could remember the days of Queen Anne, and had survived till 1780, might have observed a vast amount of progress all along the line in industry, but no revolutionary change. For the great majority of industrial workers the home was still the workshop, where a man might or might not own his own plant, but where he worked up, to his employer's orders, and perhaps with the assistance of one or two apprentices, the material with which that employer supplied him. Such a system was obviously unworkable with large scale production, involving the use of expensive machinery and minute division of labour. The workers would have to be gathered together into one building, under some form of disciplined organization. The factory must sooner or later supplant the home.

But that time was slow in coming, and much slower in some trades than in others. The cotton manufacture, which was less bound

[1] These statistics are quoted from Appendix F of Cunningham's *Growth of English Industry and Commerce.*

than others by traditions, and which was the first to be transformed by machinery, took the lead. The first factories were comparatively small affairs, worked by water power, and built, mostly, by the side of the streams that descended Westwards from the Pennines. It needed the coming of steam power to produce the great, smoky towns that were to be the most conspicuous result of the factory system.

But men are human and not economic animals, and it would take a whip of sternest necessity to make them quit their homes and habits for an existence so much more nearly approaching slavery. The enclosure of the commons was making the application of this whip markedly easier, by depriving the cottager of the scanty resources by which he could keep body and soul together if all else failed.

6

The Loss of an Empire

After the dismissal of Pitt from the ministry and the conclusion of peace with France and Spain, it soon became apparent to what an extent the national revival during the Seven Years' War had been the work of one man. Almost at once England fell back into the lowest trough of eighteenth century politics, and the views of Brown, and other pessimists, began to seem not so wide of the mark after all. The history of the opening years of George III's reign is of fascinating interest to the student of political intrigue. The dirty game of aristocratic politics had become dirtier and more involved than ever now that the Crown, for long quiescent, had again taken a hand in it. And while this faction and that faction were competing for power and patronage, the government and morale of the country were going to rack and ruin, the fruits of our victory were being thrown away, and the vital domestic problems created by the rapid change of social conditions were left to solve themselves. It was a lamentable exhibition of the incapacity of human beings to order their own affairs on rational or even sane lines.

For nearly half a century Britain had been under the nominal rule of German boors for whom no one had much loyalty or respect, and who allowed the Whig magnates to rule the roost. The new sovereign was, however, born and educated in England, and despite his German descent, professed to glory in the name of Briton. Englishmen, who have always had a weakness for royalty, were at

anyrate prepared to accept the young King as one of themselves. He came to the throne with the natural and not ignoble ambition to end the humiliating dependence to which not the law of the land but the practice and doctrine of the Whigs had condemned the Crown. He was not only inspired by the repeated exhortation of his mother, "George be a King," but he had studied Bolingbroke, and was determined to realize in his own person that statesman's ideal of a patriot King. He would refuse to have his ministers and policy imposed upon him by any clique or faction that might happen to have the upper hand in the Parliamentary game; he would take his proper and lawful position as head of the national executive, and his ministers should be selected by him on account of their fitness for his service, without any regard to party considerations. In short he would substitute an efficient and patriotic administration for a gang of corrupt party nominees.

This was a grand ideal in itself, but it presupposed one necessary thing that George left out of account, and which Bolingbroke had explicitly recognized in the words "patriotism must be founded on great principles and supported by great virtues." George III had both principles and virtues, but neither could in any sense have been called great. His was a soul that had been cast in the most exiguous of moulds. He had a shrewdness that made him one of the astutest politicians of his time, a courage that neither odds nor defeat could daunt, an unwavering consistency to such principles as he was capable of grasping, and a private life marked by what Oscar Wilde would have called all the seven deadly virtues. But he was incapable of taking a magnanimous or statesmanlike view of any situation; if he sought power it was that he might use it for mean ends and maintain it by low cunning. Most of the ministers whom he sought to enlist in his service were subservient mediocrities, or worse. He loved pettiness rather than greatness in men because his soul was small.

At his accession he had a golden and obvious opportunity. The very man for whom a patriot king might have prayed to God was ready for his service, the great Pitt, who, though a Whig, hated the business of party as much as George himself, cherished a romantic loyalty to the throne, and would have asked for nothing better than, with a national ministry, to have purged the Augean stable of Parliamentary corruption. But George could not suppress his antipathy for a man whose conceptions soared so far above his own. He had a plan for breaking the Whig oligarchy that was

simple and thoroughly suited to his mental stature. He would fight them with their own weapons of corruption, and it should go hard, but he would better the instruction. The whole of the patronage that could be exercised by the Crown was brought to bear, ruthlessly and with all the skill of an accomplished party boss. Whoever had the right to complain of these tactics, it was certainly not the men who had been followers and colleagues of Newcastle, though even nowadays there are historians who talk as if the Whig magnates were perfectly justified in stealing the horse while His Majesty might not look over the hedge.

The gravamen of the charge against George is not that he entrapped the oligarchs in the pit of corruption that they themselves had digged, but that in becoming a successful politician he forgot to be a patriot king. He got rid of both Pitt and Newcastle and he broke up the Whig *bloc* with surprising ease, but all the use he made of his victory was to hand over the government of the country to such a nonentity as Lord Bute, his first prime minister, such a pedant as George Grenville, his second, or to sheer scoundrels like the ministers Dashwood and Sandwich. The power which George sought and obtained was that of letting the country go to the dogs.

To do him justice George, after two previous invitations and six wasted years, did call to his counsels Pitt, with a free hand to form a non-party ministry selected solely on grounds of efficiency. Pitt's selection of colleagues was not altogether a happy one, nor was the start too promising. And then, as if some malignant fate were dogging the King's steps, the hand of disease fell upon the one man who could have controlled the situation. A martyr to the gout, Pitt felt himself unable to endure the strain of defending his policy in the Commons, and accordingly accepted the Earldom of Chatham, a step that was cruelly misinterpreted in the country, and eclipsed the popularity that had made him an idol of the people. But the supreme disaster supervened when the newly-made Earl collapsed altogether, and for months remained shut up in his house in a state of pitiful neurasthenia. The reins of government fell from his nerveless hands, and the ministry was like an arch deprived of its keystone. All cohesion was lost, and the heterogeneous team blundered on until it finally settled down, with a greatly changed personnel, under the amiable but flabby Lord North, to a condition of unqualified incompetence combined with absolute subservience to the Crown. The Whigs, who were divided against themselves

into three principal factions, were unable to make good as an opposition, and the King had so far succeeded as to be in a position to wreck his own Empire and bring his lately victorious country to the verge of ruin.

Sins of omission in regard to the social situation were perhaps inevitable, though none the less disastrous in the long run, but what was more immediately productive of tragedy was the series of ignorant and aggressive blunders by which the rebellion of our American colonies was precipitated, and the splendid edifice of Empire built up during the Seven Years' War came crashing in ruin. We have seen how the relations between us and our colonies were poisoned by the material and unsentimental light in which the connection was viewed on both sides of the Atlantic, and how the burden of war debt and the expense of maintaining an army to defend the colonies had created a situation of such delicacy as to tax the resources of the wisest statesmanship. The best that could be said of the situation was that it was not altogether beyond hope. In the second half of the century the clouds of materialism were already lifting, and that the colonials were not incapable of loyal sentiment is shown by such incidents as that of the New Yorkers putting up a statue of the King on the repeal of the Stamp Act. Some of the most advanced thinkers in the colonies were feeling out towards a scheme of Imperial union or federation. But an almost infinite forbearance and tact were required if advantage was to be taken of these few elements of hope.

Unfortunately with Whigs and King's Friends competing with each other in corruption, such little requirements as statesmanship and sympathy were allowed to go by the board. Even the pawky wisdom of Walpole, who at least understood the advantage of letting sleeping dogs lie, was no longer to be found. The ministry to which it first fell to deal with the American situation was that of George Grenville, the worst type of pedant thrown up by officialdom, a painstaking bureaucrat, with strong notions of departmental efficiency and a portentous bore. Conscious only of our just claim that the colonies, for whose defence we had doubled our national debt, should contribute a moiety to that defence in future, and of the fact that it had been proved impossible to combine them for any representative purpose whatever, he fell back on the letter of the law. The first thing that he set himself to do was conscientiously to tighten up the bonds of the colonial system. The trade laws which had been administered with a judicious slackness he at once

proceeded to make a reality; he ordered the customs officers, who had been comfortably drawing their salaries in England, to their posts, and even the hated Molasses Act, which had only been enforced as an avowedly war measure, was now equally strictly enforced in time of peace, the duty being reduced so as to make it workable.

All this was annoying enough to the Americans, who were resigned to the trade laws so long as the more obnoxious of them could be evaded. But Grenville, without either himself or the Parliament having the least notion that anything out of the ordinary was being done, calmly clapped a direct tax on to the colonials in the form of a Stamp Act. This direct violation of the principle "no representation, no taxation" roused such a fury in the colonies that Grenville's Whig successor, Rockingham, with the young King's hearty approval, had it withdrawn, though with the qualification of a declaratory act to the effect that Parliament had the right to impose taxes on the colonies, a piece of Parliamentary flourish which nobody was likely to take seriously enough to resent. After this it might have been thought that English politicians would have been warned off the game of slapping the colonial hedgehog. But no sooner had Chatham let fall the reigns of power than his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Charles Townshend, a smart young politician on the make, conceived of the wonderful idea of taxing British exported goods in customs houses to be set up in American ports, which was equivalent to fining ourselves in such a way as to cause the maximum irritation to Americans. From this point our descent into the vortex of American revolt was continuous. The offending duties were withdrawn, with the exception of a trifling one on tea left to keep the sore open. Then followed a remission of that duty in respect of the East India Company's tea, which ought, in theory, to have benefited the American consumer, but which did in fact constitute a threat to the American smuggling trade of so intolerable a nature that three shiploads of tea were heaved into the water at Boston.

George III was a really courageous man, and he had the country behind him in resisting what seemed to him the insolent violence of the Americans. Dr. Johnson, who hated Americans, represented the commonsense point of view when he distinguished between true liberty and colonial licence and exhorted the government to make a proper example of men who so grossly flouted lawful authority. The fatal cry went up for a strong line; George III and North had the madness to embark on the punishment of that stronghold of liberty, Massachusetts. This, as anyone less blinded by obstinacy

might have seen, was equivalent to a declaration of war upon the colonies, and as such it was accepted. The colonies, which had unanimously refused to unite in face of a foreign enemy, quickly evolved a federal congress in armed resistance to the Mother Country; from resistance the transition was easy to cutting the painter formally by a declaration of independence, and thence easier still to an alliance with the very enemies from the threat of whose domination they had so recently been delivered by force of English arms.

Despite the heroics with which it has been celebrated, it was a tedious and uninspiring conflict, of which the most creditable feature is the heroic constancy of the colonial leader, George Washington, a successful Virginian tobacco planter. The union between the colonies was by no means perfect; there was a large sprinkling of loyalists who were treated, even by Washington himself, with brutal harshness, and the old colonial weakness of profiteering at the expense of the common cause was again *en evidence*. With vigorous and determined leadership, and with a concentrated will to victory, there is little doubt that the ill-disciplined and constantly deserting colonial armies could have been dispersed, and the Americans held down for a few troublous and miserable years. Even on the eve of the final victory, Washington was doubtful whether the Americans could hold out much longer. But England did not fight like a nation that means to win.

Certainly the country was, in a sense, behind the war, and the Parliamentary opposition, though it appeared formidable by the intellect and debating power of its members, had little power till events had demonstrated the impossibility of overcoming the American resistance. The great towns that were springing up with such rapidity were particularly bellicose, and none more so than Birmingham, to whose growing hardware manufactury the demand for arms was a godsend. But the sort of patriotism that was aroused was not of the sort that wins victories; there is not the least evidence that it was either founded on great principles or supported by great virtues. At best it was pride, at worst sheer cupidity, the desire for the loaves and fishes of the colonial trade. The bond between England and the colonies had been one of business, and men, though they can sometimes be persuaded to die, can seldom be inspired to conquer for business motives. As for the King, he was blind to all but the formalities of the situation; the colonists were rebels and it was the King's duty to suppress rebels. There is something almost heroic about the way in which he stuck, in spite of defeat

and odds, to the cause he believed right, and in which he kept stiffening up the resolution of poor, easy-going Lord North, even when that favourite of Royalty was wringing his hands and bleating, "O God, it is all over!"

The war was conducted with a languor and ineptitude that contrasted strangely with the terrific energy of Chatham's onslaught on France during the Seven Years' War. George III had almost a genius for choosing the worst possible ministers. Not content with North at the head of the administration, he appointed to the Colonial Office, with practical control of military operations, Lord George Germain, an aristocrat who had, on the best grounds, been declared by a court-martial unfit to serve His Majesty in any military capacity whatsoever, and ought to have shared the fate of Byng for shameful disobedience of orders to charge at Minden; at the Admiralty he placed that filthy old rake (whose caddishness to Wilkes had earned him the nickname of Jemmy Twitcher), Lord Sandwich. With these two worthies in supreme conduct of operations, it is not wonderful that they were carried on with languor and indecision. The first great disaster occurred when General Burgoyne, with a mixed force of British, German mercenaries and friendly Indians, struck southward from Canada, by way of Lake Champlain and the Hudson River, to join up with General Howe, who commanded our principal army at New York. Instead of attempting to co-operate, Howe, a political general, who would have preferred a compromise to a victory, and to whom the incredibly unshot Germain had denied vital information owing to his hurry to be off to Sussex for a week-end, wandered off at a leisurely pace in the opposite direction, to take Philadelphia, and having duly accomplished that task, sat down there from sheer lack of a notion what to do next, though, as a matter of fact, with his overwhelmingly superior forces, he could easily have destroyed Washington's ragged and deserting army, that lay in striking distance of him at Valley Forge. Meanwhile the country had risen round the unfortunate Burgoyne, who capitulated with his whole force. That is not the way in which men or nations fight who have staked their all upon victory.

Now were apparent the disadvantages of the overweening power we had acquired by the Peace of Paris. It was some time before France could realize the desperateness of our situation enough to force up her courage to the sticking point, but Burgoyne's disaster brought her into the war, and she was soon followed by her old ally

Spain. Our next enemy was Holland, though she was probably less formidable as an enemy than as a neutral, since we were instantly able to smash up her West Indian depot of St. Eustatius, from which she had been supplying the colonists with everything they needed. But to add to our misfortunes, most of the still neutral powers joined together in an armed league, the object of which was so to enlarge the rights of neutrals at sea as to cripple the use of our sea power.

England was now engaged in a desperate struggle, not for conquest but for her very life. The enemy fleets outnumbered hers, and thanks to Jemmy Twitcher and his like the navy was as ill-provided as it was deficient in numbers. The bottom fell out of one of our best ships, the Royal George, as she lay at anchor. Our proud Empire was shaken to its foundations; in India we were fighting with our backs to the wall against the terrible Hyder Ali of Mysore; our colonies, outside America, were everywhere threatened and sometimes captured, and in America itself our armies were striking blows in the air and tramping fruitlessly over immense distances of sparsely inhabited country. The French monarchy struck a shrewd blow at England and a fatal one at itself by sending a French force to America, where they imbibed ideas of liberty while France herself was sliding into the abyss of bankruptcy, from which the only way out proved to be the summoning of the States General. The end came in America when, partly by inferior numbers but more by mismanagement, the English fleet lost control of the sea for just long enough for Washington, by a brilliant concentration of all the available American and French troops, to corner a British army of 8,000 men in the peninsula of Yorktown and to force their capitulation.

None the less, England put up a plucky fight. India we saved, though by the skin of our teeth; Gibraltar was held against every attack, and Admiral Rodney, the greatest genius the war produced, though he was suspected of not being too clean-handed, won a complete victory over the enemy's fleet in the West Indies. France and Spain were feeling the strain of the war even more than we were, and a Whig government, that came into office with the avowed object of ending it, was able to patch up a peace that, while it recognized the independence of America and deprived us of some of our outlying possessions, left us powerful overseas and with an Empire not only as large as we could conveniently manage, but, in our state of disillusionment and exhaustion, at least as large

as we had any desire for. Materialism had brought its nemesis, and the kind of Empire, exploited on business principles by the Home Government, to which we had aspired in the eighteenth century, had lost its glamour. Liberty, which, in however crude and imperfect form, had been the principle of our Constitution, had now, in a broader and more generous sense, to become that of a Greater Britain.

The Romantic Spirit in Statesmanship

It was perhaps unfortunate—if we are to regard the loss of our American colonies as a misfortune—that the crisis could not have been postponed a little longer, until the emotional reaction against eighteenth century materialism had had time to gain strength. For the only bond that could have kept us attached to the colonies was, as Burke divined, the invisible one of sentiment, and to sentimental or emotional considerations our statesmen were becoming increasingly alive. One symptom of the new tendency was the extraordinary outburst of eloquence that makes the second half of the eighteenth century the golden age of British oratory. Corrupt and misrepresentative as Parliament had become, it witnessed scenes of an emotional intensity or, to an unsympathetic judgment, theatricality, such as would be inconceivable nowadays. One thinks of Sheridan concluding his two days' speech on the Begums of Oudh by falling into a deliberate swoon into the arms of Burke, of Burke himself flinging a dagger on to the floor of the House of Commons, of Chatham singling out Mansfield with the words "Methinks Felix trembles!" or of Thurlow's "When I forget my King may my God forget me!" Such overflowings of sentiment may possibly be considered fit subjects for ridicule, or even contempt, but they are highly significant of the spirit of the times, or, to put it more precisely, *a* spirit, for never at any time did Romanticism, so-called, make a complete conquest even of the educated classes. Not even the highest criticism would convict of romantic leanings Jeremy Bentham or the Duke of Wellington.[1]

At the time of the quarrel with America we witness the spectacle of a few men, in advance of their time, desperately striving to combat the commonsense formalism of a George III or a Dr. Johnson, and

[1] And yet Wellington is known to have shed tears twice on the field of battle, incidents that it would be hard to parallel in the record of any commander of recent times.

to bring the light of imagination to bear on our relations with America. The two most important of these were Chatham and Burke, the man of ardent energy striking out sparks of intuition, and the intuitive philosopher of a type whose supreme representative is St. Paul. It is, of course, easy to point out that neither was perfectly informed about the American situation; they rated a great deal too highly the willingness of the colonists to accept the laws regulating trade, and they were a little apt to view them through rose-coloured glasses —the English, for example, had no monopoly of the use of redskins, and if we enlisted Germans the colonists did the same, on a necessarily smaller scale, with negroes. But these were generous errors and hardly detract from the surpassing wisdom that, if it did not enable Burke and Chatham to save the Empire of the eighteenth century, did at least foreshadow the principles by which the Commonwealth of the twentieth was to be sustained.

Of the two, Chatham was the less complete philosopher; he was essentially a man of action, and his fiery energy, like that of Cromwell, seldom permitted him to take calm or passionless views. He was more of a seer than a thinker, and he saw the situation as a man might in a midnight thunderstorm, by the light of successive flashes. He loved the Empire that his genius had raised to such a pinnacle of glory, and could not bear to think of parting with any inch of it. He regarded the intervention of France as a piece of sheer insolence, and would have fought out the quarrel with her, though not with America, to the death. But patriot though he was, there was nothing commonplace or mean about his patriotism. He rejoiced that the Americans had resisted, he recognized that they were fighting the battle of English liberty as well as their own, and he declared that were he an American, as he was an Englishman, while a single foreign troop (of our German mercenaries) was landed on his shores, he would never lay down his arms—never! never! never!

Chatham's attitude was more distinctively English than that of Burke, which is not remarkable when we remember that Burke was an Irishman. More and more, as premature old age laid its hand upon Chatham, did he cling to the idea of liberty as the soul of the English Constitution. Magna Charta and the Petition of Right were ever in his thoughts, and if his historical knowledge was not profound, he at least had the root of the matter. He realized that in conquering the Americans, England would be making the most shameful of all conquests of herself, she would be annihilating all that made her worthy of respect or patriotism. "America," he

said, in one of his gigantic images "if she falls, will fall like the strong man. She will embrace the pillars of the State and pull down the Constitution along with her."

Thus Chatham regarded the matter first and foremost as a constitutionalist; it was not so much liberty in the abstract that he wished to see maintained, as the liberties that immemorial precedent had made the birthright of every Briton or British colonist. Burke, though he paid due honour to the spirit of our institutions, was naturally inclined to take a more universal view, to lay down the principles of free association on which not only the British but every Empire ought to be established. It was his supreme merit to have discovered that in imperial politics, as in religion, it is the things that are not seen, the spiritual values, that count for more than the forms of power and statistics of prosperity. "Magnanimity in politics," he said, "is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together."

In one of the most masterly expositions of which we have any record, he demonstrates the wickedness and futility of force as a means of imperial domination. "America, gentlemen say, is a noble object. It is an object well worth fighting for. Certainly it is, if fighting a people be the best way of gaining them." He proceeds, with a passion so perfectly in restraint and so informed with reason as to be well-nigh irresistible, to strip naked, in its murderous stupidity, the jingoism not only of his own but of all time. Of a pettifogging materialism he is equally scornful. The true Act of Navigation which will draw to us the riches of the world is, he holds, freedom, that freedom which confers so much greater strength and security than any outward and visible signs of empire. "My hold of the colonies is in the close affection that grows from common names, from kindred blood, from similar privileges and equal protection. These are ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron." From such an elevation, the uninspired ambitions and material calculations of the eighteenth century are dwarfed to pettiness and vulgarity. The conclusion of the whole matter is that, "we ought to elevate our minds to the greatness of that trust to which the order of Providence has called us."

8

The Soul of India

It is now time to turn from our Western Empire, which we could not keep, to that greater Empire in the East into the lordship of

which the force of circumstance and national character was driving us, half against our will. This is not the place for a long digression into the past of Hindustan, and yet some mention of that past cannot be avoided, for there is no land where the past so palpably survives in the present, or of which it is so nearly true to say, "the present is the past." The unique importance, not only to the peoples immediately concerned, but to mankind, of the association of Britain with India, demands of us at least an effort to understand that so little changing heritage of past ages.

We are accustomed, when we think of India, to visualize her as something pre-eminently Oriental, in the sense of that notorious line,

"East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet."

But it would be at least as reasonable if we were to think of Hindu civilization as the Eastern outpost of what, however vaguely, we must designate as Aryan. Few people would, in our present state of knowledge, accept a neat and rounded theory of a race in Central Asia from which our own is descended. But we have the evidence of language and of ideas sufficient to establish the existence of a spiritual ancestry common to ourselves and the Aryan conquerors of Hindustan. And a kinship of spirit is even more important than one of blood.

How far we can speak of blood-relationship is a question to which no simple or undisputed answer can at present be given. The folk who brought the Aryan language into Europe, who adored the same God Father—Jupiter, Zeus, or Dyauspiter—who had got as far as using doors (the familiar "dirwaz" of every Indian bungalow), before the parting of ways East and West, and whose pioneer wanderings through virgin forest gave birth to the idea of "fear" or "faring", were doubtless only one among several European peoples. But it is at least probable that their ascendency did not stop short at the imposition of words, and that the same quality of mind, that is revealed in the Vedas and the Sanskrit language, was capable of giving a spiritual lead to the common civilization which was first Mediterranean and then European. So with their brethren, the first invaders of India, who won their way through the North Western passes, and whose triumphant progress as far South as Ceylon is hinted at in the epic of Rama and his monkey (or aboriginal) allies—they were doubtless never more than a minority. But they were a minority who maintained a singular purity of blood and ideas through the institution of caste, and they were the leaven that leavened the whole lump of Indian civilization.

Of this civilization the keynote is an intense subjectivity. The Indian has little of the English and Roman craving for outward and visible success. All systems of Indian philosophy and religion are more or less agreed in their estimate of the visible and tangible universe as *maya*—illusion. And this conception of things has struck deep roots into Indian life. Nowhere is it more manifest than in Indian art, upon which it is so difficult for the Western critic to pass a fair judgment. The typical Greek or Tuscan or English creative artist is distinguished by nothing so much as his loving study of nature, even when he aspires to use her as the mouthpiece of his own spirit, but to the Hindu the facts of nature are nothing or less than nothing; all the truth to which he aspires is in the embodiment of his own imagination. With this object in view he will think nothing of multiplying arms and legs, of giving his gods and heroes leonine chests over wasp-like waists, or of allowing Rama to strike out a new line in military engineering by shooting arrows so fast that they form a continuous bridge for his "hundreds of thousands of millions" of monkeys, lemurs, and bears to cross from India to Ceylon.

So much is the Indian in the habit of living in a world of imaginative symbols that he is apt to let them run riot in the objective world, with the strangest results. He will think nothing of proclaiming his contempt of matter by leaping down the cliff of Mahadeo or flinging himself to be crushed beneath the car of Juggernaut at Puri, he will carry his symbolism of universal fecundity so far as to encourage girls to present their charms to all worshippers at Krishna's shrine, nor would a Hindu wife have thought it anything but natural, in the days of *Sati*, to divest herself, through fire, of the flesh that kept her separate from her lord. One of the strangest sights to Western eyes is that of a troop of large white monkeys pulling up, with systematic thoroughness, the young shoots in some peasant's field, unmolested, save perhaps for a hardly regarded shouting and chasing, because gratitude to Rama's ally, the Monkey Prince Hanuman, forbids a good Hindu to molest monkeys.

This looseness of touch with the outer world has undoubtedly proved a source of much practical weakness to the Hindus. It must be held accountable for a certain deficiency in instinct of political combination, and this in despite of the fact that the early Brahmanic code, the Law of Manu, forms a veritable treasure-house of antique wisdom. But Manu was rather the propounder of a social than a political system, the system based on caste that has endured

to our own day. The Indian has seldom been vitally concerned about his governors. If a Mahommedan Akbar or an English Victoria would undertake the business, he had no special sense of grievance, provided he was not troubled in defiance of all custom and precedent. According to ancient Hindu ideas, Kings were to be duly honoured as Kings, but the proudest monarch was inferior to the meanest Brahman. The important things of life were those of the spirit, and these the government could not touch.

Accordingly we find that while the social system possesses a permanence only to be paralleled in the survival of the Hebrew Mosaic tradition, political institutions do not develop, and the work even of the greatest Kings is characterized by a singular transience. Even the Buddhist Asoka, the holy King whose ideas, at a time when Rome was just beginning her fight to the death with Carthage, put so many of our most advanced modern conceptions of government out of date, to whom the only victory was the free triumph of spiritual truth, and who organized vast works of relief and service to animals no less than men, left no system behind him. We hardly know the fate of the successors of his line, save that they died out unrecorded, and that his work found none to continue it.

This almost deliberate incapacity for political development as caused one of the most dangerous and yet most natural fallacies to which the Western mind is liable. "India," some people will say, "is not a nation, and never has been united under one government until the coming of the English. India is, in fact, historically no more than a geographical expression." But no Hindu, whose mind is not biassed by Western thought, would ever dream of making common government the test of unity. The unity to which India aspires, and which she has in such large measure possessed for many centuries, is one of the spirit. Even the formality of a common creed is no necessary qualification. The Sikh, the Jain, even the Buddhist, so long as he remains within the circle of Indian influence, may be said to have eaten the same spiritual meat and drunk the same spiritual drink as the most orthodox Brahman, from whom he differs merely in his bolder or more fantastic applications of the same underlying philosophy. And the Indian mind is the most tolerant of difference of any within historical experience. "In India," says Rai Pundit Radhakrishna Bahadur,[1] "even downright atheists like Charvakas were allowed to disseminate their views unmolested. Kapil was never offered any persecution for declaring

[1] In a preface he was kind enough to contribute to my book of poems, *India*.

that the existence of God could not be proved, Gautama Buddha, who broke away from the Vedic religion and made converts of the followers of that religion, was never persecuted. On the other hand, he was deified as an incarnation of Vishnu." Even the Mahommedan in India is in some subtle way differentiated from other Mahommedans. His faith loses some of its fierce intolerance, in time it becomes more mellow and urbane, it even dallies with notions of caste.

A conquering power, in the military and political sense, India has never been. Of what interest would such triumphs be to the Brahman, the crown of whose life, according to the Laws of Manu, is to retire in due time from the affairs and ambitions of the world in order to pass his declining years in meditation and freedom from earthly desire? India's great and most lasting triumph consists in the propagation of the Buddhist rule of life throughout the Far East, thanks to the spiritual genius of the Founder and the missionary zeal of King Asoka. But it is not only in matters of faith that Indian ideas have gone forth conquering and to conquer. It is now realized to what an extent, throughout the whole of the Far East, India has been the fount of spiritual inspiration both in thought and art, how much the creative genius of China and Japan derives its origin from her.

The Indian mind, as might have been expected, has achieved its most notable conquests in the realm of pure subjectivity. The six systems of philosophy show a marvellous subtlety in evolving the ultimate secrets of the universe out of the operations of the mind. Science was certainly not neglected, but though much ingenious work was accomplished, there was little of ordered progress in astronomy or medicine, and no work to compare with that accomplished in the science of grammar, and in the art of mind control or yogi. Fresh schools of thought and literature continued to prove the inexhaustible fecundity of the Indian mind, but its conquests over nature were comparatively meagre. Indian civilization preferred to maintain a proud aloofness from the illusion of a material universe.

But India was not to be allowed to develop in peace on her own lines. She was unable to close the gate through the passes of her North Western frontier, and through this poured a succession of invaders who profited by the weakness of her political disunion, and by the many periods when there was no strong dynasty or power to oppose them. Many of these invaders India, with her marvellous assimilative powers, contrived to make part of herself, and not a few

of the Rajput clans, the chivalry of Hindustan, are suspected of a Scythian origin. But a time came when the invader was too strong to be absorbed. The tide of Mahommedan enthusiasm, constantly swelling, reached as far as India, the armies of Islam swept down into the plains, the most romantic of patriots, the high-hearted Prithvi Raj, dashed himself in vain against the invaders. Mahommedan rulers and dynasties established themselves in the fairest provinces of Northern India and the power of Islam kept enlarging its bounds and extending southwards. The last great Hindu empire of Vijayanagar, in the South, was overthrown by a combination of Moslem states in 1565.

Mahommedan power attained its zenith in India with the rule of the Moguls, invaders of Mongolian origin who came from the highlands of Central Asia. A series of remarkable sovereigns succeeded in raising the power and splendour of this dynasty to unprecedented heights, and they included a ruler little less remarkable than Asoka himself in Akbar, whose reign coincides roughly with that of our own Elizabeth, and on whom, in spite of his being unable to read, the spirit of Indian tolerance had so abundantly descended that he attempted to establish a universal religion which should embody that pure essence which is hidden beneath the dogma of every faith. It was under Mogul auspices that Hindu craftsmen, clothing with their own spirit the forms of Saracenic architecture, erected buildings, of which the Taj Mahal is the best known if not indisputably the most consummate example,[1] of a grace and dignity never surpassed in East or West. At the same time a school of painting had arisen, surpassing its Persian original in sumptuousness and delicacy. While this great Empire was at its height, European adventurers could aspire to no more than the establishment of trading stations here and there along the coast, and they sedulously courted the Padshah's good graces.

9

The Beginning of the British Raj

So long as a powerful Empire was established over the greater part of India, there could be no question of conquest by any European power. The utmost to which Western ambition could aspire was

[1] For my own part I should wish to accord the palm to the neighbouring, and slightly earlier, tomb of Itmad ud Daulah. Mr. E. B. Havell has, I hope, finally disposed of the cock and bull story of the Taj's Italian designer.

to the possession of a few islands or ports as trading stations. The Portuguese, who came first, made a hopeful attempt to corner the trade between Europe and the East, but they had neither the numbers nor the power adequate for their purpose; they relied on the breeding of half-castes and the cruel conversion of Indians to what they called Christianity. They soon dropped out of the running, which was taken up by the Dutch, the English, and, finally, the French. Our own East India Company was incorporated on the last day of the sixteenth century and commenced its operations on a comparatively modest and unambitious scale of independent voyages. It was only the fact that the Dutch had already secured the lion's share of the trade of the coveted East India Islands, that drove our own merchants, as a second best expedient, to confine their chief efforts to the Indian mainland.

It was only by degrees that the Company began to acquire a permanent organization of factories and agents. It aspired to no more than the status of a trading association, and such depots as it acquired were solely for business purposes, and without the least thought of imperial expansion. Of these old factors of the East India Company we can get a tolerable impression from memoirs and the records of the company. They were a hard-bitten and masterful breed of almost boundless energy, entirely unscrupulous, fortifying themselves against the terrors of the climate by copious draughts of the fire-water called arrack. They were able to make the best of well-nigh impossible conditions. A dreary tongue of surf-beaten land was the unpromising site fixed upon for the Company's settlement of Madras, and tough Job Charnock fastened on a fever-stricken swamp, obviously unfit for human habitation, for his Fort William, which was subsequently to form the nucleus of the great city of Calcutta. The island of Bombay was acquired by Charles II as part of poor Catherine of Braganza's dowry and made over by him to the East India Company for what it would fetch, namely, ten pounds a year. All through the seventeenth century the Mogul Empire continued in undiminished splendour, and with an actual increase of territory and revenue. The Emperor Aurungzebe was, to all appearance, an even greater potentate than his great-grandfather Akbar.

But the Mogul Empire, even at the height of its outward greatness, was tottering to its fall. It is said that Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh guru, when in prison at Delhi, was taxed by Aurungzebe with gazing at the royal zenana :

"Emperor Aurungzebe," was the reply, "certainly I was on the top story of my prison, but not to look at thy private rooms or thy queens, but towards the Europeans, who are coming from beyond the seas to tear down thy *purdahs* and overthrow thy empire."

For, indeed, that Empire was an idol with feet of clay. Not only was the administration wasteful and corrupt to the last degree, but it depended for such efficiency as it possessed almost entirely on the character of the Sovereign. There was no fixed rule of succession, as in Europe, and accordingly the decease of an Emperor was followed by a civil war to the death between his sons, throwing the whole government into confusion and wasting its resources. Aurungzebe himself was a fanatic of the narrowest type. He reversed the tolerant policy of Akbar, destroyed temples right and left, imposed differential taxation upon the Hindu infidels, and, with all the folly of an ambitious imperialist, wantonly destroyed the two Southern buffer Mahommedan states of Bijapur and Golconda.

By the time he died, in 1707, at the age of 90, his Empire, though outwardly intact, was inwardly exhausted. His intolerance had not only alienated his surest support in the gallant Rajput clans, but had raised him a host of enemies, including the formidable Puritan sect of the Sikhs, in the North West, and in the South West, along the line of the Western Ghats, the Mahrattas. These latter, half patriots and half robbers, under a leader of genius called Sivaji, commenced a revival of militant Hinduism. Aurungzebe's cumbrous armies might beat, but could never corner these elusive enemies, and the last years of the Emperor's life were spent in a long, tedious and utterly futile attempt to crush their opposition by force of arms. When at last the old man, worn out by time and despair, launched, as he expressed it, his barque upon the waters, the Mogul Empire had neither strength nor vitality, and was ready to fall to pieces.

The first half of the eighteenth century saw the ruin accomplished. So feeble had the central government become, that the rulers of the outlying provinces became the founders of dynasties owing no more than a nominal allegiance to the monarch at Delhi. And then, in 1739, another invader, the Afghan Nadir Shah, on plunder bent, swept down on Delhi, scattered to the winds such forces as the Emperor could muster to oppose him, occupied Delhi, ordered a ruthless massacre of its inhabitants, carried off all the vast riches of the Mogul court on which he could lay his hands, and decamped, leaving the once dreaded Emperor bankrupt and powerless. It was a question whether the Mahrattas would be able to establish

a Hindu in place of a Mahommedan Empire, but these hopes were dashed to the ground when another Afghan invader, advancing into India, encountered the whole force of the Mahratta confederacy at Panipat, a historic battleground North of Delhi. Here the Hindu army was utterly overthrown, and the flower of the Mahratta nobility lay dead upon the field. It was a blow from which the Mahrattas never wholly recovered, and though they were still formidable, there was now no question of a strong, native, central power arising in India.

The blow struck at Panipat was in fact decisive. India was now in a state of political decomposition. Tyrants great and petty competed for power, marauders plundered at will. The opportunity for the Europeans dotted about the coast for fishing in troubled waters was too obvious to escape the notice of intelligent men on the spot. By this time Holland had ceased to count seriously as an Indian competitor with France and England, and the two rivals were left to fight it out between themselves, though Robert Clive, in command of the Company's forces, found it expedient to settle Dutch pretensions once and for all by destroying an expedition that they sent up the Hugli and seizing their factory at Chinsura. There is no need to record the steps in the struggle by which the French were reduced to subsisting on sufference in a few peaceful trading stations.

The effects of this struggle were, however, momentous, not only in the disappearance of the French, but in the fact that the Company, following their precedent, had now become deeply entangled in Indian politics, and also a formidable military power, thanks to the discovery of how to drill and train Indian troops under European officers. John Company was, in fact, being drawn, in its own despite, into the momentous competition for the heritage of the Moguls, for, since the battle of Panipat, the throne of India had been to all intents and purposes vacant, waiting for somebody strong enough to take possession.

The irrevocable step was taken when the Company assumed first the virtual and then the formal lordship of the richest province in India, that of the Lower Ganges valley, or Bengal. This had been one of the outlying provinces of the Mogul Empire, and its ruler, or Nawab, had been one of the first to break away from any more than a nominal subjection to the central government. All had gone well between the first independent Nawab and the English, but his successor turned out to be an ignorant and hardly sane ruffian,

who was not long in picking a quarrel with the English, overwhelming their settlement at Fort William or Calcutta, and allowing his prisoners to be shut up for the night in the infamous "black hole" from which only a wretched few staggered forth alive. This outrage, intolerable even to a trading company, brought Clive on to the scene, and his handful of men won an amazing victory at Plassey over perhaps twenty times their number of the Nawab's lukewarm and treacherously led forces.

So overwhelming was this victory, which came just before the high tide of our success in the Seven Years' War, that it was almost inevitable that the Company should seize upon the vast prize of Bengal, that was to be had for the asking. At first they were content to set up puppet rulers whom they could squeeze to an unlimited extent, their object being to exploit the wretched province to the utmost possible extent for business purposes. Never, not even in Ireland, had the materialism of the eighteenth century produced such odious results. The Company fastened upon Bengal like a malignant vampire, draining its life-blood without any thought of imperial responsibility or ordinary humanity. As was the Company, so were its servants. Wretchedly underpaid, their only thought was to get huge fortunes as quick as possible by any cruel or corrupt means. And while these fortunes were being made, and the term "nabob" coming to denote a class of *nouveaux riches* conspicuous at home, the dividends of the Company actually went down. It is a sordid and shameful story.

Ground down by iniquitous English privileges and sweating taxation, the unresisting people of Bengal groaned beneath a tyranny compared with which that of the most bloodthirsty Mahommedan despots was light and merciful. One attempt was, indeed, made to shake off the yoke by a certain Mir Cassim, whom the Company set up as Nawab in the hope that he might extract even more plunder out of his people than the puppet who had preceded him. This man proved to have more spirit than had been expected and, in alliance with the Nawab of Oudh and the now powerless Emperor, made a desperate effort to deliver his province from the usurpers. The discipline of the Company's troops completely crushed this combination in a victory against vast odds at Buxar, which brought his Imperial Majesty wandering over, next day, to the British camp, as much a puppet in our hands, for the time, as the new Nawab himself.

Clive, who was sent out by the directors to cope with the mis-

government of their servants, managed, during his short stay, to quiet the province and, by sheer force of will, to put down the most glaring forms of iniquity, but he was not able to strike at the root of the evil, and his own hands were far from clean. He at least saw clearly the choice that was forced on England, whether or not to accept the opportunity of becoming the supreme power in India. "It is scarcely hyperbole," he wrote, "to say that to-morrow the whole Moghul empire is in our power." Clive, at any rate, was not the man to shrink from a forward policy. He stripped the wretched Nawab of all power, though leaving him his title and nominal authority. He then made our other pensioner, the Emperor, legalize our position in Bengal, and the two neighbouring provinces of Bihar and Orissa, by granting the Company the Diwani, or legal fiction of colleagueship with its own slave, the Nawab. This, with the addition of the Northern Circars and its other stations, gave the Company a powerful footing on the mainland of India.

On Clive's departure the plague of misgovernment broke out anew, and in 1770 the cup of Bengal's misery was filled by what is perhaps the most terrible of all famines on Indian record, which put a merciful end to the sufferings of some third of the population. The most ghastly fact of all, and one which tells its own tale, is that the revenue was so screwed up as to show not the least diminution, and even to increase.

10

Warren Hastings

In spite of the callousness of the time and the difficulty of knowing what was happening on the other side of the world, the Home Government, even that of Lord North, could not be blind to the fact that the scandal of a private company assuming, without control or responsibility, such vast political powers, must be put an end to. Accordingly, in 1773, a Regulating Act was passed, in which the Company's administration was brought, though in rather vague terms, under the control of Parliament, in which a Governor-General and his council were nominated for five years, and in which provision was made for the setting up of a Supreme Court of Justice.

The Governor-General who was appointed under this new scheme was Warren Hastings, who had worked his way up in the Company's service by sheer merit, and—what was extraordinary in that wicked administration of Bengal—honesty. He was, indeed, a man of

exceptional qualifications when judged by the standard of any age. He had wide and scholarly interests, and his ideas ranged quite beyond the scope of the ordinary politician— he was, for example, the first to advocate shortening the route to India by breaking the voyage into two halves, divided by the overland journey across the Isthmus of Suez. He had a sympathetic understanding of the Indian people rare in an Englishman of that time ; he scrupulously respected native laws and customs, and before his accession to power he had been honourably distinguished by setting his face against the Bengal tyranny. He was, moreover, one in whom gentleness of disposition was combined with a strength and ability that enabled him to save our rule in India at a time of stress when almost any other man would have been overwhelmed.

He took up his task of government under conditions that rendered it well-nigh impossible. The Regulating Act was so framed as to nullify altogether the Governor-General's powers if a majority of the council were against him. It so happened that one of the members of this council was a certain Sir Philip Francis, a man of petty and jaundiced nature, but excellent parts. He is almost certainly the author of the *Letters of Junius*, pieces of anonymous political journalism that were diabolical in every sense, even in that of being diabolically clever. This man now turned all his malignant ingenuity to the discomfiture of the noble Hastings, whom it was his desire to supplant. The nature and objects of Francis are sufficiently indicated by one incident, which occurred on the eve of the duel into which he finally forced Hastings, and in which he was wounded, though unhappily not to the death. He had a trial shot with his pistol at one of those Indian crows that are always to be seen hopping about the verandah of a Calcutta bungalow, and, having successfully destroyed that useful scavenger, remarked, " If my hand will only be as steady an hour hence I shall be Governor-General of India to-morrow."

Francis managed to obtain the support of two members of the Council, and between them they were able for two years to thwart and annul every measure of Hastings. It was only when death deprived Francis of his supporters that the Governor-General became master in his own house, but it was not until four years later that Francis saw that the game was up in India, and went home, there to work tirelessly and secretly in order to wreak his revenge on the man who was saving India for England. There is no need to rake up the formerly vexed question of Hastings's dealings with the

Rohillas, the Rajah of Benares, that twice-born forger Nuncomar, and the Begums of Oudh. By the agreement of all reputable authorities, the charges of tyranny and corruption brought against Hastings have long ago been blown to the winds. That is not to say that in a time of desperate stress, and in dealing with men without honesty or honour, the Governor-General did not occasionally resort to drastic measures, in which it would be hard altogether to justify him. But such faults as he displayed were those of a humane and high-minded gentleman, doing his best under circumstances of incredible difficulty. His achievement amply bears out Mr. Vincent Smith's estimate of him as "the greatest of Anglo-Indian rulers", fit for comparison with Akbar.

He set himself manfully to cleansing the Augean stable of Bengal administration, and succeeded in putting down the worst abuses, and at any rate bringing British rule into favourable comparison with that of other powers in India. But his hardest task was that of preventing our rule in India from being completely overwhelmed. It was during his governorship that we drifted into war, first with our American Colonies and then with the Bourbon powers and Holland. At this lowest point of our fortunes we had to fight for our life in India. First we were involved in war with the Mahrattas, still, in despite of Panipat, the most formidable native Indian military power, and commanded by a worthy successor of Sivaji, the base-born Scindia, who received the ignominious surrender of a small Company's army that had advanced from Bombay on Poona as far as the little hamlet of Wadgaon, nestling under the verdant steep of the Ghats.

Hardly had Hastings by a combination of military energy and skilful diplomacy scotched this Maharatta peril, than an even more terrible crisis arose in the South. A Mahommedan adventurer, called Hyder Ali, who had got possession of the Southern province of Mysore, and, with something of the genius of the Zulu Chaka, turned it rapidly into a formidable military power, picked a quarrel with the English, and swept irresistibly to the outskirts of Madras. To add to our difficulties, France had now come into the war. and her fleet was disputing on equal terms for the mastery of the Indian Ocean. Thanks to the prompt decision of Hastings, who, despite the malignant opposition of Francis, dispatched gallant old Sir Eyre Coote, the conqueror of Lally, with sufficient reinforcements to the Southern Presidency, Hyder Ali was defeated, and though Mysore was still a thorn in our side, the immediate danger had passed away.

Hastings had now brought the ship of England's state in India into calm waters where she could ride on an even keel. He had hoped to be able to exert his powers under tolerable conditions, especially when the new Premier, William Pitt the Younger, passed an India Act which gave the Governor-General reasonable authority over his council. But it was not to be. He was called home, and he returned amid the honour and gratitude of his countrymen, and, what is more, carrying with him the respect, if not the affection, of Hindus, Mahommedans, and Anglo-Indians alike, despite the fact that the three have seldom been known to display unanimity on any subject whatever. But the hardest of his trials was yet to come. The amiable Francis had done his work only too well, and had succeeded in poisoning the minds of men better than himself against Hastings, whom he represented, with a skill in perverting facts that would not have disgraced the father of lies, as a hard-hearted and corrupt tyrant, a monster in human form.

The curtain now went up upon what was in the truest and noblest sense a tragedy, a conflict of wills in which the antagonists were heroes, great souls who, by falling short of perfection, put themselves into the power of destiny. We must remember that the reaction against eighteenth century materialism had gained considerable ground by this time. A new sensitiveness to suffering was perceptible even in the House of Commons, and particularly among the more advanced and active members of the Whig opposition, men who, despite the unpopularity they incurred, had steadfastly upheld the cause of American liberty. It was not for nothing that Burke and Chatham had cried shame on the employment of German mercenaries and moved men to tears at the horrors of war as conducted by Redskins. These new Whigs had learnt and were teaching the lesson that the responsibilities of Empire are not to be reckoned in cash terms, since the life is more than the meat.

It had been well known for some time that all was not well with the administration of India. The regulation of the Company's affairs had, in fact, become one of the most important problems of British politics. Two ministries, within eleven years, had passed Acts defining and limiting its powers, and a third had suffered shipwreck in the attempt to do so. An attempt had also been made by Parliament to inquire into the conduct of no less a personage than Lord Clive, who, if he was as great a genius as Hastings, was quite lacking in the latter's delicacy of honour and refinement of character. The Houses had acted, on this occasion, not unworthily of their best

traditions, and the Commons, while unanimously acknowledging Clive's conspicuous services to his country, had censured him and, by implication, lesser men if greater offenders, for applying acquisitions gained in the service of the state to his own benefit. There they had let the matter drop.

It was in 1787 that the malignity of Francis had worked sufficiently on the humane or interested feelings of members of Parliament to lead to the demand in the Commons for Hastings's impeachment. The matter might never have gone further had not William Pitt, the young Prime Minister, after voting, with his obedient majority, in Hastings's favour on one of the most serious charges, pronounced a balanced and hesitating verdict against him on one of less gravity and plausibility. This led to Hastings' impeachment before the House of Lords by a committee of managers headed by Burke, including Sheridan and Fox, but not, much to the honour of the Commons, Francis, indispensable though Burke considered him to the prosecution. There was a decency to be preserved.

This famous impeachment marks a turning point in the history of the Empire, the point at which it may be said that the conception of Empire first begins to develop into that of Commonwealth. It may be said at once that the impeachment itself was the failure it deserved to be, and that after letting it drag its weary length for seven years, until everybody was bored with the whole affair, the Lords did what was expected of them in acquitting Hastings unanimously on some of the charges and by overwhelming majorities on the rest. Hastings, who had displayed the utmost firmness and equanimity throughout his persecution, retired to his country estate, a ruined man—he had had to spend more than seventy thousand pounds in his defence. He had borne the brunt of hours and days of abuse delivered with an eloquence beside which his plain statement of the facts seemed tedious and long-winded. Nor was his fair fame safe even after his acquittal and death. Most people have gathered their impressions of him from a plausible but scandalously unjust essay by Macaulay, and even to-day, when the facts are accessible to anyone who cares to read them, such a statement can get into public print as that of the distinguished Anglo-French journalist who professes to bring up to date John Lingard's *History of England*:

"Warren Hastings," pronounces Mr. Belloc, on the strength, probably, of some hazy recollection of Macaulay, "who had shown throughout those times an extreme energy, had accompanied it with the grossest tyranny, cruelty and bad faith."

One thinks of the Begums of Oudh, who were supposed to have been the most conspicuous victims of Hastings's tyranny, and whose sufferings had provided that brilliant but thoroughly unprincipled Irishman, Sheridan, with the material for what some have considered the most moving piece of Parliamentary eloquence ever delivered, going out of their way, like generous-spirited old ladies, to write to their supposed oppressor heartily exonerating him and wishing for his successful acquittal. One thinks too of Sheridan being introduced, years after the trial, to Hastings by the future George IV. "He lost no time," says the observant Mr. Creevy, "in attempting to cajole old Hastings, begging him to believe that any part he had ever taken against him was purely political, and that no one had a greater respect for him than himself, etc., etc." The old hero—we can imagine with what feelings—replied gravely that it would be a great consolation to him in his declining days if Mr. Sheridan would make that sentence more public, but Sheridan, says Creevy, "was obliged to mutter and get out of such an engagement as well as he could."

Our own feelings in this matter have perhaps induced us to linger unduly over the honour of one who

> "has outsoared the shadow of our night,
> Envy and calumny and hate and pain" . . . . . .

But we have wished to make it abundantly clear that the importance of Hastings's trial has no relation to the supposed guilt of the victim. Burke, who dominated the prosecution, and whose eloquence was of a more philosophic and enduring quality than Sheridan's, in full assurance as to the righteousness of his cause, was fighting for a great principle against a great evil, with the tragic qualification that, thanks to the information he had received from Francis and from his own connections in Southern India, he had singled out as the embodiment of that evil the very man who, from the beginning of his career, had steadfastly set his face against it. In attacking Hastings he was wrestling not against the man, not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places, against that whole conception of Empire which would make armed force its means and material gain its end, and would scorn as unworthy of practical men the golden rule of putting a neighbour's or a subject's interests on a par with one's own. That in shooting his arrow over the wall he hit his brother, need not blind us to the fact that the Hastings impeachment vindicated, in the most public and unforgettable way, the doctrine

that no amount of material success can condone moral wrong, that it profits a nation nothing if she gains the whole world, but sacrifices her own soul to injustice or tyranny.

We must try for the moment to eliminate from our minds what we now know of Hastings's innocence and Burke's false information, and to regard the figure conjured up by the prosecution as we should one of the monsters of creative art, a Cenci or a Tamburlaine, whose personality we do not connect, except by name, with that of anybody who really lived. Burke's Hastings is no man, but the evil spirit that desolated Bengal, that lost us the United States, that planted the seeds of inextinguishable bitterness in the heart of Ireland, that has walked the earth under the names of *Weltpolitik*, of Prussianism, of the will to power, and even patriotism and our imperial mission; it is the Antichrist who thinks scorn of every unselfish and generous impulse, and who would reduce civilized nations to a moral level below that of dogs and apes. Look on it in that light, and you will appreciate the magnificence of Burke's appeal to the Bench of Bishops:

"You have," he adjures the assembled peers, "the representatives of that religion which says that their God is love, that the very vital spirit of their institution is charity; a religion which so much hates oppression, that when the God whom we adore appeared in human form, He did not appear in a form of greatness and majesty, but in sympathy with the lowest of the people, and thereby made it a firm and ruling principle, that their welfare was the object of all government; since the Person, who was Master of Nature, chose to appear Himself in a subordinate situation. These are the considerations which influence them, which animate them [a somewhat ironical compliment to the placid old prelates to whom it was addressed] and will animate them against all oppression; knowing that He who is called first among them, and first among us all, both of the flock that is fed and of those who feed it, made Himself the servant of all!"

Viewed in the light of the principles on which they are based, Burke's speeches at this trial touch an even higher level than his plea for conciliation with America. There he had had to deal with men of the same blood and traditions as those of Englishmen, men who were standing for the same principles as Hampden and Eliot, but now he was pleading for sympathy and justice on behalf of a race whose kinship with us was not even suspected, and whom most Englishmen scarcely regarded with more brotherly feelings than they

cherished for the poor blacks whom their ships bore away from their homes to bondage or death. It is true that during the eighteenth century a philosophic Oriental, usually a Chinaman or a Persian, had been the fictitious mouthpiece by which advanced spirits like Voltaire and Montesquieu were wont to deliver their own criticisms of society. But Burke made a genuine effort to understand the people whose rights he was defending, to enter into their point of view, as members of a civilization to be honoured equally with our own. "God forbid," he exclaimed, "we should pass judgment on a people who framed their laws and institutions prior to our insect origin of yesterday." He seems to have had some dim, prophetic intuition of that marriage of souls between England and India which is among the fairest hopes of mankind to-day.

But it was not only India for which Burke was pleading. His sympathy was wide enough to embrace mankind, to perceive that nations live not to themselves, but as part of a universal brotherhood whose common welfare is of more importance than that of any mere state or empire. In a magnificently ascending scale of charges he arraigned the evil spirit he misnamed Hastings at the bar of humanity.

"I impeach him in the name of all the Commons of Great Britain, whose national character he has dishonoured.

"I impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose laws, rights, and liberties he has subverted, whose properties he has destroyed, whose country he has laid waste and desolate.

"I impeach him in the name and by virtue of those eternal laws of Justice which he has violated.

"I impeach him in the name of human nature itself. . ."

Such words are not to be judged by their application to any one person or set of circumstances, they are for all time and they mark a definite advance in the progress of ideas. They signalize the definite break with eighteenth century notions of empire. In the time of Walpole and the Pelhams it is inconceivable that they could have been uttered, and they show what power the revival of emotion and human feeling had gathered during these few decades. It would be ridiculous to speak as if the trial of Hastings produced any general conversion to the principles of a free Commonwealth. The materialist and the jingo still walk abroad, still lord it in high places. Even to-day the "fathomless power and iron pride" of cowards and neurotics are flaunted as loyalty to the blood, and enough solemn nonsense is talked about the "dominating economic factor". But

these things are no longer matters of course, they have to hide themselves in half shamefaced disguises, and even when the grossest tyranny is defended it is because it is supposed to be in the "truest interest of the subject population" and so forth. The eloquence of Burke and Sheridan was so striking, the principles to which they appealed so incapable of plausible refutation, that things could never be the same again; the old brutal arguments might be repeated, but they no longer held the field.

It was, of course, the principles of Whig liberty and of the ancient Common Law that had thus undergone expansion. It was not without the insight of a seer that Voltaire had divined, more than sixty years before, of the English people that they were, by nature, as jealous of the liberties of others as of their own. It indeed follows that a man who has imbibed with his mother's milk the spirit of English liberty will be more ready than the subject of a despot to appreciate a similar spirit in others. It is the bias of the Constitution. There was no more devoted Whig than Burke, and no more impassioned constitutionalist, but unlike the magnates whom he honoured by his support, Burke regarded these principles as capable of indefinite expansion, though it may be maintained that his courage of vision failed him when contemplating the awful spectacle of the French Revolution.

But the nobility of his principles cannot absolve him from guilt in the vileness of their immediate application. His eloquence would have produced even more effect had it not been possible to discount it as mere slander and abuse of an innocent man—the type of mind that is willing to sift the permanent from the transitory is not common. Burke judged uncharitably, and uncharitably he will be judged. In common with his colleagues Fox and Sheridan, he was a true child of the Emotional Revival, and the career of every one of them was marred, to a greater or less extent, by its characteristic instability, the lack of that *gravitas* for which there is no English word. They were all three men of genius, but none of them was quite, in the highest and sternest sense, a man of character. There is perfect truth in Goldsmith's verdict on Burke,

> "Who, born for the universe narrowed his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind."

There was, in fact, some "imp of the perverse" in his nature that kept him from realizing the full potentialities of his magnificent genius. He lacked self-control—a lack that Matthew Arnold noticed as the bane of his prose—he lacked coolness of judgment, he never

attained that serenity that is the crown of supreme greatness. Men did not adore him as they did Chatham, nor look to him as they did to Chatham's son, for a refuge in the time of trouble. He was a less happy, a less blessed man, than the statesman whose declining years his eloquence had so unworthily clouded.

II

The Quickening of Art

A silent and spiritual Revolution, of which the terrible catastrophe shortly to take place in France was but one manifestation, had all this while been in process of accomplishment throughout Western Europe, and particularly in Britain, France and Germany. We have traced the beginnings in this country of the Emotional or Romantic Renaissance which was to prove fatal to the whole system of thought and institutions that we associate with the eighteenth century. But we must be careful not to exaggerate the swiftness nor the scope of its triumph. The hard and aristocratic materialism was not to be conquered so easily; much of it survived into the new century, the dregs of it our own time has yet to drain. But it ceased, gradually, to set the tone of life or art.

Towards the middle of the eighteenth century we begin to perceive two distinct and divergent streams of tendency, one conservative, cold and rationalistic, the other passionate, richly coloured and spiritual. It is often possible to say, with greater certainty than is usually permissible in such judgments, that this or that man belongs to the old or the dawning age. Charles James Fox, for instance, Burke and Nelson are, in their ways, as definitely "Romantic" types as Blake and Coleridge; on the other hand the younger Pitt, Castlereagh and Wellington are as "eighteenth century" as Dr. Johnson himself. Of course there are infinite gradations between the two.

Mr. Reginald Blomfield, who has thrown such a flood of light upon the development of English architecture in this and the two preceding centuries, has some pertinent observations on this contrast of the old style and the new.[1] By about the middle of the century, the generation of architects who succeeded Wren was beginning to die out. "Their immediate successors," says Mr. Blomfield, "divided into two camps, represented on the one hand by Chambers, who, to all intents, belonged to the older school, and on the other,

[1] *A Short History of Renaissance Architecture in England*, p. 194.

by the brothers Adam, and the innovators who endeavoured to refine upon the old tradition by the introduction of Greek and other motives. With this latter school, the eclectics as one may call them, quite modern architecture with all its disastrous experiments begins."

This is a hard saying when applied to the work of these accomplished brothers, who, whether in architecture, sculpture or furniture and interior decoration, attain a standard of refined elegance that makes everything to which they set their brains a joy to behold, and who had yet enough restraint and sincerity to respect the essentials of construction. We should be rather inclined to say that they were the only British architects of this time who managed to combine the soundness of the old work with the elegance of the new. Stratford Place is too satisfying a masterpiece to be branded with the stigma of mere prettiness.

None the less Mr. Blomfield's strictures on the new style, or absence of style, in architecture are just in the main. For it is in architecture that the besetting weakness of the Emotional Revival is most fatally apparent, and therefore can be best studied. Architecture is of all the arts the one which most imperatively demands strength and a certain solidity, the one in which undisciplined enthusiasm tells least. What most marred the Romantic movement generally was that its enthusiasm was lacking in the very strength and solidity which was the best quality of the age against which it was a reaction. Something very like a rot begins to be apparent in English architecture during the second half of the century. A fashion set in for a shoddy and insincere Gothic, of which the most dreadful example is Horace Walpole's folly of Strawberry Hill. A type of church becomes fashionable in which the business-like massiveness of Gibbs and his contemporaries is succeeded by a sugary prettiness. Such a church is Christchurch and Saint Ewen's, at Bristol, in which Southey, appropriately enough, was baptized. The lowest depth in ecclesiastical architecture was touched in the early nineteenth century, when Nash put up that ridiculous little sugar loaf of All Souls' spire which closes the Northern prospect up Regent's Street.

The great houses of the eighteenth century can no more be thought of apart from their gardens, than we can visualize one of their owners apart from his clothes. And it was in the matter of garden planning that the Romantic spirit showed itself first of all, in a revolt from the stiff and formal conventionality *de rigueur* under the auspices of Louis XIV. It was no less an Augustan than Pope

who blew the first trumpet of revolt in an amusing skit in the *Guardian*, in which he pleaded for a return to Homeric and Virgilian simplicity from the clipping artifice by which the gardener attempted to vie with the sculptor. As the century went on, this "back to nature" movement gathered strength, the formal garden went out of fashion, and some of the most beautiful examples were ruthlessly mutilated in favour of the new craze for doctoring the landscape, opening up vistas and so forth, since getting back to nature usually consisted in dressing nature up, and even providing her with such adornments as sham castles, Greek temples and Gothic shrines. "The living landscape," as Horace Walpole complacently explains, "was chastened or polished, not transformed."

This cult of nature was stimulated to no small extent by the influence of Chinese civilization, the fame of which had been spread by traders and missionaries, and whose charm was revealed by the porcelain and lacquer that adorned the rooms of every gentleman and lady of taste.[1] As early as 1712 Addison had contrasted the subtly concealed art of the Chinese with the clumsy formality of the Western garden. It was in the fifties that the Chinese style was translated, rather freely, on the grand scale, in the Duke of Kent's garden at Kew, which added a house for Confucius to the classic and Christian stage properties by which the English landscape was being humanized. But with all its extravagances and occasional vandalism this genteel return to nature was preparing the way for the triumphs of English landscape painting and nature poetry.

In sculpture the influence of the Emotional Revival was less fruitful of masterpieces than in painting or literature. Perhaps the solidity of the art called for certain corresponding qualities in the artist which sensibility did not engender. But the best of it, if not dazzling, was by no means contemptible. English sculpture at least passed into the hands of Englishmen, instead of owing all its best work to foreigners, as it did earlier in the century. John Bacon's tomb of Lord Chatham is a fine, florid piece of work, and the effigy of the statesman himself may challenge the epithet "great". The sculpture of the Adams, if never in the grand manner, is invariably charming, and of Flaxman, the English counterpart of Canova and Thorwaldsen, it is enough to say that he imitated very prettily what the Greeks had done perfectly.

But it must be confessed that at no time was there produced

[1] For the best account of this influence see Adolf Reichwein, *China and Europe*.

a greater amount of dull, insipid and tasteless sculpture than towards the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. We all know the classically draped young lady, fingering something that looks like a coffee pot, and whose services were almost as much in demand, for the moneyed dead, as those of the undertaker. She is at least harmless compared with some of the minor horrors, in the Grecian vein, that desecrate St. Paul's. And yet not all, even of the later effects of chiselled sensibility, are to be wholly despised. He must be a hard-hearted critic who could be stern with those dear children whom Chantrey, the Lawrence of our sculpture, has left asleep in each others' arms, in Lichfield Cathedral.

The middle of the century is the time of Hepplewhite and the Adams in furniture. A new elegance and feminine delicacy has replaced the constructional virility of Chippendale; more stress is laid upon decoration and inlay, but none the less the principles of sound construction, if less emphasized, are not lost sight of, and Hepplewhite, frail as much of his work may appear, and fashioned, as it sometimes is, of too perishable materials, wrought not unworthily of his professed purpose, "to unite elegance and utility and blend the useful with the agreeable."

At the close of the century English furniture attains its maximum of elegance under the auspices of Sheraton, but the beauty of his work is frail and almost decadent. All the sensibility and emotional appeal of the Romantic dawn are vocal in these charming adjuncts to moneyed and leisured well-being, but the strength and honesty of Chippendale are sought in vain. Though Sheraton was too sincere a craftsman to yield himself willingly to the ostentatious divorce from reality which is associated with the last days of the French monarchy, he was weak or needy enough to vie with the florid vulgarity of the Empire style, while, in his more English and natural mode, he is fond of such frivolous jugglery as hiding dressing tables in looking glasses and turning pieces of furniture into ingenious transforming toys. His genius alone sufficed to prolong the golden or silver age of English furniture well on into the nineteenth century—his death was followed by its almost total eclipse. The constructional art of furniture-making, being naturally of a more delicate nature than that of architecture, bent itself more readily to the Romantic influence, but only at the cost of bartering strength for gracefulness, and thereby becoming eventually too fragile to survive.

We must make one qualification in any judgment of the Romantic

spirit by such a rich man's luxury as Hepplewhite or Sheraton furniture. The culture of the eighteenth century, before the stirrings of that spirit, had been narrowly exclusive and aristocratic, and, in catering for the tastes of a minority, was restricting art to limits which it had no desire to transcend. But the Emotional Revival was, in its essence, democratic; its chief prophet was Rousseau, and it tended towards a brotherhood of man and man, and of man and beast, which was of the heart and not of the brain. Therefore in carrying on the tradition of the eighteenth century, the Romantic spirit was, to a certain extent, working in shackles.

Nevertheless the marriage of the new spirit with the old gave birth to some of the most exquisite creations of English art. It could not accommodate itself to the stern laws of architecture; in sculpture we did not rise even to the lusciousness of a Canova, but in furniture, in ceramics, and in painting it found scope to invest the lives of a privileged few with a rare and delicate beauty, more fresh and instinct with life than the glories of a decadent Versailles. Nowhere is the Romantic spirit, acting within eighteenth century limitations, more beautifully displayed than in the luxuriance of English china and pottery. Chelsea, Chelsea-Derby, Crown-Derby, Old Bow, Bristol, Lowestoft—one has only to repeat the names to revive an atmosphere of old-world sweetness and leisure to which we have long been strangers. The crowning glory of this phase of English art is the work of Josiah Wedgwood, assisted as he was by Flaxman's talent for design—that unique English pottery, with its coolness and reserved simplicity. It is as difficult to associate Wedgwood with the dismal prosperity of the Five Towns (think of his jasper vases in conjunction with Hilda Lessways!) as it is to visualize him as the grandfather of Charles Darwin. Still less does one associate that delicious ware with the potter's asthma that rotted the lungs of its producers.

When we turn to painting, an art of two dimensions, and one which, in choice of subject, was capable to some extent of breaking loose from aristocratic gyves, we obtain a more comprehensive view of what the Emotional Revival meant and could accomplish. We have first to take note of the fact that since the great days of John Riley, there had been a continuous and virile school of British portrait painting, though with that strange humility which throws so penetrating a light on the legend of British insularity, we could never get ourselves to believe that anything of which our own countrymen were capable could vie with the tailor's model portraiture of

Sir Godfrey or the pompous adiposity of the now forgotten Vanloo. There is, significantly enough, a direct line of succession traceable between Riley, and the first two subsequent English artists who could with any plausibility have claimed to stand in comparison with him. For Riley had, in his studio, taught Jonathan Richardson, a sincere and sound portrait painter, whose influence was more important even than his art, for he was never tired of saying that what English art needed was to shake off the suffocating foreign domination, and he was not ashamed to proclaim his faith that English painters were capable of competing with the best old masters.

Richardson, besides directly inspiring Hogarth to some of his best work, taught Thomas Hudson who, in his manly and unpretentious way, succeeded in worthily interpreting the spirit, such as it was, of the Walpole age. The effects of roast beef and port wine are traceable in every feature of those tough-spirited gentlemen who regard us with such burly self-assurance from the canvases of Hudson. Had he brought the delicacy of a Nattier, the sensitiveness of a Goya, to their portrayal, he would have been a false interpreter of his age. His very sincerity lifts his art out of the commonplace. And Hudson, to make the line of succession complete, was the teacher of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Richardson's high hopes for English art were, however, first realized not in his own work or Hudson's, meritorious though these were, but in that of the sturdy Hogarth, who, though born in London, came of the same tough North Country stock that was to produce Wordsworth. Whether or not we accept Whistler's verdict that Hogarth was the greatest English artist who ever lived, he is no doubt among the masters, and is probably, taking him at his best, the supreme figure in eighteenth century painting. He is an Englishman of Englishmen, lustily proud of his country's superiority to the French even when he is most unsparingly lashing her domestic vices, and carrying his healthy reaction against the foreign tyranny over English art to the point, sometimes, of injustice.

What we are here most concerned with about Hogarth is his relation to the Emotional Revival. For in spite of the fact that he began to paint in the twenties of the eighteenth century, he is not, like Hudson, a merely complacent interpreter of his age—except perhaps in his patriotic roast beef and plum pudding pictures—but partly the unsparing critic of that age, and partly the messenger who announced the coming of an age to be. There was no one ever born who had less natural sympathy with the cold and

aristocratic culture that emanated from Versailles. Though almost aggressively unpolished, he had a warm and tender heart, to which the sufferings of the meanest man or beast were intolerable. His art is one long plea for humanity against the hardness and cruelty he saw everywhere around him; his pictures of Gin Alley, of the debtors' prison, of the madhouse, are passionate pleas for social reform in a time when social reform was hardly dreamed of.

Hogarth was at least as complete a democrat as Rousseau, and it was unnecessary for him to preach about it, because his nature was so constituted that he could conceive of nothing else. His spirit is the absolute negation of the eighteenth century exclusiveness which regarded a well-born and educated person as a different order of being from those less fortunate than himself. His innate consciousness of human brotherhood was such that he had no interest in a lord as a lord or a servant as a servant, but only in the man, whom he regarded with a penetrating curiosity that pierced through the rank as easily as an X-Ray through the skin. When he is drawing an imaginary lord, like the Earl in *Marriage à la mode*, or a real lord, like old Lovat, he sees merely a pathetic young ass and a rather fascinating old crook.

His great picture of his servants' heads is as striking a democratic manifesto as any that was to emanate from the Legislative Assembly or the Convention. For Hogarth, with a little child's simplicity, contrives to see these ordinary household drudges, not with the patronizing humour to which even Shakespeare had—though not always—succumbed, not from the point of view of the employer appreciative of honest loyalty and unpretending serviceableness, but as men and women as worthy of reverent curiosity and as interesting for their own sakes as any of the splendid sitters of Gainsborough and Sir Joshua. In like manner is his treatment of dear old Captain Coram, so touching in his transparent goodness of heart that the most inveterate snob forgets to ask the question which Hogarth does not condescend to answer—"was he a gentleman?" Nor does Hogarth's sense of democratic fraternity stop short at the human species. He possesses the divine faculty of loving all his creatures. When we look at the portrait of "Hogarth and his dog Trump", we are not at all sure whether it ought not to be re-named, "Trump and his man Hogarth."

With Sir Joshua Reynolds and the great school of fashionable portrait painters which included Gainsborough, Hoppner, Raeburn, Opie, and Romney, and ends with Lawrence, we reach a phase of

painting corresponding to that which we have already witnessed in the other arts, one in which the aristocratic spirit of the eighteenth century blends with the romantic impulse and in which:

> "Strength and beauty met together
> Kindle their image like a star
> In a sea of glassy weather."

It is in this opulent and glowing portraiture that the English governing class of the later eighteenth and dawning nineteenth centuries is seen to the best advantage. The clean cut, refined faces of the men, their gracious, white-skinned womenfolk, and their roguish, laughing children, are enough to show that whatever faults may be charged against the English oligarchy, there was, when every allowance is made for the artists' flattery, much about it that was admirable and even lovable. Sir Joshua and Gainsborough can tell, to anyone who cares to understand, one reason at any rate why the peasants of England did not follow the example of their French brethren and rise and massacre their seigneurs.

Gainsborough is the most completely aristocratic of this group, and invests his sitters with something of the steely coldness of that blue to which he was so much addicted. It was not at random that he said, when he was dying, that he would be with Vandyck, for the spirits of the two were much akin. Gainsborough was fond of nature, he liked to paint yokels perched on carts or jogging home from their daily toil, he did one magnificent portrait of an old parish clerk, but we can seldom escape from the feeling that for Gainsborough nature is but a picturesque background to leisured ease; his yokels are there not for their own sakes but those of their betters, and even that kindly old parish clerk is obviously of the sort whose highest ambition it is to please the squire and the family.

Sir Joshua, though his technique may be less flawless, is more human than Gainsborough, more inclined to see the man and less the aristocrat in the sitter, and occasionally he makes the most surprising discoveries, as in his exquisite General Bligh, until recently at Cobham Hall, where, instead of giving us the strong man of action demanded by his rank and scarlet uniform, he paints the face of a poet, almost too sensitive for the roughness of the world. But he loved to paint strong, burly Englishmen in whom his master Hudson would have delighted, massive, kindly, but invincibly obstinate figures like those of Admiral Keppel and Lord Heathfield and, in what is perhaps his masterpiece, the great, good, troubled face of his friend Samuel Johnson. If Gainsborough regarded the governing

class with intellectual detachment as a race of superior beings, the more warm-hearted Sir Joshua delighted to pierce the shell of a reserve which Gainsborough regarded as necessary and essential to their superiority.

Portrait painting goes exactly the same way that we have traced in other arts patronized by the governing class. The balance between the old strength and the new sweetness is gradually shifted, art becomes more frail and delicate as it loses its masculine objectivity. The soft touch of Romney is capable of investing strong men with the sympathetic gentleness of women—Lawrence, in whom this school of English portrait painters declines to a calm beauty as of sunset afterglow, has an unsurpassed tenderness of appeal, but the lusty radiance of noonday has departed, and night is already beginning to climb the Eastern sky.[1]

12

England's Revival

After the surrender of a British army at Yorktown, the failure of our attempt to conquer America was manifest to everyone except George III, who, with an obstinacy worthy of a better cause, refused to abandon hope. But facts were against him, and his system of personal government, built up with so much careful intrigue, was for the time discredited. There was nothing for it but to throw away that broken reed, Lord North, and to call to office his old enemies the Whigs, now thoroughly incensed by their long exclusion from office and a corruption more powerful than their own. They now, to all appearance, had the King at their mercy, and were at liberty to give effect to the motion which they had carried against Lord North's government, that "the power of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished."

But they were pitted against a sovereign who, whatever his defects as a statesman, was the astutest politician in his realm, and did not know what it was to be beaten. The Whigs, under the Premiership of one of the largest landowners in England, the Marquis of Rockingham, did indeed pass a series of Bills that dried up some of the most fruitful sources of royal corruption, but they would have better sustained their reputation as political purists had they been above jobbing pensions for their own friends. Then Rockingham died, and Lord Shelburne, who professed to continue

[1] For the growth of English Landscape Painting see Book 4, Chap. II, Sect. 5.

the non-partisan principles of Chatham, formed a ministry that at least deserved well of the country by getting the best terms of peace procurable under the circumstances.

This again was shattered by the most unscrupulous combination even of that time. Charles James Fox, with a following of extreme Whigs who had kept aloof from Shelburne's moderates, suddenly formed a coalition with the very Lord North whom Fox had exhausted every resource of invective in denouncing, and whose head he had recently threatened. These strange allies, under the nominal leadership of the incompetent but ducal head of the House of Bentinck, forced themselves on the King, who was not unnaturally furious at so shameless a betrayal at the hands of his old friend and favourite, North. It was now war to the knife, on both sides, the ministers being determined still further to curtail the power of the Crown, and the King to rid himself of the ministers. Neither side was too particular as to the means it employed.

The King's opportunity soon came. Fox had brought forward a measure framed on bold and comprehensive lines for transferring the whole power and patronage of the East India Company to the Crown. Unfortunately this measure, excellent in principle, had a political aspect that nobody could fail to perceive. The patronage of the Company was even more important than that of the King, and if this was once at the command of the coalition, they might so strengthen their position as to make it impregnable. It became known that the Council, which for five years was to administer the affairs of British India, was to consist of seven Foxite and Northite hacks, including North's own son, and the ranks of the coalition were openly jubilant at the thought of the rare and refreshing fruit that would shortly fall into their mouths from this earthquake shaking of the pagoda tree.

But it was diamond cut diamond. The King perceived that the decisive moment had come, and he fearlessly staked everything. When the bill came up to the Lords, he authorized Lord Temple to give it out that those who voted for it would be considered by him in the light of his personal enemies, in other words that every nobleman might put it to himself whether the advantages that he (not to speak of England and India) had to gain by the proposed transference of patronage were worth purchasing at the price of any pickings that he might in the future expect to derive from royal jobbery. The majority of noblemen decided that they were not; out went the bill and out, immediately afterwards, went the ministers.

Then the King brought off his second master stroke in the game. He called to the premiership a youth of twenty-five, William Pitt, who, with marvellous self-restraint, had refused the honour a few months before as premature. Obstinate George had at last learnt the wisdom of employing the ablest man among his subjects, who, at the same time, was loyal to himself.

Now would have been the time, under the old conditions of Parliamentary warfare, for a decisive assertion of privilege against prerogative. The King had outrageously defied the majority of his presumably faithful Commons, and the obvious course for that majority to have taken would have been to have impeached Pitt and Temple, to have refused supplies and brought the whole machinery of government to a standstill pending redress of grievances. But the Revolution settlement had so much altered the whole conception of constitutional government, that a return to the old warfare of King versus Parliament, which, if pushed to an extreme, would have imperilled the interest on the national debt, was inconceivable. Besides, Fox and North were not only without a majority in the Lords, but the country had been thoroughly disgusted by their manœuvres, and was disposed to regard the King's action with the same amused tolerance as might have been felt by spectators when Bill Nye and Truthful James, with their sleeves stuffed full of aces and bowers, found themselves outdone by the twenty-four packs up that of the guileless and bland Ah Sin. Pitt played the game with imperturbable skill and good temper, and the rage of his opponents broke on him in a froth of oratory. Dreadful things were talked about, but nothing came of them—the majority dwindled, the Mutiny Bill was passed as usual, and then Pitt, having made his opponents look thoroughly ridiculous, appealed to the constituencies, in which feeling had now risen to such a pitch that the coalition was "snowed under" by a record majority.

So the King had dished his Whigs after all, and his young minister was able to get on with the business of pulling the nation out of the mire. "Billy Pitt," as he came to be nicknamed, had inherited from his father, Lord Chatham, his grandeur of manner, his stainless personal integrity, and, above all, his passionate love of England, such love as only the world's greatest lovers have lavished on the women of their choice. But to the world, to an uncritical posterity, he presents a cold, even a repellent aspect. Never, in public, did he for a moment unbend; his every word and action were under exact and reasoned control. Those who knew him in private caught

glimpses of another man, who blacked his face to romp with children and who jumped his horse over turnpikes in the moonlight. But this side of his nature had to be continuously repressed in one who, at an age when most youths are hardly down from the University, was called to sustain the name of his father and the cause of his country in circumstances involving the gravest responsibility. Pitt, though in the glowing dawn of his career he might have passed for a product of the Emotional Revival, tended to hark back to the cold intellectuality of the eighteenth century. Thus Gainsborough and Hoppner depicted him—not so Romney.

In the inevitable comparison between the two great rivals, Pitt and Fox, the child of the Romantic spirit will most easily attract sympathy. Fox was so openly lovable, he wore his great heart so visibly on his sleeve, that we are naturally more attracted to him, on first thoughts, than to the icicle statesman, with his nose in the air, who seems above the frailties and sympathies of ordinary mortals. And then Fox's ideas had so much wider a sweep than those of Pitt; he was ardent in his championship of liberty, of humanity, of democratic progress, when the pilot at the helm thought only of weathering the storm. But that pilot was the man whom his countrymen instinctively trusted, and rightly so, while they instinctively distrusted Fox. For with all his lovable and brilliant qualities, Fox had that fatal weakness of the Romantic movement in that he was lacking in character, as lacking as the building or furniture of his time in constructional soundness. However excellent may have been his principles, he showed himself time and again ready to sacrifice them to interest. His alliance with North was an exhibition of barefaced shamelessness from which he never recovered; he successfully opposed Pitt's scheme of commercial union with Ireland; he opposed Pitt's commercial treaty with France on the ground that France was our natural enemy; he and his friends actually maintained an agent to thwart our diplomacy, during a grave international crisis, at the Russian court; and they showed how little adversity had improved their principles when, on the King's temporary madness in 1788 they, the party of opposition to the Crown, actually espoused the cause of Divine Right against Pitt and Parliamentary government, and on behalf of that gross cad, the Prince of Wales! It is only fair to remember, however, that on his brief and dying return to power in 1806, Fox showed himself capable of high-principled and courageous statesmanship.

William Pitt's mind had not the scope of his father's or even of

his rival's; he had been forced into a life of incessant and responsible activity before he had had time to take sufficient stock of the great world in which his lot was cast. This could not but fail to have a stunting influence on a naturally vivid imagination. He became more and more, as his career progressed, a man of expedients; he was generally content to take his broad principles from his time. He entered Parliament as a reforming Whig, eager to diminish the influence of the Crown, he gradually drifted into the leadership of the Tory party that was now once again becoming a power in the State after its long eclipse. He had, on the whole, a mediocre team of ministers to drive a Parliamentary majority that was by no means disposed to give him a *carte blanche*, and an opposition that was ready to employ any means, fair or foul, to get even with him. With a confidence no less than his father's that he was the one man who could get his beloved England out of her difficulties, he, personally the most incorruptible of men, was too often induced to compromise with political purity. In particular, he resorted to one form of corruption that had been put into practice by James I; he poisoned the fount of honour and tampered with the composition of the Upper House, not by the cynical sale of honours into which the practice has now developed, but by bartering nobility to rich men as the price of political support. A more insidious blow could not have been struck at the proud Whig Houses than this flooding of the Second Chamber by *nouveaux riches*.

Pitt's greatest claim to be an original statesman is in the realm of finance. As early as 1783 he had urged the necessity of "a complete commercial system, suited to the novelty of the situation." When he came to power, the nation might have appeared in a parlous condition, exhausted, humiliated, and on the verge of bankruptcy. Lord North's finance had been as wasteful as the rest of his statesmanship, and we were faced with a gigantic debt and a temporarily shattered credit. But Pitt never lost his confidence in England. It was probably instinctive, for we have no reason to believe that he explicitly realized the great dominating factor in the situation, which was that in the North and Midlands a new, dismal, and laborious England was coming into being, that a hitherto undreamed of energy was being harnessed to the service of man, an energy of which, for the time being, England had almost a monopoly. Wealth was thus being created at a prodigious rate, and Pitt and his England had only to sit still and reap the harvest.

To sit still! That was in substance the counsel of Adam Smith

and the statesmanship which based itself on his teaching, though how much exactly Pitt's policy owed to Smith's inspiration, and to what extent to the fact that his mind was moving independently on similar lines, is a moot point. Within certain limits it was a wise counsel. Compared with other nations, the Industrial Revolution had conferred such immense economic advantage on this country, that she could afford to fling away the old protective barriers and stand, as it were, naked; trusting in her own strength. But that revolution had raised problems of even graver import than those of balancing budgets and providing the nation with the sinews of war. Were the power of England and her prosperity, measured by statistics, to be purchased by the material and spiritual degradation of the majority of her sons? Could any sorrow of conquest or bankruptcy be like that which boiled and simmered under the obscene smoke clouds that were already beginning to darken the sky? To such questions Pitt, with the tough eighteenth century mind that he was now acquiring, had no answer—probably he never even heard them. It was enough if he could restore England to her place among the nations and enable her to face the terrible trial that, unforeseen by him, was coming upon her.

He therefore set manfully to work, funding all he could of unfunded debt, paying off the nation's capital liability by a sinking fund that he meant to make really effective, simplifying the tariff to the utmost possible extent, and imposing taxes of a more or less experimental nature to make both ends meet. He was more than successful, for the Industrial Revolution was working for him, and big surpluses were the order of the day. Soon the prosperity and credit of the nation had recovered as if there had been no war to mar them. But this was not the only use Pitt made of the Industrial Revolution, for he succeeded in inducing our old enemies the French to conclude with us an amicable commercial treaty which, though Pitt did not realize it himself, nor posterity after him, had the effect of exposing the rising industries of North Eastern France to the full blast of Lancashire competition. The travels of Arthur Young offered abundant evidence of the disastrous effects of this treaty across the Channel.

At the great manufacturing centre of Lille Young found the inhabitants clamouring for war with England. "It is easy enough to discover that the source of all this violence is the commercial treaty, which is execrated here as the most fatal stroke to their manufactures they ever experienced," though as the excellent

British free-trader complacently remarks, "the advantages reaped by four-and-twenty millions of consumers are lighter than a feather compared with the inconveniences sustained by half a million of manufacturers." Unfortunately hordes of unemployed and starving producers, especially when they tend to gravitate to a metropolis, are the stuff of which revolutions are made.

For the rest, Pitt's policy was, according to the prosaic standards of the eighteenth century, masterly. He not only restored the country's financial position, but he quickly brought her back to the status of a first-class power, and achieved a diplomatic victory by an alliance which he concluded with Holland and Prussia to achieve our age-long object of keeping French hands off the Low Countries. When the clouds of the French Revolution were already darkening, he became involved in a bitter dispute with Russia, whose advance on Turkey he, with an instinct or obsession that was to cling to British statesmanship for the next century, dreaded. The dispute centred round the possession of an obscure fortress called Oczakow, and might easily have involved us in war, but it died down, in the end, as such controversies have the habit of doing. It was the last hand we were to take in the diplomatic game of sovereigns that had constituted the *haute politique* of the eighteenth century.

13

The False Dawn in Ireland

It is now time to turn to Ireland. We have seen her, during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, in the lowest depths of degradation and misery, a despised and conquered country, groaning under the minute and ruthless tyranny of the penal laws, clinging heroically to her national religion, and striving to keep alive the dying flame of her ancient culture.

Desperate as Ireland's lot was, it was not without some alleviation and still less without hope. The penal code itself became less barbarous in reality than it was in form, and as the century wore on the practice of the Catholic Religion was winked at, though the Land Laws continued to be an engine of oppression in the hands of the Protestant garrison. Fortunately, the Englishman, even when he indulges in tyranny, never has it in his nature to be such a complete and logical tyrant as some of his Continental neighbours. The spirit of the Common Law does not lend itself to unmitigated autocracy, and England had stultified her policy of holding down

Ireland by the sword, when she failed to withdraw the thin end of the wedge of liberty in the shape of a Parliament. It was certainly a poor mockery of a free Parliament, composed exclusively of those Protestant gentry whose interest it was to keep up the oppression, shackled almost to impotence by the restrictions of Poynings' Act,[1] honeycombed with corruption. But a Parliament it was, and its members had enough English blood in their veins not to rest content until it became in fact what it was in name.

In this, her darkest hour, the voices that pleaded Ireland's cause with most power and directness were those of Englishmen and Irishmen of English descent. It was a gentleman bearing the old Norman name of Molyneux who, as early as 1698, published a closely-reasoned argument for the legislative independence of Ireland, which, though respectfully dedicated to the King, was considered sufficiently dangerous to be burnt by order of his Government. It was a generation later that Ireland secured the services of an even more powerful champion in the person of Dean Swift, who pounced on one of the many corrupt jobs for which Ireland was considered a fair field, in that terrific series of invectives known as *The Draper's Letters*. But Swift's genius did not stop short at annihilating one licensed profiteer. He boldly denounced that subjection of Ireland to England that made such iniquity possible. He laid down that characteristically English doctrine that government without the consent of the governed is slavery. "By the laws of God," he thundered, "of Nature, of Nations, and of your Country, you are and ought to be as free a people as your brethren in England."

But it was not till after the middle of the century that the Irish Parliament showed the first signs of restiveness at its humiliating dependence. An opposition was formed to assert the right of Parliament to appropriate the surplus of the Budget in the way they thought fit; the significant name of "patriots" was assumed, and though these patriots allowed themselves eventually to be bribed and pensioned off, an ominous precedent had been set. In 1767 a new epoch in Irish affairs was inaugurated when the Lord Lieutenant came to reside permanently in Ireland, instead of paying the country a brief annual or biennial visit. It is from this time that we may date the brilliance and splendour of Dublin as a capital.

The parliamentary struggle now became more intense, and the Irish Parliament, Protestant and corrupt as it was, contained a leaven of sincere patriots. The control of the purse became a subject

[1] In 1494, subjecting the Irish to the English legislature.

of contention, and all the money that was lavishly poured out in bribes did not succeed in forcing an admission from the Irish Commons that money bills could originate anywhere but with them. But progress, under such handicaps, was painfully slow, and even such loyal Irishmen as Henry Flood had little sympathy with the unrepresented Catholic majority, so bowed down that they had hardly the spirit to resent their chains. The hard-living, duelling and money-scattering landowners treated them like dogs, flogged them out of their way, and, in their capacity of justices, systematically refused them any redress. No wonder "blarney" became one of the Irishman's principal accomplishments.

But the nemesis of tyranny was at hand. The British government, in its stupid greed, had made the almost incredible blunder of alienating its own Protestant garrison in the North. The Penal Laws pressed nearly as heavily on Dissenters as on Catholics, and the Toleration Act passed on William III's accession was not even extended to include Ireland. For an industrious community, largely of Scottish descent, the fiscal laws that clogged trade and stifled industry were peculiarly galling. And when England's necessity created Ireland's opportunity, the strange spectacle was seen of Protestant Ulster, despite the memories of Londonderry, standing in the van of Irish liberty.

As the struggle against America and a Europe either in arms or in armed neutrality strained England's resources to the utmost, Ireland had to be depleted of regular troops and was practically defenceless to a French invasion that might come at any moment. Under these circumstances it was only the dictate of patriotism and commonsense for Ireland to organize her own defence by enrolling an army of volunteers. This army was at first exclusively Protestant, and though after some time Catholics were admitted to serve, it remained under Protestant command, and expressive of the Protestant will. Its commander was a Lord Charlemont, one of the most charming and cultured of eighteenth century noblemen, and scion of one of those great Planter families that had received plundered land of the O'Neills, and whose head had been murdered by an O'Neill in 1641.

The volunteers, once formed, were naturally in command of the situation. Ireland, as represented by her Protestant aristocracy, faced England with a sword in her hand. Her leaders were men of genius and statesmanship, who knew how to turn the situation to practical advantage. This situation was not at all unlike that with

which George III and his ministers had already been confronted in America, and even that most obstinate of monarchs might well hesitate before embarking on two wars of independence at once. The question of England's commercial tyranny had been a burning one for some years, and even Lord North's government might have had the sense to make concessions had not the English and Scottish manufacturing towns raised a howl about their interests being imperilled. Ireland had, at the time, answered by a very effective " swadeshi " boycott, but now she had a better argument, which was lucidly stated by placards attached to two cannons—" Free Trade or This ! " It so happened that England was getting quite as much as she wanted of " This " in other fields, and so she kindly conceded the measure of elementary justice that she had so long withheld.

But the volunteers had not done. The Parliament had, for thirty years now, been feeling after independence, and the time had come to take it. England, forced to a disastrous peace, humiliated and almost bankrupt, was passing through a phase of hearty reaction against any attempt to impose her will by force overseas. Her new Whig rulers included men of sincerely liberal principles, and they made the best of a bad business by conceding generously and without reservation the full demands of the volunteers and the Irish Parliament, The independence of that Parliament was absolutely recognized, and the only formal tie that bound Ireland to England was supplied by their common sovereign. That single-hearted patriot and superb orator, Henry Grattan, who might at this juncture have been called the uncrowned King of Ireland, passed between the volunteer ranks to the Parliament House to salute the dawning of Ireland's freedom. " I am now to address a free people," were his words, " I found Ireland on her knees ; I watched over her with paternal solicitude ; I have traced her progress from injuries to arms, and from arms to liberty. Spirit of Swift, spirit of Molyneux, your genius has prevailed ! Ireland is now a nation. In that character I hail her, and, bowing in her august presence, I say *Esto perpetua !* "

CHAPTER V

THE LAST STRUGGLE WITH FRANCE

I

Sensibility and Vision

In one of his most inspired sonnets, Wordsworth calls before our imagination a fallen tower—

> "That in the morning royally did wear
> Its coat of weeds, but could not even sustain
> Some casual shout that woke the silent air,
> Or the unimaginable touch of time."

We are reminded of this image when we think of how the splendid French court and aristocracy, that had set the tone to eighteenth century culture, came crashing in ruin. "Oh how suddenly," says the Psalmist, "do they consume away, perish, and come to a fearful end!" Pity and terror will always dwell on the events of those five years between the storming of the Bastille and the crash of the knife that cut short Robespierre's yell of agony. But to the historian, the French Revolution is but the noisy and almost inevitable outcome of forces that had long been at work throughout the whole of Western Europe, and which continued their onward movement with comparatively slight acceleration.

No such catastrophe testified to the working of these forces in England. To all outward appearance the course of our history, at a time when thrones and systems were collapsing throughout Europe, was one of victorious reaction, and even when a great constitutional change did, at long last, come, it was in the form of the 1832 Reform Bill, which merely transferred part of the power wielded by the aristocracy into the hands of the bourgeoisie, perhaps a useful but scarcely an inspiring piece of work.

None the less it will be found that changes were going on beneath the surface in England, as momentous in their consequences as any, and that England can show as rich a harvest of creative beauty as any other country. The fact that she did not plunge into the horror and bloodshed of violent revolution does not prove that she was lacking in ideas, but rather that her ideas were too deep-rooted

in the soil of her past to be easily uptorn. "The loud blast," says Thompson—

> "that rends the skies
> Serves but to root thy native oak."

The French monarchy and its dependent aristocracy were built upon the sands of bureaucratic despotism, but the British Constitution was founded, for good or ill, upon that rock of centuries, the English Common Law.

When the storm of the Revolution burst upon France, the Emotional Revival had proceeded far enough with us to have profoundly affected the outlook of educated men, and even touched the lives of the people. Dr. Johnson died in the year after the younger Pitt's accession to office, and his death was like the passing of an epoch. Massive commonsense was giving place to sensibility; it would be hardly exaggerating the transition to say that the rediscovery was made of man's soul. Johnson's psychology was of the most simple and obvious. To him there was nothing mysterious about human personality; "Thou knowest the commandments," would have summed up his message of salvation. A man's whole duty was to conform, earnestly and sensibly, to the precepts of established morality, to fear God, to honour the King and all who were put in authority under him, and to labour manfully in whatever station of life it should please God to call him, without indulging in treasonable cant about liberty, or drivelling about the complexities of his soul. Johnson had something of an inquisitor's eye for any sort of mysticism, ecstasy or enthusiasm, and he trounced them with resounding severity when he detected germs of them in the poetry of Collins and Gray. The muse herself must conform to the dictates of commonsense.

But now the current was flowing with ever increasing force against Johnson and all that he stood for. Whitefield and the Wesleys effected their spiritual revolution by discovering that man had not only a soul, but a sick soul in need of a divine physician, a foul soul to be cleansed in sacrificial blood, a lonely soul crying out for a lover. And William Cowper, whose soul was congenitally sick, discoursed of its malady and its cure in verse instinct with a greater intensity of feeling than any which eighteenth century England had as yet produced. In the secular sphere, the work of Richardson in the analysis, or rather the intuition of character, was taken up by that strangest of clergymen, Laurence Sterne, who in his Namur veteran, Uncle Toby, has created a character whom to read of is to

know, and to know is to love. A scarcely less lovable figure is the almost Christlike Dr. Primrose in Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield.*

A new atmosphere of tenderness and compassion was beginning to pervade life and literature. Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* threw a light on the process of enclosing commons, of joining house to house and field to field in the interests of scientific agriculture, which had probably never dawned on landlords and legislators :

> " Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

Cowper's hypersensitive spirit was cut to the quick by any tale of injustice or cruelty, and he denounced, now with lofty indignation, now with burning scorn, the iniquities of the traffic in slaves that brought prosperity to Liverpool merchants and luxuries to well-to-do breakfast tables. But there was food enough for pity without crossing the seas. In 1783 the Reverend George Crabbe, who had gone through the mill as a day labourer and therefore harboured no pastoral illusions about a happy countryside, depicted the life of a typical English village in colours of such naked realism as to make almost intolerable reading. Merrie England, the country of roast beef and plum-pudding, with her increasing prosperity and swelling commerce was, seen from this new standpoint, no better than a sordid Hell.

But it was not only to mankind that the new-found sympathy of the Emotional Revival was extended. We have already seen how Hogarth had opened his great heart to the sufferings not only of his fellow men, but of the very animals. The tendency in Christian Europe (with one or two beautiful exceptions, like that of Saint Francis) had been to regard animals as creatures without souls, and therefore cut off from brotherhood with man. There was no legend comparable to that of all the animals weeping for the death of Buddha ; Christ's care for the sparrows passed almost unnoticed, whereas Paul's query, " doth God take thought for oxen ? " was evidently one of those to which, as the Latin Grammar says, an answer is expected in the negative.

But now the spirit, if not the letter of Christianity, was being extended to embrace all God's creatures, even in default of our present knowledge that these creatures are in very truth and blood our kinsfolk.

" My uncle Toby," says Sterne, " had scarce the heart to retaliate on a fly," and having caught one which had been tormenting him cruelly at dinner, " Go," says he, lifting up the sash and opening

his hand as he spoke to let it escape, "go, poor devil get thee gone, why should I hurt thee? This world surely is wide enough to hold both thee and me."

Christopher Smart, a poet of much importance in his day, was able to understand the tragedy of a captive eagle, and Cowper was the friend of every animal that breathed, except perhaps one surly old bull, who caused him such perturbation of mind that he got its owner to have it taken away. Even Horace Walpole, we have seen, was fond of dogs and indignant at the panic cruelty of a rabies scare. And the heart of the great Unromantic, Samuel Johnson, was yet large enough to have a warm corner for cats—did he not lumber round in person getting oyster suppers for Hodge, "a very fine cat indeed"?

But for sheer warmth of sympathy for everything that breathed, none of these men quite reached the intensity of Robert Burns, by whose genius the prosaic and rather sordid life of the Scottish Lowlands became invested with all the beauty of romance. He could not even deny a warm corner in his heart to the Devil, or believe that he could really find pleasure in hearing the squeals of "poor dogs" like the by no means sinless bard. Perhaps the very wildness of his own life widened the scope of his charity, for he was equally attracted by the pious and God-fearing cotter, and the "randie, gangrel bodies", who bartered their rags for an evening of drink and lechery. For animals he had an understanding tenderness more manly than that of Cowper. He knew what it was to be torn with anxiety for the life of a favourite lamb, and to burn with compassionate indignation at the sight of a wounded hare. But Burns, if he expressed what was best in the Emotional Revival, shared also in its weakness, that lack of moral fibre which was the handicap of the Romantic spirit both here and abroad. The author of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* was not above the pornography and treacle of *The lass that made the bed to me*, not to speak of certain cruder if less nauseating efforts that are not published in collected editions.

The scope of Romantic sympathy was not confined to flesh and blood. If the destruction of a field mouse's nest by his plough made Burns—

> "truly sorry man's dominion
> Has broken nature's social union."

he was not less grieved when the coulter turned down a mountain daisy, for the brave and unassuming life thus untimely cut short, finding in the sister flower's fate the image of his own. The attitude

of the earlier eighteenth century towards nature had been one of somewhat contemptuous patronage; any description of her must be in the most abstract and formal terms, as if familiarity with her were something almost indecent and certainly vulgar. All this was now changed, for if to the passionless intellect nature is something to be improved out of existence, to the warm heart she was a perpetual source of refreshment and consolation.

There were two ways in which nature appealed to the hearts of men. To some, she was lovable not for her own sake, but for the human emotions she typified. Thus by Coleridge the masses of white cloud vapour, driven by the winds across the sky, were endowed with a tameless caprice, and made the types of liberty. Streams murmured because they were sorry, and the poor nightingale was never allowed to utter a note expressive of anything but the most profound pessimism, frequently aggravated by pressing his (or rather her, for nightingales were tacitly assumed to exist only in the female gender) breast against a thorn. It was under this guise that nature had almost always appeared to the Elizabethans, to whom the rose smelt not of itself but of a lady, and who heard the cuckoo, from every tree, poking rather indelicate fun at married men.

But the conception of the brotherhood, and in the true, democratic sense, the equality of all living and even inanimate things, anticipating as it does the doctrine of evolution, may almost be said to be the discovery of the Emotional Revival, at least as far as Europe is concerned, for the conception had long been implicit in the Hindu philosophy and in its offshoot, Buddhism. It was the discovery of such men as Burns in poetry and Turner in painting that nature could be loved not only for man's sake, but for her own.

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things, both great and small."

It was the discovery made by the Japanese artist, Kano Motonobu, that to paint anything successfully was to be that thing—thus, when he would set about painting a crane, he would pass the night standing on one leg, and entering, as far as possible, into the crane's feelings. As the Emotional Revival proceeds, this conception of nature begins to gain ground, at any rate among the greatest spirits. Perhaps it is a result of the humiliation of man, which we saw was one aspect of humanism, that he should sink his pride to brotherhood with the worm, and the very clod of clay, to whom Blake gives so eloquent a voice:

> "We live not for ourselves.
> Thou seest me, the meanest thing, and so I am indeed.

My bosom of itself is cold and of itself is dark;
But He, that loves the lowly, pours His oil upon my head,
And kisses me, and binds His nuptial bands around my breast,
And says: 'Thou mother of my children, I have lovéd thee,
And I have given thee a crown that none can take away.
And how this is, sweet maid, I know not, and I cannot know;
I ponder and I cannot ponder; yet I live and love."

The new-found sympathy, that took all nature for its province, was not neglectful of past ages. The eighteenth century culture had been nothing if not exclusive. So far were the fine gentlemen of Versailles and their imitators convinced that they had discovered the true way of life, that they were consistent in treating less polite ages—the whole of the past, that is to say, with the exception of classic antiquity—as merely brutal and barbarous. Gothic was in those days a term of contempt. Certainly England, with her not wholly unfortunate freedom from logical consistency, had been, at the worst, less intolerant than her neighbour towards the times of faith and energy. Dryden, who had done more than any other man of letters to effect the transition to the eighteenth century standpoint, had at the same time been a warm and discriminating admirer of Chaucer, and Addison had gone on with the good work of keeping alive the glory of at least the most prominent national classics. Sir William Temple, though a champion of the "classics" against the "moderns", had gone to the origins of Nordic literature in translating the death song of the Viking Ragnar.

When, therefore, the Emotional Revival came to exploit this rich field of the past, it found the soil already, to a certain extent, prepared. In the reaction from the colourless rationality of the prose age there was a wild and often uncritical rush to satisfy long starved emotional cravings by ransacking the treasures of the past and, on occasion, counterfeiting them. Readers of Jane Austen, who had no patience with this kind of thing, will remember how, at the end of the century, the bookstalls were lurid with genteel dreadfuls about black magic and bloody chambers, so that poor Catherine Morland, on her visit to General Tilney, saw nameless horror in cabinets and uxoricide in washing bills. Chatterton, a poor boy of Bristol, saturating himself in the fifteenth century in that most sumptuous of all parish churches, St. Mary Redclyffe, burst on the world with a galaxy of poems that ought to have been written, if they were not, by a monk called Rowley. James Macpherson, whose fate was less tragic, in creating what he professed to transcribe as the poems of Ossian, caught at least some portion of the dreamy opulence of the old Celtic bards, though Dr. Johnson, who liked Celts as little as he did

forgery, purchased a peculiarly big stick to deal with Macpherson in case of possible necessity.

The man who distilled the pure essence of the Emotional Revival, in whom it attained its most complete and unalloyed manifestation, was William Blake, who lived almost unknown and whose genius was only discovered long after his death—that lyric passing, as he himself expressed it, " into another room," after making the rafters ring with the hymns that burst from his escaping soul. Blake's revolt against the correctness and Johnsonian commonsense of the eighteenth century was so uncompromising and, at times, so extravagant, that prosaic people have had some difficulty in deciding whether he was or was not in his perfect mind. It is a controversy into which we shall not enter, nor shall we moot the further question whether, if Blake were mad, it would not be better to be mad than sane. It is certain, however, in the light of our present knowledge, that much of what Blake, in his later years, took to be the direct inspiration of spirits was—with all due respect to commentators of voluminous solemnity—a trick of automatic writing for whose explanation there is no special reason to invoke ghostly assistance.

It is with Blake, the busy, capable man and the master craftsman in two arts, that we are here concerned, and we shall beg leave to premise that his work is of most value where it speaks straight to the heart, and comparatively negligible where it has to be worked like a Chinese puzzle to a solution. It is as a poet, and not as a Kabalist that he ought to be judged, and it is often a simple matter to make out the general sense even of his " prophetic books " without reference to a " Who's Who " of all the symbolic bogies that run riot in his imagination. It is in words of lucid simplicity that he arraigns the spirit of his time and points out a better way. He considers that the poetry of the Johnsonian age lacks inspiration, " the sound is forced, the notes are few " ; he sees England fallen away from her former goodly estate to an old age in which the arts are frozen and commerce settles on every tree. He has a yet more horrible vision of the " chartered streets " of London, with marks of weakness and woe depicted on every face, with the starving veteran's sigh running " in blood down palace walls " and the youthful harlot's curse blighting the " marriage hearse " with plagues. The effects of expanding trade and industry are as dreadful to him as they were admirable to economic bards of the previous generation.

His remedy is to transform the human mind by forsaking

uninspired reason, which he personifies in the terrible figure of Urizen, the " father of jealousy ", and to give free rein to the passionate intuition whence alone springs delight and wisdom. This he proclaims in such memorable phrases as " energy is eternal delight ", " everything that lives is holy ", " the soul of sweet delight can never be destroyed ", " the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom ".

This energy, or passionate intuition, fulfils the same place in Blake's thought as the categorical imperative of the moral law does in Kant's, only Blake's ideal is less austere and formal, more completely a product of the Emotional Revival. It leads him to carry all the tendencies of that revival to their extreme conclusion. So completely does he mingle his spirit with all around him that he attains to the point not only of loving his neighbour as himself, but of admitting to neighbourhood the very flies and clods. Not Cowper, nor even Burns, with all their love for innocent fellow-creatures could have coined a couplet of such poignancy as :

> " Each outcry of the hunted hare
> A fibre from the brain doth tear."

and though the skylark's song was to call forth the most inspired strains of Wordsworth and Shelley, even they could not surpass the burning directness of appeal that informs such lines as :

> " His little throat labours with inspiration, every feather
> On throat and breast and wings vibrates with the effluence divine.
> All nature listens silent to him, and the awful sun
> Stands still upon the mountain looking on this little bird
> With eyes of soft humility and wonder, love and awe."

Blake, who, whatever may have been the eccentricities of his method, was the most consistent of men to his guiding principles, could not fail to be a champion of liberty in the broadest sense, a far broader sense than most men would dream of attaching to the word. He would see men and women happy in the full development of their powers and capacities for enjoyment, he crowns liberty with love, because by love alone can the soul break the shell of selfish jealousy. " Can that be love, that drinks another as a sponge drinks water ? " Love is not love that binds the freedom of its object. God is love, love is liberty.

> " And trees, and birds, and beasts, and men behold their eternal joy,
> Arise, you little glancing wings and sing your infant joy !
> Arise and drink your bliss, for everything that lives is holy ! "

It is not surprising that with these views Blake saw first in the American revolt and then in the French Revolution types of the liberation that he sought. It is difficult to know, amid the vast, cloudy images that he conjures up, whether he is symbolizing political

or purely spiritual contests, and probably Blake could hardly have told himself. But there is no doubt that he, the purest representative of the Emotional Revival, was thoroughly on the side of the revolutionaries, and it was in 1792, the year of Valmy and the September massacres, that he burst forth into his great song or psalm of the liberty whose dawn was illumining the earth with so wild a radiance.

" France," cries the poet seer, " rend down thy dungeon !
Golden Spain, burst the barriers of old Rome !
Cast thy keys, O Rome ! into the deep . . . . .
The fire, the fire, is falling !

Look up ! look up ! O citizen of London, enlarge thy countenance ! O Jew, leave counting gold ! return to thy oil and wine. O African ! black African ! Go, winged thought, widen his forehead ! "

To such dreams did the Emotional Revival conduce in what seemed, to its most sanguine child, the dawning triumph of its own spirit.

The Non-Revolutionary Englishman

The year 1789 saw the eighteenth century, in so far as this word has any spiritual significance, in its death agony. The cup of Versailles, and all that it stood for, was full. Bankruptcy, inevitable after the clever stroke of French intervention on behalf of the American colonies, now stared the Government in the face. The States General was summoned, the National Assembly proclaimed, the Bastille stormed, the châteaux of the nobles sacked, and the King himself fetched out of his great suburban palace by a mob who, in rowdy triumph, brought him and his family back to Paris.

The significance of these events was but slowly appreciated in England. Neither the House of Bourbon nor the French nation were popular. Village boys, we gather from *Sandford and Merton*, had no greater term of contempt than to say that one of their number looked like a Frenchman. Frenchmen were insulted in the streets and fleeced on a lordly scale by fine old English innkeepers. France had not increased our affection for her by the stab in the back she had given us during the American war. Nothing, therefore, was better calculated to please Englishmen of all classes than the spectacle of their inveterate enemy stewing in her own juice.

Nor, despite the very natural fears of those who had land or wealth to lose, was there any real danger of the English peasantry following the example of their French comrades and staining their furrows with the blood of the squirearchy. This may seem strange in the light of recent research, all of which goes to prove that the labouring class in England was being fast reduced to a state of misery little, if at all, inferior to that which is so vividly described in Arthur Young's diary of his travels in France. The Industrial Revolution was now beginning to produce its full crop of wretchedness in the towns, while the effects of common pillage were everywhere apparent in starvation and sweated labour throughout the countryside. The coarse prosperity of the Pudding Age had gone beyond hope of recovery. Yet both in the towns and in the country, so far from it being a time of scanty production, such a surplus of wealth was being produced as had never been known before. Scientific agriculture and scientific industry were multiplying the fruits of the earth for the use of man. And yet, such were the combined effects of selfishness and muddle, that the more there was to go round, the less there was to divide among those who most needed it.

Why, then, amid a sturdy and freedom-loving people such as the English had prided themselves on being throughout the eighteenth century, was it that there was so little will to follow the lead set by revolutionary France, and that the mobs showed more disposition to attack the champions of liberty than the defenders of established order? It is hardly possible to accept the explanation that the countryside, which furnished Wellington with his troops and Nelson with his sailors, or the town mobs, whose violence had long been proverbial, were so cowed as to be incapable of making a fight for it. True, there was a regular force that the government would not, after the Gordon riots, have hesitated to use again, but such a force had existed also in Paris, and events proved that even the British navy was not incapable of mutiny. One is forced to the conclusion that in spite of a squalid misery unprecedented in our annals, not the power but the will to rebellion was lacking. We should never have won through a war, lasting for nearly a generation, and in which at one time we were fighting alone against the conqueror of Europe, unless the country had been, on the whole, solid behind its rulers.

It is obvious that we must seek for the explanation of this loyalty or passivity elsewhere than in merely economic causes. Some weight must be given to the contempt for Frenchmen and foreigners generally, which not only tended to discredit ideas supposed to emanate from

abroad, but diverted the hostility of the British working man from a domestic to a foreign foe. But then there is little evidence that the working man, in the mass, did regard his landlord or employer as an enemy, however justifiable we, in the light of the facts, might elect to consider such hostility.

There is this that distinguishes the English squire and manufacturer from the French seigneur—with all their faults and tyrannies, they were known to their dependents and commanded their respect. Even the Lancashire master cotton spinners, ruthless and close-fisted as they generally were, were of the same class as the men they employed, speaking the same accent and in perpetual contact with them. Anyone who knows the Lancashire temperament—and the same is more or less true of other new manufacturing districts—will realize the cheerful and democratic recognition of success, particularly in the matter of acquiring what is known as " brass ". The fact that the boss, or " 'ard Bob " as he is more probably styled, has made his own pile, proves that he has successfully accomplished what every one of his employees wishes he could do for himself. The presumption is that in a world where natural selection is instinctively recognized as the basis of morality, " 'ard Bob " is the best man and respected accordingly. It must be remembered that this was before the limited liability system had deadened the personal touch.

As for the squire, it is certainly possible to establish a case that his dependents were little better off economically than those of the seigneur. But there the resemblance ends between the two. The seigneur, from the peasant's point of view, was at once a stranger, an oppressor, and a drone. He was rarely seen; he would have scorned to know the faces of his peasants or the difference between oats and barley; he was no more than the licensed robber who extracted money and services—often humiliating—for which he did nothing in return, and in his public capacity he and his order were reducing the country to the verge of ruin by refusing to shoulder the burden of taxation. Accordingly when the opportunity presented itself of sacking the château of the Marquis de Carabas, Jacques Bonhomme saw no valid reason for refusing to take it.

Very different was the atmosphere that emanated from the squire's hall. Whatever else they might be, the great majority of squires were thoroughly conversant with their business of agriculture and stock-raising, and the best of them were men of energy and ideas who applied scientific methods to their task of making two blades

of corn grow where one had grown before. Nor had any word been coined in English to render the exact sense of *canaille*. Even at the worst times, there was a tie of sentiment which united the squire both to his neighbours and his dependents. The tradition of Sir Roger de Coverley was by no means extinct, and when, in 1821, Maclean wrote his admirable, jog-trot epic of a typical old English squire, he concluded with a dance of all the villagers in the servants' hall:

> "For the squire ever liked all around him to see
> With broad happy faces and hearts full of glee."

The very tradition that has grown up round the figure of the old-time squire is not without its significance. And if those very able but somewhat one-sided writers, Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, lay stress on the words that often greet us in French official reports, "This lord is at law with his vassals," they should in fairness have added that it would have been possible to say, in England, "This squire"—Coke of Norfolk is a case in point—"works with his labourers, and this Duke plays cricket with his gardener."

For no survey of English country life would be adequate that failed to take account of sport. The country gentleman was, like Squire Western, as keen a sportsman as he was an agriculturist, and the one was almost as strong a tie as the other between him and his people. This was the golden age of foxhunting, a sport that brought together everyone in the district with a horse to ride—those in the neighbourhood of the meet would open doors and bottles to those who had hacked over, on the previous day, from remote districts. A fine orgy would take place in the evening after one of the prodigiously long and leisurely runs then in vogue, often at the house of the principal nobleman or squire of the district. The punch would be stirred with a fox's brush, and the Duke of Northumberland once went so far as to eat a fox's head, devilled. Apart from its influence in promoting neighbourly feeling among the landowning class, fox-hunting gave employment to a great number of hunt-servants and grooms, and must have made as powerful an appeal as it does now to the sporting instincts of the English yokel. When the chorus goes round of "the traitor is seized on and dies", "the happy domestics", we read, "recovered from their fatigues, become inspired by the general joy and instinctively join in the chorus." A marked contrast, this, with the sister sport of shooting, which was thoroughly a class amusement, and protected by game laws of a fiendish severity recalling the old Norman forest laws.

Boxing was another sport patronized impartially by all classes, and by some held to be a valuable national institution, both as keeping up a manly, English spirit, and delivering us from the Continental horrors of the knife and stiletto. Knight, in his *Principles of Taste*, was scarcely exaggerating the general sentiment when he described boxing as "perhaps the only security now left, either for our civil liberty or political independence." Fighting with fists was as much the accomplishment of the gentleman as of the rough, and it was no uncommon thing for the former to offer the latter the honour of bodily combat. Frederick, Prince of Wales, William Windham, the statesman, not to speak of John Keats, were heroes of such encounters. The frequent big prize fights were the delight of Johnny Raw no less than of the buck and Corinthian.

It was during the eighteenth century—in the South Eastern counties principally—that the most distinctively English of all games, cricket, began to take a hold. As early as 1723 we have the evidence, in an itinerary of the second Earl of Oxford, that club cricket was being played between places as remote from each other as Dartford and Tonbridge, and in 1740 we find Chesterfield, of all people, exhorting his son to excel all other boys in cricket as well as in learning. The democracy of a game which then, as now, brought butchers and baronets together on terms of equality is recognized, not approvingly, by a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1743. But the spirit of the game was too strong to be quenched by snobbishness. It was in 1777 that the great match was played in which the Hambledon Club took on All England and defeated them by an innings and 168—when the Duke of Dorset, captain of the England side, went in first with Lumpy, "a bit of a smuggler" as well as the finest bowler in England, and was bowled for a duck by Farmer Brett. No incident shows to better advantage the spirit of sportsmanlike comradeship than that of the violin presented, with carriage paid, by this same Duke to the fiddler and batsman, John Small, and the return gift of two bats to his Grace, with the carriage likewise paid by the donor.

Such incidents may seem below the dignity of history, but no record of English country life that confined itself merely to the statistics, important as these are, of food prices and pauperism, and failed to take into account the whole spirit of that life as it must have appeared to one who lived it, would be anything but incomplete and misleading. It may be argued that such alleviations as we have described were merely the gilding on the pill of misery, but even so, the fact that the pill was gilded is of the utmost practical importance.

During the long war with France it is remarkable how little evidence there is of serious disloyalty among the still preponderant agricultural community. Even in the towns such discontent as there was was sporadic and did not assume dangerous proportions till the peace. This may be cited as a miracle of patience or passivity, but it cannot be ignored.

Never, at any rate, was there a class with less conviction of sin than that of the squirearchy who were the backbone of our resistance to France through these long years. It was a class that prized, and indeed deserved, no epithet so much as that of "manly". It delighted in producing such heroes as the famous Jack Mytton, who regularly drank six bottles of port a day besides incredible quantities of brandy, and who, by his dare-devil and hardly sane feats of sportsmanship, earned the nickname of "Neck-or-nothing". This class was perpetually in the open air, when not drinking or sleeping off a muscular debauch, and with the close of the eighteenth century began to lose much of its intellectual leaven, though a tradition of scholarly culture was still maintained in the greater houses. It furnished Wellington with his officers and the Tory Government with its majority. It was losing, not only in numbers but in thinking capacity, to its rival, the growing middle class of the towns. Nevertheless, we have no warrant for characterizing it as unpopular.

3

Constitution versus Revolution

We have yet to take account of the main element of stability in Pitt's England, that furnished by the Constitution itself or, in the last resort, by the Common Law which is the soul of that Constitution. Never had Englishmen been more conscious of this heritage of theirs, from which the most profound thinkers of the Continent had not withheld their admiration. In 1765 had appeared the first volume of a veritable epic of English Law in the shape of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, the most popular and influential, though perhaps not the most erudite, of all the long series of English law books. Blackstone, though he did not claim that they were incapable of improvement, wrote of the law and Constitution as a lover, "of a constitution so strongly raised, and so highly finished, it is hard to speak with that praise which is justly and severely its due:—the thorough and attentive contemplation of it will furnish its best panegyric."

It is in no illiberal spirit that Blackstone expounds the principles of a law whose most important function it is to guard the liberties of Englishmen, which consist, primarily, "in the free enjoyment of personal security, of personal liberty and of private property." But Blackstone's adoration of the law made him too ready to regard it as something complete and perfect, to defend all existing institutions and even abuses for no better reason than because they existed. This of course was clean contrary to the spirit of the English Constitution, which, in spite of its invariable habit of seeking justification in precedent, had in fact been a continuously growing and improving organism.

It is here that we encounter the dividing line in English political thought, now that the old issue of the Crown versus Parliament passes out of date. In spite of George III's dishing of his Whig enemies, the Crown was a spent force. The idea of the patriot King had failed to materialize from the sheer inability of the Hanoverian dynasty to produce one. George III was only powerful for mischief; his two successors had not enough character to be powerful for anything. The Constitution and the Revolution Settlement commanded the lip homage of both parties. It was when it came to fixing the boundaries of this common ground that there was scope for disagreement. The new Tory tended, with Blackstone, to regard established institutions as fixed and sacrosanct, to hold that any attempt seriously to reform the Constitution was to fly in the face of ancestral wisdom. He was inclined to outwhig Whiggism in upholding the letter of the Revolution Settlement, and deified the very Whig fathers whom his own fathers had impeached. The new Whig, on the other hand, regarded the Revolution as something still going on, and he conceived that he was best honouring the principles of Locke and Somers by keeping the Constitution, as they had done, abreast of the times. There were, of course, almost as many different shades of Whiggism as there were Whigs, but the broad distinction between a static and a dynamic Constitution was what divided the party of Pitt from that of Fox.

On the extreme left of Whiggism were to be found a mixed assortment of root and branch reformers, the spiritual descendants of the old Levellers, who had begun to take the name of "Radicals". The principles of these men were those that had long before been formulated by the Ironside Colonel Rainborow, that "the poorest he that is in England hath a right to live as the greatest he", and, most important of all, the right to choose the men by whom he shall

be governed. This opinion was strongest among that Dissenting community to which Rainborow had belonged and for which he had died. Prominent among these new Levellers were the Unitarian, Priestley, the most distinguished scientist that England then possessed, Dr. Richard Price, an economist who believed the salvation of the country to depend on Parliamentary reform, and " the father of English Radicals ", Major Cartwright, a typical old sailor, very bluff and kindly, with a religion of his own based on the Bible, and a belief in universal suffrage and annual Parliaments, which he reiterated with a monotonous obstinacy that at last gained him quite a considerable influence.

The abuse on which all reformers concentrated was that of Parliamentary representation. A haphazard and ridiculously small minority formed the ostensible electorate, and a great many of the seats were recognized private property. This was the pass to which nearly a century of oligarchy and lip homage to the Revolution had reduced Britain, and her most enlightened statesmen were agreed that some way ought to be found at least of mitigating the scandal. The younger Pitt had inherited the cause of reform from his father, and was its ardent champion on his first entrance into Parliament. But the weight of ministerial responsibility and a Tory majority soon lay upon him heavy as frost, and a few years of office were enough to make him veer gradually round to the static and conservative view of the Constitution which was Blackstone's. He helped to sharpen the militant Radicalism of nonconformists by refusing to make an end of the intolerant legislation against them, and in 1792 he turned savagely on those still progressive Whigs, who continued to advocate the very reform of Parliament for which he had himself stood in the ardent dawn of his career.

Pitt was, according to his lights, a sincere patriot; like his father, he believed that he had the power to save the country, but his ideas, prematurely stunted by responsibility, moved in a much narrower circle. He could play the game of eighteenth century politics with consummate ability; he had already, by sound administration, nursed back Britain to solvency at home and prestige abroad, and he desired nothing better than a free hand to play the game according to the recognized rules. He was therefore, at first, rather pleased than otherwise at the outbreak of the French Revolution, and was more interested in his squabble with Russia about a remote and unpronounceable fortress, than in the upheaval that was shortly to convulse Europe. The Whigs, on the other hand, were at first

inclined to welcome the Revolution as a surrender of a despotic government to their principles, and it was this that inspired Fox to characterize the storming of the Bastille as the greatest and best event that had ever happened. There was, at the outset, little alarm, much complacency and a certain amount of Utopian enthusiasm over the events in France.

All this was rudely changed by Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution* which, published in 1790, burst like a thunderclap upon the national indifference, and precipitated the regrouping of Whigs and Tories into what were in fact, if not yet in name, two new parties of Conservatives and Liberals. The party man in Burke had, of late years, been more *en evidence* than the statesman, and his glorious injustice (if the two words may ever be conjoined) in the Warren Hastings affair, was followed by a frothy virulence on behalf of the Prince Regent's Divine Right to govern Whiggishly, that induced some observers to doubt whether Burke's mind might not be giving way. Despite his liberal opinions about the treatment of dependencies, Burke, like Palmerston after him, was an aristocratic reactionary in home affairs, and most of his high-sounding phrases about liberty amounted, in practice, to the liberties, in the old sense, of magnates like Newcastle and Burke's own employer, Rockingham. When the Revolution broke out he was much less inclined to sympathize with it than Fox, and with his extraordinary if somewhat perverse power of intuition, was quicker to take the alarm than Pitt.

Burke was a Romantic of the Romantics; it was perhaps the splendour of Indian civilization more than the lies of Francis that had first moved him against Hastings, and now the terrible tragedy, which he foresaw with weird accuracy, that was to overwhelm a royal family and aristocracy long the acknowledged fount of European civilization, filled him with pity and terror. His sensitive heart could not bear the spectacle of cruelty, and his poetic imagination seized at once on the concrete tragedy of Marie Antoinette, "that elevation and that fall," as he wrote with the tears of sincere sensibility streaming down his cheeks. What provoked him to his terrible anti-revolutionary Philippic was a sermon preached at the Old Jewry by that dour, non-conforming veteran, Dr. Price. The sermon, in itself, was not particularly offensive or out of the ordinary, being a balanced and somewhat academic disquisition on the rival claims of the love of humanity and the love of one's country. But the old democrat, who already felt himself approaching his long

home, could not refrain from frothing over into a *nunc dimittis* anent the diffusion of knowledge, the rights of man, and the two revolutions, both glorious, that he had been spared to see. This outburst had the effect on Burke of a lighted spark on a powder magazine.

He burst forth with what, with all its faults, is one of the world's masterpieces, both for the beauty of its expression and the depth of its principles. So far as the proof of the pudding is the eating Burke must be allowed to have gauged the situation more accurately than his opponents, who united in predicting a peaceful and bloodless course for the Revolution. Burke not only foresaw in effect, but in astonishingly correct detail, the whole course that the Revolution, then in its confident and idealistic beginnings, was actually to take through bloodshed and ruin at home and war with every civilized power, to its culmination in a military dictatorship. Burke, in fact, saw clearly as far as Napoleon, and the greatest fault chargeable to him was that he neither saw beyond Napoleon, nor what Napoleon stood for.

The great principle upon which Burke took his stand and of which he gave a more sweeping and masterly exposition than any other political philosopher before or since, was that which the biologist calls organic continuity and the British historian constitutional government. Political institutions are parts of a living though invisible body and can no more be destroyed and refashioned at will than Aeson, in the Greek tale, could be made young again by being sliced up and boiled in a cauldron. A nation cannot cut itself loose from its past because, in the deepest sense, it *is* the past, because though, in the sight of the unwise, its sons and daughters seem to die, their works and their spirit live after them; because the England of Burke's day and of our day is really but intangibly different from what it would have been if Cromwell and Alfred, if the meanest labourer or household drudge, had never existed. A country consists of all its people, those living, and those dead, and those yet to be.

To what end has this country, this communion of souls, come to exist? Burke's answer is magnificently complete. It is a partnership in all art, in all science, in every virtue and in all perfection. Thus is the old fiction of a social compact sublimated out of recognition—Burke has said the last word on that subject and, in fact, little is heard of it after his time. The gap between the narrower and the more universal love is thus bridged :—

"Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by the inviolable oath which holds all physical and all moral natures, each in their appointed place."

Unfortunately, there is another side to Burke's Reflections not so pleasant to dwell upon. For Burke was throughout his career afflicted by that strange duality of nature which seems almost inseparable from the Romantic spirit, and hardly capable, except perhaps in his attitude towards the American Colonies, of formulating any great principle in the abstract without degrading it by some perverse application in the concrete. He had championed the cause of English liberty in the interests of the Whig oligarchs, he had expounded the doctrine of a free empire in order to compass the ruin of an innocent man, and now he had written the noblest essay in political philosophy since that of Aristotle, only to bolster up a system of outworn tyranny.

If Burke had had as much knowledge of biology as anyone who reads may acquire to-day, he would have known that the essence of life consists in its power of adaptation. Once an organism or a species has lost its power of adapting itself to circumstances, it is already partially, and will soon be wholly dead. But Burke would not see this about the British Constitution. Instead of regarding it as something perpetually adaptable and growing, he treated it, in practice, as if it were perfect already and in no need of improvement. He followed up the Reflections by a lengthy appeal from the New to the Old Whigs in which he had little difficulty in showing that most of the old Whig Fathers were of a thoroughly conservative tendency, who would have been gravely scandalized at anything connected with Jean Jacques or the National Assembly, or even their degenerate successors of the Foxite persuasion. This was all as true as it was irrelevant. Burke was formulating the principles of life in the cause of death. His advocacy at least succeeded in that it brought the whole issue of petrification against progress to a head. There was a perfect deluge of replies, nor was the championship of democracy the monopoly of one sex. Mrs. Macaulay, Dr. Johnson's *bête noire*, had her fling, and so did a remarkable young schoolmistress called Mary Wollstonecraft, in a spirited vindication of the Rights of Man, following on a more famous vindication of those of Woman, which opened a vista of emancipation

hitherto scarcely regarded by the doughtiest apostles of freedom. The Whig Lawyer, James Mackintosh, whose own enthusiasm for the Revolution was soon to fade in the red light of the Terror, put the case with imperturbable commonsense against Burke's Jeremiad, and Priestley replied to Burke in a series of reasoned and courteous but rather dull letters, whose gist is sufficiently indicated in one of the opening sentences: "You appear to me not to be sufficiently cool to enter into this serious discussion."

All of these replies put together did not focus as much attention as the downright onslaught of Thomas or, to give him his somewhat uncivil nickname, Tom Paine. This man had sprung from the sturdy East Anglian nonconformist stock that had, in former years, been the backbone of the Roundhead cause. And Paine, despite the odium of infidelity that clung about him, never ceased to be a nonconformist at heart, a Quaker, as he was reminded in no friendly spirit when a member of the French Convention. He was a Puritan in his plain determination to get to close quarters with the truth, and to let nothing, however sacred or venerable, stand in his way. In this he was the exact opposite of the romantic Burke, who loved what he called the decent drapery of life, and deplored the barbarous system, born of cold hearts and muddy understandings, in which a King was only a man and a Queen a woman. To Paine's mind a King was a man like any other, and under the same necessity of justifying his existence, a man, too, in the sense that he was entitled to justice and pity, as this freethinking Quaker did not hesitate to maintain, on behalf of Louis XVI, at the imminent risk of his own life.

Paine was too much of a zealot to keep his hands off idols. He had lent his sword as well as his pen to the cause of American independence, and had recrossed the Atlantic full of republican enthusiasm, a thorough-paced Leveller. But so deeply religious a man could not assail the shams of politics without going on to those of dogma, and his *Rights of Man*, which was his reply to Burke, was followed by his *Age of Reason*, written just before Robespierre consigned him to the prison from which the only exit, for the vast majority of victims—though not, as it happened, for Paine—was to the guillotine. This book he concludes with a sentence of terrible earnestness: "He that believes in the story of Christ is an infidel to God."

Martin Luther had started the Reformation by declaring that he would submit to no authority but that of Scripture, and Paine

was only continuing his work when he declared that he would submit to no authority whatever, not even Scripture, that could not justify its claims at the bar of reason. People stood aghast when his Puritan bludgeon fell first on the Crown and then on the Gospels. The arguments about the true interpretation of the Constitution and fidelity to the Whig Revolution were brushed contemptuously aside. Paine cared nothing for Whig principles and less than nothing for the Constitution—the very word was to him meaningless cant. But as Milton had looked for the rising of a noble and puissant nation, once she had shaken off the last relics of her Babylonian thraldom, so did Paine look forward to a happy and enlightened mankind, freed from every time-honoured illusion and guided only by the reason that God has planted in every man's breast, for Paine's Puritanism, iconoclastic as it was, stopped short at getting rid of God.

Practical East Anglian that he was, he was not content to remain a visionary, but must needs get his proposals formulated in pounds, shillings and pence. They were enough to make even the most progressive Whig gasp with horror. For Paine was a root and branch social reformer; he would have wiped out pauperism and unemployment, he would have had an old age pension for those who needed it after the age of fifty, he would have provided funds for educating poor children, he would have given free relief to destitute families, and he would have found the money to do it by a steeply graded income tax which, starting at 3d. in the pound for the first £500, absorbed altogether every thousand after the 23rd. Of course he would have abolished royalty, the peerage, and privilege of every description.

Thomas Paine proved as great an asset to the anti-revolutionary cause as Burke himself. Their combined effect was to frighten respectable people out of their wits with anything remotely democratic. No matter how carefully a Whig gentleman might dilute his principles, he could not rid himself of the usually quite unjust suspicion of being in some way on the side of Tom Paine, whom devout imaginations had transformed into a fiend incarnate. Even the advocacy of what had but a short time ago seemed the most moderate of reform proposals, was now considered to be the thin end of the revolutionary wedge.

Accordingly it required a good deal of moral courage for a progressive Whig to stick to the advocacy of his principles as if nothing had happened, and it was inevitable that a considerable proportion of the party should take the alarm that Burke had sounded. Party

loyalty was dangerously strained when, in 1792, a promising young aristocratic politician, Charles Grey, formed a society, the Friends of the People, to promote Parliamentary Reform. But it needed the spectacle of the Terror and open war with France to produce a definite split. In 1794 the Duke of Portland, who had once been the figurehead of the Fox-North coalition, transferred the weight of his mediocrity to the party of stagnation and a firm line, and with him went a considerable section of the Whigs. Fox stood firm for a liberal interpretation of the Whig creed, and so, to their credit, did some of the magnates, including the ducal head of the House of Russell, and the Earl of Stanhope, a name honourably associated during that century with the cause of progress and enlightenment.

England Joins the League of Despots

There is this to be said in defence of the French Revolution, that the violent and bloody courses, into which it degenerated, were the direct response of French Republicanism to the menace of armed rebellion leagued with foreign aggression. So peaceable was the constitutional government in its opening phase, that Pitt was able to secure an important point in the game for England because, when Spain claimed rights over the West coast of what is now Canada, and was prepared to back them by war, France flatly refused to honour the family compact between the two branches of the House of Bourbon, which bound her to stand in with her ally. Spain, thus left in the lurch, found herself obliged to back down. The Legislative Assembly was, at this time, glowing with pacific and brotherly sentiment. Had the Revolution been allowed to take its normal course, it is conceivable that the idealistic and moderate elements might have prevailed.

But the lords of eighteenth century civilization were fated to accomplish their own tragedy. First the provocation came from within; the King tried to conquer Paris and Paris stormed the Bastille; the King's officers at Versailles tore down the national cockades, and the mob fetched the King back to Paris. Then the tragedy became international; the aristocrats emigrated to foreign courts seeking the help of foreign arms; the French royal family was in active intrigue with brother potentates; the King made his position impossible by slinking off to join his real friends and having to be fetched back again. Then, when foreign armies began to

assemble on the frontier, the mob broke into the King's palace; when the Prussian commander threatened Paris with military execution, they stormed that palace; when the invading armies seemed to be carrying all before them, the home front was made secure by a massacre of suspected reactionaries; when France was confronted by Europe in arms, she responded with the Terror; and when victory relaxed the tension on the frontier, the head of the chief terrorist dropped off as easily as if it had only been kept on his shoulders by pressure of the enemy.

Burke is fairly chargeable with having done his considerable best to bring about the very evils he predicted. His romantic imagination had been taken by the idea of a crusade—it was as an "anti-crusade" that he had viewed our support of the Turk—and he aspired to play the part of Peter the Hermit in urging the sovereigns of Europe to stamp out a fire that would otherwise spread till it had consumed them all. Unfortunately, like most devout Royalists, he had reckoned without his sovereigns. It was to the very dregs of humanity that he was making his appeal. The grand, philosophic despots of the eighteenth century were now only represented by Catherine of Russia, a genial old polyandrist who thought as little of extinguishing a people's freedom as she did of deflowering a grenadier's virginity. The rest of the crowned heads were too half-witted and too blindly selfish even to combine in their own interests, still less to end the troubles of their unhappy cousins at the Tuileries. There was other work on hand than that to which Burke's simple faith would have urged them. Poland had already been incompletely partitioned by the despots of Prussia, Russia and Austria; it only remained to finish her off and share out the effects. It suited Catherine's book very well that her fellow criminals should have their hands full with suppressing the Revolution, while she was grabbing as much as possible of Polish soil.

While Prussia and Austria, who hated and distrusted each other for the best of reasons, were slowly screwing up their courage to crusading point, with the blessing of Burke and the benevolent sympathy of Catherine, Mr. Pitt was content to mind his own and his country's business, and continued in the path of sound administration and cautious diplomacy, quite unperturbed by the eloquence of Burke and the woes of Louis XVI. So confident was he of peace that as late as 1792 he publicly anticipated fifteen years of it, and was economizing on national defence. It was no concern of his what government there might be in France, so long as that government continued to play the

game according to the rules, and did not remove its neighbour's landmark. When the ill-paid and well-flogged mercenaries of the Kings began to goad French democracy to ever wilder and more bloody excesses, feeling in England ran high, and diplomatic relations with France were strained almost to breaking point.

But the breaking point did not come until the French committed themselves to a course of action that threatened England's interests at their most vital point. By an international treaty Holland had acquired the right to close the navigation of the Scheldt, and thus to stifle the commerce of Antwerp. The French, whose armies had burst into Belgium and were preparing to attack Holland, treated this restriction as unnatural and contrary to the Rights of Man. Pitt knew nothing about these rights, but he did know about the sanctity of treaties, and, when the French proposed to treat this one as a scrap of paper, he regarded it, as he would have if a king and not a regicide Convention had been the aggressors, in the light of a *casus belli*. His attitude was characteristically English. He cared little one way or the other about the questions of high philosophy that agitated Burke and Paine. In private conversation, according to Lady Hester Stanhope, he even admitted that Paine was in the right, but "what am I to do?" To encourage such opinions would mean bloody revolution. As a statesman his business was not with abstract right but with the concrete rights of England, and these he would maintain though the Heavens fell and Hell were let loose. It has ever been the nature of British policy to react by war against aggression in the Low Countries. The Jacobins of the Convention aspired to make all things new; Pitt was merely making the orthodox move in a game centuries old.

Once the issue was joined and we were committed to an alliance of Kings against the Republic, it would have been well for the country had Pitt listened to the advice of Burke, or even followed the example set by his own father in the Seven Years' War of flinging the whole force of the nation against the enemy in a series of relentless onslaughts. Burke would have had the allies sink all their differences and strike, without thought of their sectional interests, right at the heart of the enemy. It would have been well for them if they had done so. But neither Pitt nor the leagued despots could grasp the fact that a new situation had arisen that put the old, eighteenth century game completely out of date. By every one of the rules the Republicans ought to have been beaten. They were opposing raw levies against the highly disciplined and scientifically led troops of their enemies;

they defied every principle of sound finance; they had a great part of their own country, the cream of its blood and culture, in arms against them. But they had behind them what their enemies as yet lacked, the impetus of a great idea, and that was decisive. It was hard to beat troops who, when routed all along the line, could be rallied to victory by the mere singing of the Marseillaise. Most wars, if sufficiently prolonged, resolve themselves into conflicts of moral forces, and moral force was at present on the side of the Revolution.

Against this, what had the allies to oppose? The despots and petty princes of the Continent were conspicuously lacking in ideas of any sort except of the most petty and personal, and their troops marched to the slaughter without patriotism and without a cause, because it was their trade and because the habitual line of least resistance lay in doing what one was told. The Frenchman was burning to think of a "horde of slaves, of traitors, of leagued Kings" daring to threaten his new won freedom and the sacred right of every nation to be governed as it chose. And this national fervour was focussed and directed by one of the world's greatest organizing geniuses, Lazare Carnot, an officer of engineers, who, while his colleagues were busy intriguing and guillotining, was conjuring hordes of willing soldiers out of the soil, and hurling them on the invaders with an energy worthy of Chatham. In a surprisingly short time these levies had blossomed into war-hardened veterans led by the ablest officers in Europe. With the generals it had to be neck or nothing, or—to be more accurate—neck or everything, for even an incomplete victory brought the commander to the *Place de la Révolution*.

It may well be asked what oar England was pulling in this galley of despots. With all the abuses of her oligarchy and the increasing misery of her social conditions, she had a soul and a patriotism as genuine, though not as actively volcanic, as that of her opponent. She had gone into the war of necessity, but without any sort of enthusiasm. Public opinion was aghast at the proceedings of the Jacobins, as it would have been at any spectacle of cruelty and extravagant violence, but not to the extent of burning to smash the Jacobins in order to restore the Bourbons. Burke's idea of a crusade found the average Englishman lukewarm. He would, like Pitt, have been willing enough to have left the French alone if the French would have left him alone.

Some anonymous critic of the South African War described our part in it as "absent-minded". This is precisely the description we

should give to the conduct of the war against France by Pitt and the man who most influenced him, that clever but unprincipled adventurer, Henry Dundas. Unlike his father, Pitt could not make up his mind, or rather his soul, to win. He seemed to have no clear purpose whatever, and the idea of Dundas was to secure as many points as possible in remote and unessential fields. A wretched contingent which was all that could be raised, was sent to take part in combined operations from the Low Countries, but none of the allies had the remotest intention of playing for anything but his own hand, and just when a combined effort was all that was needed to open the road to Paris, the British force was diverted to the unnecessary and unsuccessful siege of Dunkirk. This it was not only forced to abandon, but the French commander was, not without reason, guillotined for failing to destroy it altogether. Thus led, the professional armies of the alliance were in no condition to resist the wild onslaughts of Carnot's Marseillaise-drunken levies, and next year the British forces were lucky enough to escape, in parlous condition, from the inevitable *débacle.*[1] In the South, with the assistance of the French counter-revolutionaries, the allies were at one time in possession of the all-important naval base of Toulon, but let it slip from their grasp without even securing or destroying the French fleet there. In the West we succeeded, by way of a diversion, in sending a gallant party of French gentlemen to certain death at Quiberon Bay.

Our superiority at sea was overwhelming, but we failed to make any intelligent use of it. Lord Howe, on the 1st of June, 1794, won a tactical victory, which he did not follow up, over a French fleet which was successful in covering the arrival of grain from America. Pitt and Dundas could think of no better way of employing our troops and sea power than by securing the French possessions overseas. The result of these efforts was disastrous. It was easy enough to capture the French West Indies, but the difficulty was to hold them against revolting black slaves and the deadly yellow fever. Mr. Fortescue gives our losses in the West Indies alone, to the end of 1796, as 40,000 dead and as many more discharged as unfit for service—more than the whole losses, from all causes, of Wellington's army during the Peninsula War. One battalion perished to a man.[2] Such were the fruits of half-hearted and absent-minded war.

[1] After participating, at Turcoing, in a wonderful attempt to combine the operations of five different forces, in the palmiest tradition of Austrian staff work. Our contingent, having penetrated furthest, suffered most.

[2] See Vol. 4 of his *History of the British Army.*

It is remarkable that Pitt, who had for so long refused to take the Revolution seriously, should, once we were committed to war with it, have been more concerned about safeguarding the home front than beating the enemy. We can well understand the alarm that this terrible and unprecedented annihilation of a governing class caused among the same class in a sister nation, an alarm that was fomented by all the eloquence of Burke, who, as he drew near to the grave, grew less and less philosophic and more and more declamatory, at one time throwing on to the floor of the House, with an apocalyptic gesture, a revolutionary dagger made in Birmingham. But Pitt's cool head and steady nerve ought to have been proof against such terrors. What was really extraordinary about the English proletariat, considering the extreme misery that everywhere prevailed, was that it should have been so insensitive to the call of the Marseillaise. Even in the great industrial centres the mobs rioted not for but against the new champions of liberty. At Birmingham they sacked the house of Priestley, destroying his library and scientific appliances, at Manchester they expressed their loyalty by similar rough methods, and it was an exquisitely Gilbertian situation when the wealthy Earl of Stanhope (who was, like Priestley, a scientist of distinction) had his London mansion wrecked by the poor men whose rights as against his own class he had had the insolence to champion. Even when destitution and repression drove the mob to pelt the King on his way to open Parliament in 1795, the cry was not for liberty and the Rights of Man, but "Peace! Peace! Bread! Bread! No Pitt! No famine!"

It is not, however, altogether to be wondered at that our national game of hunting for the Hidden Hand should have been carried on with peculiar zest. Revolutionary principles made a certain appeal to liberal-minded members of the upper class, but where they took the strongest hold was among what we can best designate as the lower middle class, clerks and tradesmen with just enough smattering of education to make them susceptible of ideas. It was among these that the most famous of many reforming societies was formed by the shoemaker Hardy, the Corresponding Society, as it was called from the rather futile but—to nervous patriots—hair-raising correspondence that it had carried on, before the war, with genuine revolutionaries across the Channel. Most of these societies were frankly constitutional, though their rendering of constitutional principles was often as extravagant in its liberalism as that of Burke and Pitt was hidebound and reactionary.

Under these circumstances it is tragic that the sometime reformer Pitt should have abandoned himself to what, with our present knowledge of the facts, we can only describe as groundless panic. There was a flaw in the man's nature that was no doubt the result of his prematurely stunted youth. He had an incurable *penchant* for intrigue; ever since his dishing of Fox's Whigs he had been the most accomplished wirepuller in England. He maintained a perfect army of spies, and his underground machinations were so magnified in France that "Pitt's gold" was the explanation worthy Jacobins at once sought for any untoward happenings. But it is the fate of those who deal in plots to be obsessed by the fear of plots,[1] and there really were some legitimate grounds for alarm for anyone not possessed of an equanimity based on an understanding of the British character.

Even to this day it is not easy to determine the influence of secret societies on the development of the French Revolution. A passion for a rather theatrical secrecy had been incidental to the Emotional Revival, and by no means all of its manifestations had been of a revolutionary tendency.[2] But for those who like to diagnose the Hidden Hand whenever starving men adorn the lamp posts with those who bid them eat grass, or desperate men kill those whom they suspect of being in league with a victorious invader, there is plenty of food for speculation in the fact that the regicide and fratricide Duke of Orleans was Grand Master of the Masonic Grand Orient, and in trying to trace a connection between the political clubs of Paris and the mysterious Illuminati of Bavaria. There is no doubt that Pitt was fully apprised of every breath of rumour, and how ready public, or upper class opinion was to fasten on to any suspicion of this kind is shown by the success of an agitated book, dedicated to Burke's friend Windham, and written by Professor John Robison, who, as a clear-headed and meritorious scientist, ought to have known better. This book, entitled *Proofs of a conspiracy against all the religions and governments of Europe carried on in the secret meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati and Reading Societies*, was published in 1797 and quickly ran through four editions.

Anything less suggestive of the conspirator than the plain and, as a rule, transparently honest men whom the government singled

[1] There is no greater believer in the power of secret societies than ex-Kaiser William II of Germany.

[2] Readers of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* will recall his account of the craze for freemasonry among the young aristocrats of St. Petersburg.

out as traitors and Jacobins in disguise, it would have been hard to imagine. Poor Hardy, whose wife, about to become a mother, was frightened into her grave first by the brutal circumstances of his arrest by Bow Street runners, and then by the mob attacking her house to celebrate Howe's qualified glory of the First of June, was as John Bullish a type (save for John's cant) as could be found anywhere. But the government had begun to scent Jacobins in the most innocent people and Jacobinism in the most moderate opinions. The red terror in France was answered by a white terror in Great Britain. It became a crime so much as to suggest that the Constitution was capable of improvement, to advocate the very views that Pitt himself had championed but a decade ago. So much as to own, still more to lend a book by Thomas Paine, was to court the pleasures of a trip to Botany Bay.

Pitt sought to secure his position by suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, which was the same thing as putting the country under a mild form of martial law. But the Constitution that he would have killed by petrification, and which he so grievously abused, was yet strong enough to preserve the last liberties of Englishmen, and to prevent the White Terror from being stained with the blood of men whose love for England was as noble as, and more understanding than his own. The government sought to get Hardy and certain of his associates not only under lock and key, but hanged, drawn, and quartered for treason. Luckily Hardy was defended by Erskine, one of the ablest and most liberal members of the bar, before a Judge who, though his sympathies were certainly with the prosecution, was not unworthy of the impartial traditions of the Bench. The jury were picked Tories, but they were Englishmen, and had the tradition of fair play and the Common Law in their blood. Hardy was acquitted, and so were Horne Tooke, a witty though undignified clerical philologist, and Thelwall, a merely indiscreet lecturer. Then the defenders of the Constitution gave up; the Constitution had held firm against their defence. Far otherwise was it in Scotland, where the traditions of Roman Law provided no safeguard against the sadistic terrorism wielded by judges like Lord Braxfield and directed by politicians like Henry Dundas.

In England liberty, though not killed, was certainly scotched. The more extreme democratic societies were stifled, but the liberal Whigs, who would probably have been the next victims had Hardy and his friends gone to the scaffold, survived to maintain the elastic view of the Constitution that was its sole hope of survival. The part

played by these men cannot be described as altogether admirable; often it was factious and in the worst sense unpatriotic, for there was much about Fox's conduct, especially after French Republican ardour had turned to naked militarism, which suggested that he was more concerned to see Pitt beaten than England victorious. But these men were able to see—what Pitt was not—that fighting along with a gang of despots to put another despot on the French throne was criminal lunacy. They were for frankly conceding the right of the French to choose their own masters, they would have had us recognize whatever *de facto* government was in power, and make the best terms with it that we honourably could. Never did the best of them allow the bitterness of war to extinguish in their breasts the humane and reforming sentiments engendered by the Emotional Revival.

The Reactionaries

If Pitt and his colleagues were uncertain what they were fighting for, it cannot be said that England herself was much better resolved. The invective of Burke had certainly a profound effect in alarming and shocking the country at the spectacle of Jacobinism, but his merely negative affection for the existing order of things was not of the kind to inspire crusades. He represented a phase of the Emotional Revival that was already passing out of date. The young Romantics, and particularly the famous trio, Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, were intoxicated with the wine of liberty, and in such an ardour of love for a soon-to-be-regenerated mankind, that they were more concerned to see the Republicans victorious than their own misguided countrymen.

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> And to be young was very heaven!

The Romantic spirit had become fully conscious of itself, and ran to the wildest extravagances in its efforts to cast off the filthy garments of the eighteenth century and clothe itself with imagination. Tenderness became gushing, simplicity that of the nursery, a sense of humour was conspicuous by its absence. Neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge was as yet sufficiently disciplined to give adequate scope to his genius.

It was the precise opposite of this spirit which was voiced in 1797–8 by *The Anti-Jacobin*, a magazine which was founded by some young Tories for the purpose of expressing the national opposition

to Revolution principles. Though by the time it was started its knights were riding atilt at a dead or dying bogey, *The Anti-Jacobin* fulfilled an important function in voicing the kind of opinion that reactionary gentlefolk, not only of that time, but ever since, have held with regard to threatening democratic tendencies, and which they endeavour, with varying success, to propagate among the community at large. The Englishman, as they depict him, is a good fellow, who loves his King, his Constitution and his country, and is ready to make any sacrifice in their defence. He is satisfied with things as they are, and has too much commonsense to bother his head with schemes of social betterment, which turn out to be windy humbug. The Jacobin or democrat is, for all his fair talk about humanity and the rest of it, an ill-conditioned knave, equally hypocritical, cruel and mean. Meanness is, in fact, a vice with which *The Anti-Jacobin* is particularly fond of branding its opponents, from the friend of humanity who refuses the needy knifegrinder sixpence to the Whig Dukes who try to get out of paying their taxes.

But *The Anti-Jacobin* has a deeper significance than this somewhat obvious reaction against imported democracy. It was the manifesto of the dying eighteenth century against a new order of ideas for which it cherished a profound contempt. It was a challenge not only to the Revolution, but to the whole Emotional Revival of which the Revolution was a by-product. The net of satire was flung wide enough to take in Goethe and Schiller, at their most extravagant, but it was upon the English Romantics that the keenest criticism was directed. Southey, the most obvious butt of them all, came in for a merciless drubbing, but neither Coleridge nor Charles Lamb was allowed to escape. The new sensibility was ruthlessly sacrificed, and George Canning was not above a backhander at the new fellow-feeling for animals. There is, in fact, a peculiar hardness about the whole tone and teaching of *The Anti-Jacobin*, that is suggestive of the aristocrat and still more of the parvenu. The lips of these brilliant young men seem to be perpetually curled in a sneer. The mere fact of a man's aspiring to be an idealist seems a sufficient reason for condemning him :—

> "Reason, philosophy, fiddledum diddledum,
> Peace and Fraternity, higgledy piggledy."

The Anti-Jacobin was the most celebrated, but it was not the first, attempt to enlist Tory sentiment against revolutionary and democratic principles. A strange champion of aristocratic culture had previously arisen in William Gifford, who had served as a farm

hand and shoemaker's apprentice, and whose miserable youth appears to have jaundiced his disposition. This man had, in two satires, called the *Baviad* and the *Maeviad*, trounced the small fry of Romanticism in the shape of a precious clique, largely feminine, which had dabbled in revolutionary sentiment and acquired the nickname of Della Cruscan. A trend of opinion was started, which was to survive Jacobinism and *The Anti-Jacobin*, to the effect that any departure from consecrated forms, any revolt against present authority or harking back to an earlier tradition, was something not quite worthy of a gentleman, that a light and scholarly touch was the hallmark of good breeding, and that there was something more than a little vulgar about any display of emotion or sensibility.

But it was not among the gentlemen and gentlemen's hangers-on of the Tory connection that the true spirit of the eighteenth century achieved its final and most satisfying triumph. It was in an obscure country parsonage that a modest and anonymous young lady, Jane Austen, was writing those half-dozen novels which hardly condescend to strive against the new-conquering Romanticism, but quietly and with smiling good humour put it aside. Anyone of these books might have borne the title *Sense and Sensibility*, an opposition which just expresses all that Miss Austen stood for, and all that she despised. Excess in anything, and particularly in the display of emotion, aroused her instinctive aversion. She herself was the best practiser of what she preached; she hardly ever indulges her readers in anything remotely approaching to what would now be described as a strong scene; she has a delicacy towards her characters that refrains from intruding on their strongest emotions; we can imagine her disgust could she be aware of the familiarity of those journalistic pundits who refer to her as "Jane". To eliminate the animal, to seek and ensue the civilized attributes of restraint, urbanity and—to use her own favourite word—sense, was what she aspired to and, in her own writings, achieved. But hers was a swan song. The young lions of Toryism were more and more obviously, as time went on, trying to revive a spirit which had passed away and which was not theirs. Their touch became crude, their temper brutal. But it would be a pardonable exaggeration to say that the eighteenth century came to perfection and died in Miss Austen.

6

England against French Militarism

By the time *The Anti-Jacobin* was launched, the struggle with France was already entering on a phase to which Anti-Jacobinism was irrelevant. What Burke had foreseen, and what he and his crowned crusaders had helped to bring about, was already becoming an accomplished fact. The republican enthusiasm for liberty, equality and fraternity died hard—it seemed at one time to have taken a new lease of life—but dying it was, and something more formidable as well as more familiar was set up in its stead. The clumsy and insincere alliance, which English gold had been poured out by the million to keep alive, had produced its inevitable effect. It had proved powerless to crush the Revolution, but menacing and provocative enough to change peaceful idealism into bloody tyranny, and an undisciplined rabble into the most formidable army in Europe.

In 1796 it became evident that the last and worst of Burke's predictions might be realized. A young general of dazzling genius led a ragged and hungry army along the Mediterranean coast into Northern Italy, knocked the Sardinians, who had joined the alliance, clean out of the war, and then scattered three successive and superior Austrian armies before a whirlwind of victories. His name was Napoleon Buonaparte. Prussia had already got tired of kicking the French porcupine, and employed her jackboots for the more congenial purpose of stamping the life out of Poland's prostrate body. In 1797 Napoleon had finished with the Austrians in Italy, and his invincible army was hustling Austria's last hope, the Archduke Charles, along the road to Vienna. The Emperor realized the good sense of agreeing with his adversary whilst he was in the way with him, and thus the terrible alliance, which had been going to flatten out the Republic after the manner of a certain steam-roller of later date, tumbled to pieces, and England was left alone.

The safe and easy war which Pitt had anticipated against a disorganized and bankrupt opponent had now developed into a struggle no less formidable than that in which we had been beaten almost to our knees in the days of Lord North's administration. Exactly the same set of European allies were now in the field against us, for Spain and Holland were now on the side of France, and if we had no longer our own colonists to fight, we were engaged with a France beyond all comparison stronger than the already tottering kingdom of Louis XVI. It was, indeed, stronger than the

France against which William III and Marlborough had waged so prolonged and doubtful a struggle, for the armies of the Directorate were holding the Rhine line, and the corrupt government at Paris already commanded a European empire to which the "*Roi Soleil*", in his rosiest daydreams, had hardly dared to aspire. If we had been unable to effect anything of value with half Europe for our allies and a good part of France in rebellion, what prospect had we of standing alone against the furious counter-offensive of which we must bear the brunt alone?

But in losing our allies and the advantages with which we had begun the war, we had gained something that was of more value than all of them. We were fighting for an intelligible and righteous cause. So long as England had been a mere accomplice of despots in the suppression of liberty, her blows had been vague, feeble, ineffective. So long as the French troops had been fighting in the spirit of the Marseillaise against the bloodstained knife of tyranny, it was as if the God they denied had gone forth before their armies and bidden their enemies be scattered. But now the sons of liberty were themselves becoming liberticides. No Corsican bandit ever did his business more thoroughly than Napoleon, wherever he went in Italy. And then, in 1798, the French committed a crime that horrified even their best friends. The knife of tyranny, grasped in Republican hands, was plunged up to the hilt in the blood of free Switzerland. Nobody any longer could be under the illusion that we were fighting a people rightly struggling, or struggling at all, to be free. It was time for John Bull to defend his rights and his liberties against a tyranny as merciless as that of Alva, and more ambitious than that of Louis XIV.

The Romantic enthusiasts for freedom were not long in finding this out. It was in 1798, under the influence of the Swiss outrage, that Coleridge traced the process of his own disillusionment in the grand Ode to France which was then called *The Recantation*. To Coleridge's metaphysical mind, liberty had never been the simple and obvious conception it had been to some of his fellow-enthusiasts. He had first found, somewhat illogically, the types of liberty in the clouds, forests and waves, then his imagination had fastened on France, whom, despite her excesses, he trusted to compel the nations to freedom, conquering only by her happiness. But France had played Judas to freedom, and reduced herself to the level of the Kings. Coleridge's final verdict on the Revolution is that

> "The sensual and the dark rebel in vain
> Slaves by their own compulsion."

Wordsworth, whose austere, Cumbrian spirit had justified the killing of Louis XVI and rejoiced in the defeat of British troops, now devoted all his ardour for liberty to the cause of his own country. He turned against the French with all the bitterness of a disappointed idealist, and his voice was like a trumpet calling Englishmen to maintain their liberties.

1797, the year which saw the Romantic spirit come into full blossom with the composition of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, also saw England at the nadir of her fortunes. The distress was terrible, and so desperate was the financial situation that the Bank had to suspend cash payment. It was by contrary winds and bad seamanship that the French had been prevented from wresting Ireland from our grasp. Worst of all, our fleet, whose command of the sea alone stood between us and ruin, broke into mutinies at Spithead and the Nore. Our last ally had dropped out, and we were fighting Spain and Holland as well as France. Fortunately our fleets were enabled to inflict smashing blows off Cape St. Vincent upon the Spaniards and off Camperdown upon the Dutch, and the immediate danger to our shores passed away.

Confronted with this awful crisis, Pitt rose to the height of his character. Wirepuller and reactionary as he had become in home politics, and criminally incompetent as he had proved in the conduct of the war, he confronted the peril in the true spirit of his father. Not for one moment did he lose his belief in England's ability to come through victorious in the end. Throughout the worst hours, he not only preserved his equanimity but even his gaiety, and there is surely no more remarkable spectacle than that of the unapproachable Prime Minister pausing from his task of saving the country to contribute to a rollicking Anti-Jacobin squib a verse about Rogero starving, through the malice of Kings and priests, on water gruel, far from the University of Gottingen. His blunders, and they were many, may be forgiven Pitt when we remember these two facts; he convinced the country that he was, like his father, the one man who could save her, and he convinced the French that he was the most formidable of their enemies. He received the high compliment of being solemnly voted, by the Convention, an enemy of the human race.

Pitt's eloquence during the war was not the least of his saving attributes. It lacked the imaginative appeal of Chatham and Lloyd George, but it was instinct with the quiet and reasoned confidence of a patriot, strong in the justice of his cause. While he was at the

helm, there could be no question of defeat or surrender. The unemotional, businesslike way in which the King's government was carried on, may have been irritating enough in the first easy stages of the war, but when ruin stared us in the face and the odds mounted against us, this quiet persistency with which England pursued her normal way began to take on something heroic. Jacobins and Napoleon might bluster as they would, but neither the Premier nor the nation saw any reason to be bustled. Of the many noble and inspiriting things said by Pitt we need only instance two of the most famous and characteristic—"Let us continue to hope till events compel us to despair"; "England has saved herself by her exertions, let us hope that she will save Europe by her example." In these the whole spirit of the man is revealed.

Apart from the advantage of a good cause and a firm leader, England held two winning cards in her hand. The hideous new towns that were springing up in the North and Midlands, the vampire machinery that sucked out the lives of myriads who tended it, were producing a constant stream of marketable commodities which in turn drew wealth into the country to provide the sinews of war, and while the condition of the poor was going from bad to worse, the effects of the new scientific agriculture and enclosure of commons sufficed to prevent England from being starved out. Then, again, we held the command of the sea. The French navy, unlike the army, never properly recovered from the effects of the Revolution and our admirals were usually able to pin the enemy fleets to their harbours and to prevent them from becoming our rivals in seamanship.

Napoleon, with the extraordinary obtuseness that he displayed on any subject antipathetic to his genius, was throughout his life grossly ignorant on this subject of sea power. After his triumphant return from Italy he first allowed himself to toy with the chimerical idea of an invasion, and then to be decoyed—much to the relief of the already apprehensive Directors, who were only too glad to get rid of him—into an eccentric operation in Egypt. By good luck, his fleet and transports obtained a strategetic victory over no less an opponent than Nelson, by arriving safely at their destination and taking Malta on the way. But Nelson had his revenge when he caught the French fleet in Aboukir Bay and all but annihilated it. Napoleon and his army were thus virtual prisoners, and an attempt to push Northward into Syria was frustrated by the long arm of British sea-power at Acre. There was nothing for it but for Napoleon to abandon

his army and make the best of his way to France. The proud army that had ignored sea-power remained to be mopped up at leisure by an English force, assisted by one from India.

It was largely Napoleon's mistake and Nelson's victory that had the effect of calling into being another of those European coalitions on which Pitt placed such reliance. But France could only be beaten by the spirit of the peoples, which had yet to be aroused, and not by the mercenaries of the Kings. This Coalition commenced victoriously, but the first successes only brought out the mutual hatred of its members, and gave Napoleon, on his return, a chance to turn out the discredited Directorate and concentrate the government and resources of France in his own hands. After that it was a comparatively simple task to shatter the Coalition at Marengo. Again England, whose own attempt at a military diversion in Holland had ended not only in disaster, but capitulation, found her allies dropping away and herself isolated. An attempt to revive against her the Armed Neutrality of Northern Powers, which had been the last drop in her cup of misfortunes during the American War, was frustrated by Nelson's destruction of the Danish Fleet at Copenhagen, and the assassination of the Tsar Paul. Then in 1802 a new and thoroughly incompetent British Government—Pitt having resigned on the question of Catholic Emancipation in Ireland—patched up a temporary peace which surrendered most of our conquests, and left France supreme in the Low Countries. This, of course, proved merely a brief interlude in the war, which was resumed next year.

One favourable effect of the peace, in which we had conceded nearly everything and France hardly anything, and of its swift and inevitable rupture, was to unite the country as never before against Napoleon, who outraged English feeling unforgivably by making prisoners of some ten thousand harmless English travellers and residents in France. He next proceeded to concentrate his Grand Army on the Picard coast for the invasion of England, a theatrical menace that never had the slightest chanee of materializing so long as our fleets held command of the sea. But if Napoleon was so blind to the value of sea-power, or so confident in his own grandiose combinations as to imagine that he could obtain command of the Channel even for forty-eight hours, it is not surprising that people in England should have taken the threat of invasion with extreme seriousness, and indeed the prospect of having the fair fields of Kent and Sussex overrun by such past-masters in the art of pillage

as the French troops was not alluring. Napoleon was said to have pointed out to them, with an obvious significance, that English women were noted for their beauty, and vigorous pens were not lacking to anticipate in minutest detail the horrors of invasion.

But fear was not the predominating note of the tremendous outburst of patriotism evoked by the supposed peril. The old contempt of Englishman for Frenchman had by no means weakened, and it was the impertinence rather than the frightfulness of "little Boney" that moved Englishmen to hearty wrath or to amused contempt. We see him depicted by the coarse pencil of Gillray as a frog bursting himself in the effort to swell to the size of the English ox, or as a ridiculous little man at whom big King George is staring through a microscope. Innumerable were the patriotic ballads in which John Bull invited "Boney" to "come and be damned", John Bull, no longer a cloth merchant, but a sturdy yokel depicted, with unconsciously cruel irony, as well-fed. The roast-beef of old England, which only a minority of Englishmen had now any chance of eating, was much to the fore in these appeals. Sometimes the note was one of sentimental trust in our tars and volunteers or of affection for the "good old King", more often it was mere full-mouthed bluster of the kind which was considered "manly". But it served its purpose of pulling the nation together and diverting attention from domestic oppression and misery to the task of beating the enemy. There was, for the time, no more talk of secret societies and the Rights of Man.

The Romantic leaders had now thoroughly shed their sympathy with France, and came forth into the front rank of patriots. Even Blake so far condescended to notice mundane affairs as to paint stupendous twin allegories of Pitt, his calm features crowned with an aureole of golden light, guiding Behemoth through the flame-litten gloom of carnage, and of the nude hero, Nelson, controlling Leviathan. Southey swung round to a Tory fervour as crude and sentimental as his previous Jacobinism. Coleridge hastened to argue away his cosmopolitan theories and to set up patriotism in their stead as a necessary accompaniment of manhood. But it was from Wordsworth that the threat of invasion struck the brightest sparks of inspiration, and never was his genius so flawless as in the poems and sonnets which were more or less directly connected with the crisis.

Wordsworth, though he had now come to love his country with all the strength of his soul, was no blind patriot. Even at the height of his enthusiasm for England he could bring against her a terrible indictment, and a sonnet, in which he admits that if anything good

were destined for Egypt, Greece, India or Africa, England would step between, concludes with

"Oh grief that Earth's best hopes rest all with thee!"

But his affection is only the greater from its being that of "a lover or a child". He had visited France during the peace and come to the conclusion that whatever might be amiss with England, her enemy was far more abject, not only in physical but in spiritual desolation,

"equally a want of books and men",

and in Napoleon himself he could see only one of the meanest of mortals raised unworthily to supreme power. Wordsworth believed that

"by the soul
Only, the Nations shall be great and free",

and he exhorted England to raise her own soul to the height demanded by her function as a "bulwark for the cause of men". He pined for the spirit of Milton; in 1805 he penned his austere *Ode to Duty*, and the year after, with the memory of Nelson in his mind, drew the character of the Happy Warrior, the man who is equal to every emergency, because his law is reason and his prime care his moral being. It was in the strength of this philosophy that Wordsworth called upon his countrymen to sink their differences in the resolve for victory or death.

Patriotism expressed itself in more tangible form than words; volunteers flocked to the colours in hundreds of thousands, Pitt himself taking his turn at drilling them. These volunteers would probably have been useless enough in the field, owing to their complete lack of discipline, and it must be remembered that volunteering was frequently a convenient way of avoiding the much harder service in the militia. All along the threatened coast sprang up the squat Martello Towers which are still a feature of the landscape. Elaborate plans were made for evacuating and wasting the country before the Grand Army's advance.

But the Grand Army never came, and was never likely to come, so long as our admirals knew their business. In naval circles there was not the least nervousness about invasion. Everywhere the French fleets were closely blockaded, and Admiral Mahan, in a famous passage has described how "those far distant, storm-beaten ships, upon which the Grand Army never looked, stood between it and the domination of the world." That is a true and inspiriting reflection, but it must not be forgotten that these ships were, by every account that has come down to us, little better than floating hells, manned

by the press gang, by jail delivery, and by every expedient by which poor men could be compelled or cajoled to a life from which the imagination shrinks. Torture and semi-starvation were the lot of the men who saved England, and any attempt to escape was visited by the ghastly punishment of flogging round the fleet, which was usually the same thing as beating to death. In no respect was the gap between the privileged classes and the poor so manifest as in the army and navy—the Black Prince would never have dreamed of treating his archers nor Cromwell his Ironsides as the seamen of Trafalgar and the soldiers whom romantic Napier describes as fighting with such majesty in the Peninsula were treated, day in and day out, as a matter of course, by the gentlemen who commanded them.

Napoleon, again in alliance with Spain, tried a desperate naval gamble which began with his Mediterranean fleet slipping out of Toulon into the Atlantic. This move was eventually frustrated by the careful strategy of the British Admiralty. Meanwhile Pitt, whom the general voice of the country had recalled to the helm, succeeded in his favourite expedient of forming an anti-French coalition, but Napoleon, who at last recognized that the game of invasion was up, made a lightning march from Boulogne to the Danube and fell with annihilating might on the nearest of his new enemies. It was the shattering of this coalition that broke the iron nerve of Pitt. He had been cheered a little by the news that Nelson had caught the principal French and Spanish fleet feebly trying to enter the Mediterranean, and had utterly overthrown it off Cape Trafalgar. But when he heard of Napoleon's crowning victory of Austerlitz the steadfast statesman, still in the prime of life, turned his face to the wall and died muttering " my country ! how I leave my country ! "

Alike in his love of England, but in every other respect a contrast to Pitt, was the supreme naval genius who died in the hour of victory off Trafalgar. Nelson, or Neilsen—for he was sprung of true East Anglian Viking stock—was as much a man of the Emotional Revival as Burke or Coleridge, and while he was a supreme product of its genius, he partook in no small measure of its weakness. Outside the scope of his own calling, his thought was so crude as to be almost childish ; he cherished a sentimental Toryism that expressed itself in a passionate hatred of the French nation, and allowed him to act the part of tyrant and hangman for tyrants at Naples. If it is pleasant to think of his asking his flag-captain for a kiss on his deathbed, it is less pleasant to think of his prostituting his own and his country's good name for the kisses of Emma,

Lady Hamilton. But as a sailor, he was what Wordsworth's best sonnets and odes would have been if translated into terms of action. The Romantic spirit produced nothing nobler than the prayer that he wrote on the morning of his death, in which he not only prays for a great and glorious victory for the benefit of England and Europe in general, but also—what is more remarkable at such a time—that humanity after victory might be the predominant feature in the British fleet. To his duty, the duty hymned by Wordsworth, he was wholly devoted, and he succeeded in communicating his spirit to those who served under him. His captains, as he truly remarked, were a " band of brothers ". As a fighter he had grasped the secret, which Chatham had possessed but which his son never acquired, of being all out to win. Nothing short of annihilation would satisfy him ; he concentrated on the business of victory at sea with as overwhelming a determination as Napoleon on land. And with the British ships and seamen, as with the Grand Army, the rest followed.

Wheels of Victory

The struggle with France turned Europe into a cockpit for a generation. Armies marched backwards and forwards, entering every important capital in turn. The manhood of the nations was drained by conscription, and when so many were wanted in barracks it was no time to build factories.

In England alone was it possible for the ordinary citizen to regard the war with the detachment of a spectator. His battles were fought by professional armies on alien soil. He considered himself as mightily patriotic if he evaded the militia ballot by a little playing at soldiers among the volunteers. Sport as usual might have been taken for the motto of the squires, business as usual for that of the self-made manufacturers. And business throve all the more in proportion to the crippling of our Continental rivals. It was not far short of the literal truth that England was becoming the workshop of the world.

It was in textiles, and particularly in the comparatively new cotton industry, that the most striking advance was made. Our oldest manufacture, that of wool cloth, which was more bound by time-honoured methods and regulations, lagged in the wake of its younger rival. Even in cotton the adoption of the new machinery and particularly of the power loom, was a more gradual process than summary accounts of the Industrial Revolution might lead us to

suppose. It was only by slow stages that the old domestic workers were forced out of their cottages into the factories, and the most sweeping transformation of all was destined to follow the advent of the railway. The victory over Napoleon was that of a country still mainly agricultural.

But when all allowances are made, the advance was striking enough to constitute, even by the time of Waterloo, a phenomenon unprecedented in history. We have only to contrast the 3 million pounds of imported cotton in 1781, the year of Yorktown, with the 19 millions of 1793, our first year of the Revolutionary War, and the 132 millions of the bumper year 1810, when Napoleon's Continental System was at its height, and Europe lay at his feet. In the darkest time of all, between the naval mutinies of 1797 and the overthrow of the second anti-French coalition in 1800, these imports of raw cotton almost exactly doubled, owing to Whitney's invention of the saw-gin, which for the first time enabled us to utilize cotton from America. No other industry could rival such figures as these, but the general rate of progress may be partially gauged by the fact that the official combined value of imports and exports in the year of Waterloo is about twice that of 1796 and four times that of 1783, though the depreciation of the pound renders these figures somewhat less striking than would at first appear.[1]

When a nation is fighting for its life, all other considerations have to yield to the supreme object of beating the enemy. Judged by this standard, the Industrial Revolution was a heaven-sent windfall. But from a higher standpoint than that of immediate necessity, it may well be questioned whether it was not a supreme misfortune that a time of such vital transition should have been one in which attention and energy were almost wholly diverted from the supreme, constructive necessity of adapting our civilization to a revolutionary change of conditions.

It is hard to blame our governing class. When Napoleon's privateers were taking merciless toll of our shipping, when Europe was being dragooned into one vast boycott of our goods, when taxation was rising from an annual figure of under 19 to one of over 71 millions, it was not surprising these worthy gentlemen should have been content with pulling through victoriously and letting domestic problems solve themselves. The French Revolution had opened a path of association in their minds between reforms and guillotines. And the blind faith that by flinging the reins on the neck

[1] See Cunningham's *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, Appendix F.

of competition we should induce God, or the natural order of things, to come to our rescue, was thoroughly in harmony with the comfortable eighteenth century philosophy in whose atmosphere such minds had been formed.

Thus it came about that the firstfruits of man's increased command over nature were a misery and degradation such as it would be hard to parallel at any time in our history. It is not that the worst horrors of factory life could not be matched by instances of sweating and tyranny during the first half of the eighteenth century, but the more or less sporadic brutality of a brutal age is negligable in comparison with a system affecting vast and increasing masses of the population, and destined to alter the whole complexion of national life.

8

Ireland to the Act of Union

The situation that the triumph of the Volunteers had created in Ireland was one that might well have appalled the most liberal-minded of English patriots, for it could hardly fail to eventuate in complete Irish independence, the undoing of centuries of conquest and the placing on England's flank and sea-communications of what might only too probably turn out to be an active enemy. At present all this was masked by the fact that though the Irish Legislature was nominally independent, it was representative of a Protestant and Anglicized minority, and was amenable to governmental corruption. The executive was appointed by the Crown, which meant the English Ministry, and it did not represent the wishes of the Irish Parliament.

This, so long as it lasted, was a fairly comfortable state of things, but that it could be a permanent arrangement the slightest knowledge of English history would have shown to be impossible. The control of the purse must always, ultimately, place the executive at the mercy of the legislature unless the executive has sufficient power behind it to override law and Parliament at once. To trust permanently to corruption was to build on the sand. Sooner or later the rising tide of Irish patriotism must break down the barriers of religious ascendency; sooner or later Ireland must be governed by an Irish ministry, responsible to the Irish nation, with complete control of home and foreign policy, and only the person of the Sovereign in common between her and England. And it soon became apparent that even this bond of union might be snapped, since when George III

went mad, the Irish Parliament promptly asserted its right to give full royal powers to the Prince Regent, though these were withheld in England. There was obviously no reason why Ireland should not some day assert her right to a King of her own choice.

It must therefore have been obvious that the arrangement of an independent Irish Parliament and an English executive could not be permanent, and must either eventuate in an independent Ireland or a resumption by England of some, at least, of the powers that the Volunteers had compelled her to relinquish. Perhaps the wisest, and certainly the boldest and most generous view of the situation was that of the Whig left wing, as represented by Fox, who would have frankly conceded to Ireland the utmost measure of liberty, who would have rejoiced in her being governed by Irish notions and according to Irish prejudices, in the faith that, as he expressed it, " the more she is under Irish government the more she will be bound to English interests."

To the anxious and opportunist patriotism of Pitt, the youth crushed by the awful responsibility for England's destinies, this simple policy of abandoning all control over a people embittered by centuries of wrong and of trusting to their generosity seemed too desperate a gamble. The intensity as well as the narrowness of his English patriotism made him regard with unconcealed apprehension the rebirth of patriotism in Ireland. He had no clear-cut solution of the problem, and his desire was to proceed cautiously with as much generosity as was safe, and not to despise the aid of corruption in maintaining England's power and safety. Pitt's aims may have been lower than those professed by Fox, but he at least pursued them with single-hearted devotion. To his practical mind, the most effective tie between a free England and a free Ireland would be one of trade, and he was ready to assent to a series of proposals that passed the Irish Parliament for mutual concessions amounting to a permanent economic union.

Unfortunately the short-sighted greed of the English manufacturers, which had stood in the way of any mitigation of economic tyranny so long as England had had Ireland at her mercy, was by no means lessened by the fact that the predominant partner had been brought to reason by the threat, " Free Trade or This ! " Even before the proposals could be submitted to the Parliament at Westminster a dismal, dogged howl of " pockets in danger " had gone up to Heaven. What was worse still, Fox and his Whigs, seeing the opportunity of scoring over their youthful supplanter, threw their

high principles to the winds and sedulously pandered to the basest passions. Fox, of all people, argued that if Britain conceded so much to Ireland she would never have any more to concede, and spoke up in favour of a jealous, insular, protective policy. Meetings of protest were held all over the country, and Pitt found himself faced with a situation similar to that which had confronted Walpole when the agitation against his excise scheme had convinced him that "this dance will no further go." He accordingly bent to a storm that threatened to sweep him from office, in so far as to amend the proposals in a way that was held by the Irish Parliament to constitute a derogation of Irish sovereignty. Accordingly the whole scheme fell through, and Pitt's great effort after a working arrangement with a free Ireland had failed. Henceforth he seems to have lost heart and to have leant more and more to the side of those who, like the great Anglo-Irish lawyer, Fitzgibbon, held that safety demanded the ruthless assertion, at all costs, and by all means, of English supremacy over Ireland.

It was the rejection of these commercial proposals that was the real turning point in the adventure of a self-governing Ireland. A harmonious partnership had failed to eventuate, and sooner or later the will of a little nation to be free must be crushed by the force and backsheesh of an England that felt her very existence involved in the unity of the British Isles. Nevertheless the days of Grattan's Parliament, as it was called, must be reckoned as the brightest that Ireland has known since the shadow of English power first darkened her skies.

It was unfortunate that the triumph of a free and armed Ireland had not been consummated by the reform of that Parliament itself. The Volunteers wanted to crown their victory by a measure of Parliamentary reform which, though it was aimed at stopping corruption, failed, thanks to the sturdy prejudices of Lord Charlemont and the eloquent Flood, to include Catholic Emancipation. But no Parliament cares to be reformed by the threat of military force, and the dictatorship of the Volunteers was felt to be a menace to constitutional liberties. Accordingly Parliament would have nothing to do with the resolutions which Flood presented to it, and the Volunteers, thus decisively snubbed, felt their power gone and ceased henceforth to count as a political force. Thus Ireland was not only saddled with a corrupt and unrepresentative Parliament, but the sword with which she had won her freedom had dropped from her hand.

With all these disadvantages, Grattan's Parliament succeeded in accomplishing wonders for Ireland during its brief tenure of power. Since it had no control over the executive, its reforms could only be accomplished by statute, but even in England of the eighteenth century, the legislature had controlled the most trivial and transient affairs in this somewhat cumbrous way. The Dublin Parliament, whatever its faults may have been, was one of the most intensely vital assemblies of which it is possible to conceive. Eloquence attained a level of fantastic and exuberant splendour. Invectives of unmeasured violence were hurled across the floor of the House by gentlemen who would light-heartedly face each others' fire at twelve paces next morning (it was not etiquette to hesitate over your aim), and would be all the better friends for it afterwards. "I have here some excellent pills to cure a cough," once remarked Sir Boyle Roche, producing a handful of bullets for the benefit of members who were stifling his periods in the time-honoured Parliamentary fashion. One is inclined to suspect that all this quick-witted impetuosity was not unconnected with that instability which has ever been the besetting weakness of the Celt. It would have been well for Ireland if the most glorious bursts of Irish eloquence less frequently bore such titles as "Flood's invective against Grattan" and "Grattan's invective against Flood". Irish patriots have too frequently been each other's worst enemies.

For all that, Grattan's Parliament legislated vigorously, even brilliantly. The constitutional edifice was crowned by bringing Irish into harmony with English practice by a Mutiny Act valid for two years only, and by making the judges irremovable except by Parliament. The tyrannies of the Penal Laws were one by one removed, and Catholics were put on the level of their fellow-citizens in all but the eligibility for important offices under the government and seats in Parliament. An immense stimulus was given to Irish trade and industry by a strong protective system worked in the interests of Ireland. She was now able to speak in the gate with her economic rivals, England included, and to provide a reasonable measure of security for capital invested in Irish industry. In almost every department there was an industrial boom; the linen trade advanced by giant strides; cotton struggled bravely forward in the teeth of Lancashire competition and dumping; Irish fishermen carried on their craft on both sides of the Atlantic; brewing received a mighty impetus; the lovely glass of Waterford not only acquired a European fame but was sedulously copied by the best foreign manufacturers.

Above all agriculture, which is the real key industry of Ireland, was stimulated powerfully by careful protection and encouragement. The amount of waste land that was reclaimed made it possible for the cattle trade to be maintained, while the yield of agriculture was multiplied many times over and—what was not of such good omen—population and rents multiplied, too. Ireland, however, did not take kindly to the Industrial Revolution; only in the cotton industry—and that imperfectly—was any serious attempt made to adopt modern improvements; no great manufacturing towns sprang up, nor was the Irish mist thickened by the smoke of innumerable factory chimneys.

Nevertheless, whether we appeal to the dry evidence of statistics—so ably marshalled by Mr. George O'Brien—or the eloquent encomiums of patriots in Parliament, this time of Irish freedom was one of unexampled prosperity. Perhaps the greatest benefits of this were reaped by those possessing capital, but, to quote Mr. O'Brien's authoritative summary, "while the condition of the labouring classes did not progress as rapidly as that of other sections of the community, it was by no means stationary. This is proved by (*a*) the increased taxable capacity of the peasantry, and (*b*) the increase in the average consumption of imported commodities."

It was fitting that this brief effulgence of Irish freedom should have seen Dublin at its greatest splendour as a capital. The time of Grattan's Parliament was also that of the architect Gandon, who was to Dublin what the Woods had been to Bath. The two glories with which his genius adorned the Liffey, the Custom House and the Four Courts, have been reserved for the patriots of a later generation to burn and shell to ruin.

But the glory was all too short-lived. It had not the elements of permanence, and a corrupt and Protestant Parliament could not for ever strike the balance between English sovereignty and Irish freedom. A change was bound to come, and was hastened on by the repercussions of the French Revolution. It was in the Protestant North East that Republican principles took the strongest hold, and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* was especially popular in Belfast. There emerges at this time a young Irishman called Wolfe Tone, of a peculiarly dangerous type, recklessly brave, entirely free from scruples, burning with an inextinguishable hatred of England and imbued with Republican principles very different from the aristocratic loyalty of men like Grattan. This Sinn Feiner in everything but the name was instrumental in founding a Society of United Irishmen,

at first mainly Protestant in composition and aiming at a union of all creeds and a thorough-going Parliamentary reform, but tending more and more, as time went on and the government frowned on their activities, towards naked republicanism and an independent Ireland.

The government at home and in Ireland was now faced with a problem of the utmost delicacy. Should it pursue the bold and liberal policy of securing the loyalty of Ireland by admitting her Catholic majority to full political equality with their Protestant neighbours? To keep them in permanent subjection might be to drive them into the arms of their old allies the French. But to admit them to the franchise and to Parliament might be to give over Ireland to the rule of those in whom centuries of wrong had planted the bitterest hatred of England; it might mean having a hostile and practically independent Ireland on our flank in the great European struggle. The Irish Parliament, the privileged representatives of a privileged class, were more obstinately Protestant than Pitt and his ministers, who so far leaned towards a Liberal policy as practically to force on them a measure which gave Catholics the vote, but not the right to sit in Parliament.

To a minister less opportunist in his methods than Pitt it would have been apparent that having proceeded thus far along the road of Catholic Emancipation, it was not only illogical, but too late to draw back, that a condition of things in which a Catholic electorate was compelled to choose representatives of another religion was too patently absurd to end in anything but further concession or disaster. And in 1795, little more than a year after the reform of the franchise, it did indeed seem as if full emancipation were about to become an accomplished fact, for Earl Fitzwilliam, one of the most liberal of the group of Whigs who seceded to the Government party, was sent over as Lord Lieutenant to carry, as the Catholics confidently expected, this policy to fruition. But Fitzwilliam's instructions were vague and he had against him all the corrupt influences of Protestant ascendency; he mortally offended the powerful Beresford connection, and tactlessly invited the enmity of that most formidable of the reactionaries, the Chancellor Fitzgibbon. The ministry left him in the lurch and he was recalled, amid the lamentations of an Ireland that saw the cup of emancipation dashed from her lips. Henceforth conciliation was doomed.

Meanwhile an ominous fissure was beginning to appear between the Catholic majority and the Protestant garrison in the North East.

Catholic Emancipation had an ugly sound for men whose privileged position depended on their monopoly of political power. They saw themselves faced with the prospect of being at the mercy of an overwhelming majority, whom they despised and who did not love them. The republican jubilation with which they had hailed the fall of the Bastille changed to horror when the Revolution disclosed its true nature, and a new-born loyalty to England sprang up in answer to the threat of a French landing in Ireland. The United Irishmen were now a powerful and dangerous secret society of republican Levellers, and excited nothing but hostility among an oligarchy who were fast beginning to discover that their interests as well as their affections were bound up with the English connection.

The tragedy hastens to a climax. The land hunger of the Catholics, now stimulated by the repeal of the Penal Laws, excited the fears and inflamed the hatred of the Protestants; the old Cromwellian formula "To Hell or Connaught" was revived; a competition of outrages ended in a pitched battle of the "Diamond" in Armagh, between Protestant "Peep o' Day Boys" and Catholic "Defenders", and as its immediate sequel the first of the Orange Lodges was formed. The two nations of Ireland, which English oppression had forced into a temporary union, were now torn asunder, not again to be united.

Nothing was left but the arbitrament of the sword. England was fighting for her life and Ireland was working up for a rebellion. Troops were employed to terrorize the country and lived at free quarters on the inhabitants. Torture and outrage were the order of the day, and the noble Abercromby who, as commander-in-chief in Ireland, tried to restore decency and discipline, was forced to resign and was superseded by the ferocious Lake. The rebellion broke out prematurely, a pitiful, sporadic affair, stained by fearful cruelty and suppressed with a cruelty more fearful still. The old Volunteers, who had ever behaved with the chivalry of gentlemen, were succeeded by a Protestant yeomanry who behaved like savages. Germans were imported to give the Irishmen—and women—a taste of their methods of war. Ireland was bludgeoned into submission and lay helpless, but with an inextinguishable bitterness in her heart.

There was now only one solution of the difficulty fraught with the least hope of success. To leave Ireland under a free Parliament, with an electorate the majority of whom hated England worse than the French did, would now have been plain madness. But to have behaved as France, or any other Continental power would have done in the

same circumstances, to have sent that Parliament packing and imposed our rule by force of arms, was so contrary to all English traditions as to be unthinkable even to the most violent reactionary. Even in the worst days of the eighteenth century, England had tyrannized by law, had respected the forms of Ireland's freedom and not openly treated her as a conquered province. The English Parliament had solemnly confirmed the full liberties granted to Ireland in 1782; it had expressly abrogated its own powers of taking them away. Therefore whatever policy was to be pursued, the assent of the Irish Parliament must somehow be secured. But if one thing could be more certain than another it was that that proud and brilliant body would not, of its own unbiassed choice, vote away its own existence.

The policy which Pitt now determined to put through was one that had been freely mooted for several years past. He would not take away the rights of Irishmen to send representatives to a free Parliament, but it should be to the Parliament at Westminster and not that of Dublin—the whole British Isles should, in fact, be treated as one self-governing unit. So far as constitutional logic is concerned, there was nothing more undemocratic in the idea of an Irish minority being outvoted in a Parliament of the United Kingdom than in the then existing supremacy of a Protestant Parliament in a Catholic island, or in what would certainly sooner or later have eventuated—the complete domination of a Catholic majority at Dublin over a Protestant minority. A legislative union seemed the one way of escape from the impossible situation that had existed since the triumph of the Volunteers. Pitt sincerely hoped that it might be for the good of all parties in Ireland. It would, in the long run, be the safeguard of the Protestants against the inevitable Catholic Emancipation, and as for the Catholics, it would remove the great objection to that reform which, according to Pitt's intention, should be the immediate sequel to the union.

Among the Catholics, and particularly among the hierarchy, the project of Union—on the understanding that Emancipation was to follow—did receive a good deal of support, and was certainly not felt as any intolerable grievance. But the Protestants, who were afterwards to make the maintenance of the Union a matter of life or death, were almost solid against it, and in the Irish Commons the members who really believed in it might almost have been counted on the fingers of one hand. When the scheme was first put before them, despite all the fair and foul means that the government could

employ, the bill was thrown back in their faces, amidst general rejoicing.

But Pitt was not to be put off so easily. Master wirepuller as he was, and sincerely convinced that what he proposed was vital for the safety of the nation he was piloting through a long and exhausting war, he went calmly about overcoming the resistance of the Irish Parliament in the only way he could possibly have done so, by bribing it into assent. It was certainly not pleasant for a patriot and a gentleman—and Pitt was both—to condescend to such work, but nations fighting for their lives cannot always afford to dispense with the plea of the end justifying the means. The dirty business was efficiently and successfully accomplished and the odium of it has fastened on to a talented young politician, of Scottish-Irish stock, now rising into fame, and the chosen instrument of Pitt's policy—Lord Castlereagh. Poor Castlereagh, an honourable and humane man, who devoted his great abilities to the service of England and worked himself out of mind and life in her cause, possessed one of those temperaments to which that of almost every Englishman is antipathetic. His intellect was ruthlessly logical, without a tinge of sentiment or a salt of humour, and he concealed his feelings under a well-mannered reserve that never for a moment thawed. If corruption was, in his opinion, the right and necessary course, he would go about it without any fuss or sentiment. His colleague in the business was the Lord-Lieutenant Cornwallis, a typically English soldier and country gentleman, but Cornwallis, though he had his hands just as deep in corruption as Castlereagh, saved his face with posterity by grumbling and sentimentalizing about the part he had to play. Castlereagh, who omitted to make this trifling sacrifice to the gods of John Bull, will probably go down to the end of time as the villain of the piece.

The bribes were taken, and the Irish Parliament voted itself out of an existence which that vote went far to prove its unworthiness to enjoy. It was now time to give the Union the best, and in fact its only chance of success, by crowning Pitt's policy with Catholic Emancipation. But in the tragedy of Ireland it seemed as if nothing was ever fated to go right. The arch-reactionary Fitzgibbon, now Earl of Clare, who had powerfully supported the Union, was furious at the idea of its being coupled with Emancipation, and poured poison, not for the first time, into the ears of the obstinate old King, who had always abhorred the idea of Emancipation, and was now persuaded that by granting it he would be violating his coronation

oath. Unfortunately this contention, which was supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury, was by no means unplausible, and the fault lay in the unchristian and bigoted declaration that every sovereign was forced to take on assuming the crown. To George's simple ideas of honour an oath, thus solemnly sworn, was to be obeyed in the spirit and the letter, and not to be honoured in the breach for any reasons of State, however cogent. When Dundas urged that the ministers would take the responsibility, the King scornfully repudiated what he called " Scotch metaphysics ".

Accordingly the poor old man, with the shadow of approaching insanity already darkening his counsels, opposed with a passionate doggedness the ministerial policy. Pitt, who had certainly come to an honourable understanding with the Catholics, even if he had given them no explicit promise about Emancipation, had not the heart to force matters to extremities against his old master, so he salved his conscience by bringing to an end his long term of office, and he was followed in his resignation by the two chief agents of his policy, Cornwallis and Castlereagh. The cup of Emancipation was thus again dashed from Ireland's lips, and though the poor, exhausted country was sunk in an almost unprotesting apathy, the chance of making the Union a success was gone forever. But Ireland was not so helpless as she seemed. She was fairly and would one day be more than fairly represented at Westminster, and so considerable a minority of members as she sent was bound, once it became Catholic and national, sooner or later to impose its will by holding the balance of power between English parties.

The War of Attrition

After Trafalgar the struggle with Napoleon enters on a new phase. The threat of invasion has, for the time, lost its terror; England has decisively established her command of the sea. On the other hand, the shattering of the Third Coalition at Austerlitz has given France an overwhelming military superiority on the Continent and to all appearance established the power of Napoleon upon impregnable foundations.

Now, if he had realized it, was the Emperor's opportunity to establish a lasting and glorious peace with his supreme enemy. Such a peace was his for the asking. After Pitt's death a mixed

ministry, predominantly Whig in composition and with Fox at the Foreign Office, came into power. Fox, with the hand of death upon him, cherished two noble objects—peace and the abolition of the Slave Trade. Negotiations were opened on a generous and, as some English patriots might have feared, a ruinous basis. Napoleon was to keep what he had conquered, and not only had he now got such a France as Louis XIV had hardly dared to dream of, but his will was practically supreme throughout Italy and the Catholic South of Germany. But his infatuated materialism grasped at Sicily for his brother Joseph, whom he had made King of Naples. His astonishing ignorance of sea power blinded him to the fact that Sicily would be an even surer death trap for any army or government hostile to England than Egypt had been for the unfortunate troops he had led and abandoned there. Fox, to whom office had brought a sense of responsibility that he had lacked in opposition, clung to Sicily for its worthless yet friendly Bourbon government with invincible obstinacy, nor did he allow himself to be tricked by the astute Talleyrand's efforts to separate us from our ally Russia. And so, with the infatuated folly of materialism, Napoleon wantonly committed himself to a fight to a finish with a power that was bound to wear him down in the long run. For it was now a contest of the sword against the machine, and against the sword the machine was protected by a wooden wall.

What Napoleon's limited vision could see, he saw with extraordinary lucidity. The one way now in which he could touch England was to ruin her trade, and England's trade depended on her markets. England he visualized as a nation of shopkeepers, and if all the customers refused to patronize the shop, that shop would be ruined. He could not wreck the shop, though he had tried, but the customers he could get at and bully into withdrawing their custom. Unfortunately England was now in a position equivalent to that occupied by the only general store in a remote village whose inhabitants are absolutely dependent upon it for the conveniences and even some of the necessities of life. In consequence the strong man, who denies access to the shop, is certain to be regarded as a dangerous ruffian against whose orders and person it is in everybody's interest to combine. In these circumstances the strong man must administer such thorough and repeated thrashings to everybody in the village that they will go about hungry and in rags sooner than run the risk of his wrath. Furthermore the strong man must neglect his own business and take the trouble and expense of policing the whole

village, an intolerable strain unless the shop has to close its doors in a very short time.

This is the alternative that Napoleon preferred to that of going without an unattainable and worse than useless conquest. The mad attempt to take England by direct assault had failed like the even madder one to turn her flank in the East. He now cheerfully undertook the task of starving her out by coercing the rest of Europe. He started by half forcing, half bribing, Prussia into a nominal state of war with England, and then, when he cheerfully offered the already accepted bribe, Hanover, back to England as a pawn in his negotiations, he at last goaded the timeserving King of Prussia into war in concert with Russia, annihilated her main army on the Saale as he had annihilated the Austrians the year before on the Danube, and then, after occupying Berlin, pressed forward to a bloody and doubtful campaign on the frozen plains of Poland, a campaign which might have ended his career could Austria have summoned up the courage to fall on his communications. It was from Berlin that he proclaimed his blockade of England, that it was his intention to convert into a European boycott of her goods. The French navy had orders to cease from operations on a grand scale, and devote itself to a ruthless war, largely carried on by privateers, against British commerce.

Meanwhile in what spirit was England facing a situation more alarming than that which had broken the steadfast heart of Pitt? How it struck Wordsworth may be judged from his sonnet in November, 1806.

"Another year!—another deadly blow!
Another mighty empire overthrown!
And We are left, or shall be left, alone;
The last that dare to struggle with the Foe.
'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought;
That by our right hands it must be wrought;
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.

O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer!
We shall exult if they who rule the land
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,
Wise, valiant, upright; not a servile band,
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And honour which they do not understand."

In face of these noble lines it is astonishing to record that by the bulk of Englishmen the seriousness of the situation was scarcely appreciated at all. The hunger for peace, which had hailed the

inglorious truce of 1801 with transports of joy, was no longer acute, and Fox's negotiations excited no very fervent interest. Prize-fighting and foxhunting, balls and dinners, went on as usual, and statesmen were more concerned in scoring points in the party game than in getting the better of the enemy. In recent years an immense mass of correspondence has come to light from the archives of the Grenville family at Dropmore, and when we read of the ceaseless petty intrigue that was going on between different factions and personages of importance, the wonder is how under such leadership we could ever have put up a successful fight against the centralized and intensely efficient despotism opposed to us.

The "Ministry of All the Talents", as the coalition was called that now governed the country, did all it could to lose us the war. By its grudging and cheeseparing support it succeeded in driving our last ally, Russia, into the arms of the enemy. It missed a golden opportunity during the desperately contested winter campaign in East Prussia in 1806–7, of turning the scales against Napoleon by sending a British Expeditionary force to the Baltic.[1] Meanwhile it frittered our strength away in petty or mercenary operations that were not even justified by success. It anticipated a more disastrous failure by supporting Russia with a naval diversion through the Dardanelles, which merely resulted in our ships being badly knocked about before they could get out again. It occupied Alexandria and lost it. It was, in particular, obsessed with the notion that we had discovered a commercial paradise in South and Central America—one enterprising manufacturer actually sent a consignment of skates to Rio—and it was not till we had suffered a disgraceful defeat that we realized that it was one thing for Spanish and half-breed colonists to want to be free from the mother country, but quite a different thing for them to want to be part of the British Empire.

When the coming of spring permitted Napoleon to manoeuvre, he had little difficulty in falling on the Russian army and driving part of it into the river Alle at Friedland. A meeting was thereupon arranged between Napoleon and the Tsar at Tilsit, and the two concluded an alliance which laid Western Europe at Napoleon's feet, and made Russia herself an accomplice in the boycott of England. It might have done even worse by giving the Emperor a chance of commanding another fleet capable of challenging English supremacy, for it was part of Napoleon's design to use his overwhelming land power

[1] The strategy that Lord Fisher would have adopted, against Germany, in 1914, under much less promising circumstances.

to possess himself of the Portuguese and Danish fleets. How much of this design was known to the English ministry, a Tory combination that had replaced " All the Talents ", is uncertain. Historians have speculated as to the source from which the government ascertained the secret articles of the treaty between Napoleon and the Tsar, and particularly that relating to the former's seizure of the Danish fleet. But among all the documents that have come to light in the interval, there is none that proves such a disclosure ever to have been made. It would not have needed the deductive powers of a Sherlock Holmes to have realized the danger without any disclosure at all.

The Foreign Office at this time was occupied by Canning, of Anti-Jacobin fame, and upon whom the mantle of his friend and confidant Pitt was generally supposed to have fallen. This brilliant and ambitious man is one of those characters about whom it is customary to indulge either in uncritical eulogy or an equally uncritical censure. A self-made man, he was always something of an adventurer, his restless egotism was constantly impelling him to push his own interests at all costs, and tended at times to sink the statesman in the political schemer. The caddish intrigue that he carried on to get rid of his unsuspecting colleague, Castlereagh, was rewarded—Irish fashion—with a bullet in the thigh. Canning also had some of that peculiar hardness that is associated with the self-made man and, particularly, with the self-made Tory. He was brutal and biting in his opposition and it is characteristic of him that he was among the opponents of legal protection for animals.

At the same time Canning was, after Pitt's death, the one among all our statesmen who was capable of opposing ideas as well as force to the Napoleonic tyranny. It was not for nothing that he had started his career as the upholder of the British Constitution against Jacobin levellers. He saw, with the intuition of genius, what was at stake all along in the struggle with France. English constitutional principles, born of the English Common Law, were on trial of battle against the centralized despotism, that the Caesars had imposed on their world, and that Napoleon was busy imposing on his. Canning certainly never went so far as to visualize the struggle as—what in essence it was—one between the principles of the Common Law and those of the *Code Napoléon*, or Roman Law. But he clearly saw that the liberties of Europe were at stake, and that the very nature of the British Constitution was to stand for liberties. Men like Castlereagh and, for that matter, most of the Tory ministers,

were as little concerned with liberties as they were with liberty. They were playing the game for their side, for Britain, against heavy odds, and they meant to play it for all it was worth because they were British. It follows that Canning, Anti-Jacobin though he was, could not take the reactionary and inelastic view of the constitution that was now fashionable among his Tory colleagues. More and more did he come to regard it as dynamic and continually developing, more and more did he come to realize that its very spirit was that of freedom.

Canning's worst qualities no less than his genius were displayed in his dealings with the little state of Denmark, upon the information or suspicion of Napoleon's designs upon her small and dismantled fleet lying up in Copenhagen Harbour. Denmark had hitherto honourably upheld her neutrality and professed herself ready still to do so, but Canning had decided that where the safety of England was concerned there was nothing for it but to hack through. Accordingly our unwilling diplomatic representatives were driven, with bullying precipitancy, to demand the fleet, and when this was quite properly refused, the British, who had withheld aid till too late from their ally the Tsar, descended on the devoted capital in overwhelming force and pitilessly shelled it into submission. Castlereagh, now War Minister, cheerfully proposed to our military commander that he should deliberately find excuse for violating the terms of the surrender in order to achieve the doubtful advantage of leaving our army locked up in the island of Zealand, but this Lord Cathcart, like an officer and a gentleman, refused to do, much to the annoyance of Canning. Judgments on this affair will always differ between those who believe that it is better to violate any standards of generosity or fair-dealing rather than run the least risk, and those who believe that everything should be sacrificed before honour.

The situation now resolved itself into a duel between Napoleon carrying it with a high hand on the Continent, and England carrying it with scarcely less high land on the ocean, a procedure that ultimately involved her in a pitiful, inglorious, and useless war with the United States. But the Emperor, materialist that he was, could not perceive that the war that had brought his armies to the Niemen had lost him more than he had gained. For one thing, he was committed to holding down an unwilling Prussia, and to watching an Austria which was only waiting for the moment of revenge. This compelled him to keep a large army continually in being on his

Eastern front in Germany. For another thing, his Continental System was such an unmitigated nuisance to everybody concerned, that it was only by active coercion or the fear of it that he could get it enforced. The village bully, to revert to our old analogy, was engaged in driving his neighbours away from the village shop.

There was an even deeper sense in which Napoleon had placed himself at a disadvantage. The sentiment of nationality, of the right of every people to choose its own government, had given the French Revolution its invincible *élan*. Armies of men determined to be free had been pitted against the hirelings of Kings, and nothing could check them. But now there had long ceased to be any immediate threat to the safety of France. Her armies were strung out far beyond her borders, living on the country, and imposing an iron yoke upon peoples alien in blood and ideas. As the ardour of the French people, rightly struggling to be free, began to wane, that of her enemies began to awaken. The very Kings, reactionary and unteachable as most of them were, became symbolic of freedom, centres of national aspiration. Even Prussia began to democratize her land system and her armies; even under the shadow cast by the wings of the Hapsburg Double Eagle was the word Fatherland breathed. The national spirit that had all along sustained England was now beginning to spread to other countries, and this, in the vision of those who had eyes to see, gave her a winning advantage.

Such was the vision of Canning. In the newly started *Quarterly Review* he argued that the power of Napoleon depended less on his own strength than on the weakness of his enemies, and that it was time for cottage and palace to unite in a supreme national struggle against his tyranny. Wordsworth, sonnetizing in the Miltonian vein, invoked the spirit of liberty wherever, throughout Europe, it showed signs of awakening. His enthusiasm occasionally exceeded his knowledge of the facts, as when he made a hero out of the mad King of Sweden, but he had the root of the matter, and gave a nobler expression to England's cause, and Europe's, than any other Englishman. He was perpetually dwelling on the inward calm, the fount of strength that belongs to men and nations at peace with and true to themselves.

> "O'erweening statesmen have too long relied
> On fleets and armies and external wealth:
> But from *within* proceeds a nation's health. . . . "

His is the very opposite to the Napoleonic spirit of reckoning power by huge armies and extent of territory. Napoleon himself is to

him only a foredoomed gambler, who even now, in place of true greatness, possesses but

> " Internal darkness and unquiet breath ".

Wordsworth had, indeed, divined the weakness of France in a lack of ideas, a " want of books and men ", which counted for more in his mind than the power of armies. And, indeed, France, at this height of her visible power, was approaching something like spiritual bankruptcy. Her great series of humanists, who had adorned the eighteenth century, had come to an end, and left no successors but a few obscure materialists calling themselves ideologues. Poetry was but the dregs of the old classic convention. Napoleon's court had adopted for itself a style of pretentious vulgarity that was as different as possible from the pompous but undoubted dignity that had invested the Versailles of Louis XIV. Gilbert's Bunthorne was, for once, telling the truth when he averred that

> " The reign of art stopped short in the cultivated court
> Of the Empress Josephine."

England, with her Turner, her Lawrence, her Lake School, even with her Bentham and her Canning, showed that, whoever might have the big battalions, the great ideas were, for the nonce, on her side.

10

The War of European Independence

In attempting to conquer England by the Continental System, Napoleon had undertaken a task for which his strength was definitely inadequate, and his supreme triumph at Tilsit had started a sequence of events that could only end in his complete overthrow. He could neither leave off fighting nor force a decision. And his eagerness to close every commercial loophole rapidly involved him in fighting and squandering his resources on two fronts at once, and giving England just the opening she wanted for bringing her land power as well as her sea power into play.

Almost immediately after Tilsit, Napoleon found himself committed to operations in the Spanish Peninsula. England's old ally, Portugal, had a fleet waiting to be seized, and must be bullied into the ranks of England's foes. Accordingly a French army was hurried to Lisbon, where it found the fleet gone, with the Portuguese court, to Brazil. Having achieved this easy conquest, Napoleon, by a series of disreputable tricks, proceeded, as he thought, to make sure of Spain by putting his own brother Joseph on the throne.

The sentiment of nationality, of which Napoleon was as persistently ignorant as he was of sea power, was now aroused against him with a vengeance, and indeed the most favourable circumstances were created for the two factors to work against him in co-operation since, as every child knows but the Man of Destiny had forgotten, a peninsula is land almost entirely surrounded by water.

There is no end to the literature detailing the events that now brought Napoleon's power crashing down more rapidly than it had arisen. In its essence, the process was one of the utmost simplicity. The constant element of it is the duel—by Napoleon's choice—to the death between his Empire and England, a duel in which England forces her opponent to undertake operations on the Continent, whose ultimate effect is to kindle the spirit of nationality from Moscow to Lisbon, and draw all the nations, and not merely a gang of sovereigns, into one final and irresistible coalition against him.

Assuredly England owed little enough to the vision of her statesmen. From the fall of All-the-Talents, the Tories, with various reshufflings important to the Tapers and Tadpoles of that and subsequent times, remained steadily in office, and did at least represent a fixed determination of the landed upper class to have done with "Boney", and that without an undue amount of fuss or sentiment. But as far as statesmanship was concerned, few of them rose above a respectable mediocrity, with the exception of Canning, who made himself impossible as a colleague by his sharp practice and dangerous as a Foreign Minister by his determination to be brilliant at all costs, and of Castlereagh, who was as heedless of national sentiment as Napoleon himself and guilty of at least one ghastly blunder as War Minister. Of the three successive Prime Ministers, Portland was a nonentity, and neither Perceval nor Liverpool, though both were above the average of political competence, possessed breadth of vision or force of personality. Nothing approaching the fiery genius of Chatham nor the steadfast grandeur of his son graced our statesmanship; it was something deeper and stronger than any one man could supply that guided us to victory, it was England herself, patient, blundering, almost inarticulate, and yet strong like one of her own oaks with the growth of centuries.

It was Spain that gave England her chance of bleeding Napoleon to death, and it was one that she did not fail to seize, though her statesmen were still capable of diverting her forces to other and disastrous fields. It was soon evident that in what had seemed to him the easy conquest of an effete nation, the Emperor had burnt

his fingers badly. The Spaniards were incapable of forming an efficient national army, but the local juntas that sprang up everywhere in a barren and mountainous country carried on a guerilla resistence that seemed impossible to stamp out and was a terrible drain on French resources; one French army shared a similar fate to that of Burgoyne at Saratoga and the new King could not maintain himself at Madrid. The fire of revolt, kindled in Spain, was not long in spreading to Portugal, and England, now for the first time bringing her sea power effectually to bear on Napoleon's European land power, stepped in and easily disposed of the army that had conquered Portugal, and so found themselves caught, like rats in a trap, on the Lisbon Peninsula.

Even this successful stroke was so clumsily delivered as to cause more disappointment than jubilation at home. Sir John Moore, whom his admitted military genius pointed out as the leader of the expedition, was, for reasons other than military, distasteful to the politicians, and the upshot was a change of command twice in twenty-four hours that enabled the French to go home on honourable terms instead of surrendering unconditionally. The popular outcry that followed from a public that did not understand the importance of having secured a base for future operations, came near to wrecking the young general to whose skilful tactics the victory was due, Arthur Wellesley, who had gained no small reputation in India and—what was probably an even more decisive factor in his advancement—was a member of the government and Chief Secretary for Ireland.

This Convention of Cintra furnished the occasion for the noblest piece of English prose that the Napoleonic struggle called forth, in the shape of a long pamphlet by Wordsworth, whose sureness of intuition and sustained loftiness of diction would have assuredly placed it among the classics of the language, but for the fact of its author's allowing his romantic enthusiasm to carry him into one now demonstrable injustice, and more than one error of a too credulous charity, perhaps also from the inveterate habit of mental labelling—Wordsworth being supposed to be a poet and not a prose writer. But we can forget the unimportant controversy that was the immediate occasion of the pamphlet, forget also Wordsworth's not unnatural idealization of the greedy and incompetent Spanish Juntas, and regard it as a veritable call to a crusade, and an inspired appreciation of that which constituted our true strength, and which Wordsworth defines as "the paramount efficacy of moral causes".

Napoleon stands upon a hideous precipice from the fact of his

acknowledging no mastery but that of power. "For present annoyance his power is, no doubt, mighty: but liberty—in which it originated, and of which it is a deprivation—is far mightier; and the good in human nature is stronger than the evil," and, again, "upon liberty, and upon liberty alone, can there be permanent dependence."

Such language breathed an atmosphere into which few of Wordsworth's contemporaries had wings to soar. All that was most enduring in the struggle against Napoleon, as well as the most exalted rendering of modern Liberalism, is contained in a brief but immortal paragraph:

"When wickedness acknowledges no limit but the extent of her power . . . the only worthy or adequate opposition is—that of virtue submitting to no circumscription of her endeavours save that of her rights, and aspiring from the impulse of her own ethereal zeal. The Christian exhortation for the individual is here the precept for nations—'Be ye therefore perfect; even as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect'."

The tragedy of Napoleon's fall proceeded with Sophoclean inevitability. Enraged by the reverses he had sustained at the hands of a despised people, the Emperor determined that they, and any handful of men that unmilitary England chose to land on their shores, should feel the full blast of the thunderbolt that had already destroyed the proud armies of Central and Eastern Europe. Accordingly the Grand Army was assembled behind the Pyrenees to overwhelm the outnumbered, ill-led and ill-disciplined national levies, in one triumphant sweep across the Peninsula. But in order to do this Napoleon had to withdraw the best part of his French troops from the nominally peaceful German front, and thus to give Austria, who was only waiting for such an opening, the chance of mobilizing her reconstituted armies and falling in overwhelming force on the remainder.

Napoleon's rush started by being an even more overwhelming success than he could have anticipated. Without a serious battle, the Spanish armies ran or melted away, the Polish lancers took at the gallop a mountain pass, believed impregnable, that barred the road to Madrid, the French reached that capital almost as fast as their legs could carry them, and, while the Austrian declaration of war still hung fire, the Emperor, who never failed to exploit a success to the utmost, might have swept on to Lisbon. But he had reckoned without the little English army, now at last commanded by Sir John

Moore, which had penetrated into the middle of Spain and hazarded a daring stroke at the French communications. Whether or not the Emperor's judgment was biassed by his fixed hatred of England and his desire to get to grips with that elusive foe, he dropped the completion of his original scheme, and rushed his best troops with frantic haste over blizzard-swept mountain passes, to intercept and annihilate Moore's army. But he was too late, and he arrived at Astorga, his destined point on Moore's line of march, to find that the English had just in the nick of time slipped out of his clutches. Moore's retreat to Corunna, his successful counter-attack and death, are picturesque but comparatively unimportant incidents.

For Napoleon's furious blow had but cleft the air, and his time in Spain was up. At Astorga he received news that convinced him that Austria really meant business, and that he must hurry back to Paris if he meant to save his depleted armies on the Danube. The rush of the Grand Army into Spain had left him worse off than when it was safe behind the Pyrenees. The Spanish armies had melted away, but their guerilla bands, in which their real strength lay, were as active as ever, keeping tens of thousands of Frenchmen dispersed about the country and bleeding Napoleon's strength in the most harassing and interminable of military operations. Above all, England still had her foot firmly planted in the Peninsula, thus compelling the French to keep together a large field army that might otherwise have been employed in stamping out the revolt. Thus English regulars and Spanish guerillas played into each other's hands.

Napoleon had got back none too soon. His insufficient forces on the Danube had been seriously compromised by incompetent staff work, and it required a supreme effort of his genius to get them out of the scrape and clear his path to Vienna. But now the effect of his Peninsular venture was telling fatally upon him. Many of his best troops, of his most distinguished Marshals, were pinned down to his Western front, and he had to face an army now for the first time inspired by the love of Fatherland with a force, numerous indeed, but largely made up of German auxiliaries and of half-trained boys whom he had driven to the colours by the unpopular expedient of anticipating the conscription. In the early summer all Europe was thrilled by the news that the Grand Army, debouching from Vienna, had after two days' desperate fighting, failed to make good the passage of the Danube.

It was a situation rife with tremendous possibilities, and never

did a more favourable chance present itself for an English stroke that should arouse the whole of Northern Germany to complete the work that Austria had begun. Alternatively, she could have followed Wordsworth's advice, and thrown such a large force into Spain as to have given her a fair chance of driving the French out of it. She did neither. With the selfish and limited, though quite feasible object of destroying Antwerp, the new naval base that Napoleon described as a pistol held at England's head, a grand expedition, the largest that had ever left our shores, was dispatched under the lazy and incompetent politician who bore the name of Chatham. The expedition was too late starting and failed miserably, the army being destroyed by fever in the Marshes of Walcheren, which was the nearest they were ever allowed to get to Antwerp.

Germany did not rise, and by a supreme effort Napoleon managed to crush Austria, but this brought him no nearer the end of his troubles. England, if she had not found a statesman, had at least found a commander. Of Arthur Wellesley, afterwards Duke of Wellington, estimates and appreciations are legion, but we are inclined to think that the one nearest to the truth is that which divines under that hard exterior a nature naturally not military, but artistic, terribly repressed. One does not easily think of the Iron Duke as the son of one of the leading musicians and song-composers of his time, as a youth one of whose chief delights it was to play the violin—but it was even so with him. In one or two moments of supreme emotion, a sensitive horror of the business in which he was engaged rushed to the surface in a flood of tears. Be the cause what it may, never was there a soldier less enamoured of the romantic or glorious side of war, or indeed of bloodshed of any kind. "Take my word for it," were his solemn words, "if you had seen but one day of war you would pray to Almighty God that you might never again see even an hour of war." It is characteristic of him that when a very old man, and in charge of the military arrangements for suppressing the threatened Chartist riots, he devoted the whole of his energies to avoiding any provocation that might result in bloodshed, and, if the worst came to the worst, to giving the rioters every opportunity of getting away.

He appears to have regarded war as a disgusting but necessary business, in which not choice but a sense of duty had involved him. About it he had no illusions whatever. His Peninsular soldiers he spoke of as the scum of the earth, and instead of idealizing his

subordinates, as Nelson had done, he displayed not the least affection for them during the war nor desire to associate with them when it was over.

Tennyson's obituary ode to the "great Duke" would probably have annoyed him exceedingly, and it is well known how, when a stranger helped him across the road and to a habitually polite acknowledgment replied that he had been only too glad to be of assistance to the victor of Waterloo, Wellington had turned furiously upon him with an adjuration not to be a damned fool.

It was to this entirely unconventional warrior that the task had fallen of sustaining our cause in the Peninsula. He went about it with an utter absence of sentiment, but an unerring eye for the essentials of the situation. He was as alive as Napoleon was blind to the uses of sea power, nor did he at all mind how far or how often he was pushed back, provided he was not actually driven into the sea without the possibility of return. Accordingly his first care was to turn the tongue of land on which Lisbon stood into an impregnable fortress. His second was to provide himself with a transport capable of following and maintaining his army, whereas the French were reduced to living on a barren and hostile country, a fact which prevented them from keeping any large body of troops together for any adequate time.

His third discovery was that of a system of tactics which gave him, with the excellently disciplined troops he commanded, a winning advantage over the conscripts of Napoleon. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say rediscovery, for apart from the fact that the opposition of line to column had been tried with success by General Stuart at Maida, in Calabria, Wellington was only returning to the fire tactics that had rendered the line of English archers, properly handled, invincible during the Hundred Years' War. Of course there was nothing new in linear tactics, they had, in fact, been universal throughout the eighteenth century until the heavy columns of the Revolution, preceded by clouds of skirmishers, had put them temporarily out of date. In the early nineteenth, as in the fourteenth century, the line itself was no panacea, its success depended on its perfect fire training and on the protection it received on its flanks. Edward II at Bannockburn, like the Prince of Orange at Waterloo, proved how easy it was for an unskilled commander to get the best troops, in line, rolled up and destroyed for want of proper support. And the mere fact that the French, from the day of Vimiero to that of Waterloo, were never able to learn Wellington's secret, is strong

reason for thinking that only with such steady regulars as he commanded would the line have proved anything but disastrous.

Wellington then, to give him the title by which he was shortly to be known, went about the business of bleeding France to death with mathematical precision. While Napoleon had his hands tied in Austria, he manoeuvred one French army neatly out of Portugal, advanced to threaten Madrid, gave a successful display of his new tactics in a defensive battle, and then, having gathered all the available French troops round him, left his wounded behind and got back into Portugal. Next year (1810) Napoleon, now thoroughly sensible of the menace constituted by the British presence in the Peninsula, sent the ablest of his Marshals, Masséna, with an overwhelming army, to drive them into the sea. Wellington, who was quite prepared for this move, retired on his base at Lisbon, and left Masséna to starve helplessly outside the lines which for the last year he had been preparing, and at last to make a disastrous retreat. In 1811, with Napoleon still at the height of his power, there was nothing for it but to go on hammering away with a series of bloody and indecisive actions very distressing to the civilian mind, and wait for the Eastern front to wake up.

Meanwhile the great attempt to stifle England's commerce, in which all this expenditure of French blood and treasure was being incurred, was being pursued with the obstinate energy that only Napoleon could throw into any scheme on which he had once set his heart. But he had miscalculated his opponent's strength. England had her overseas markets that he could not touch, and so necessary was her commerce to the countries of Europe that all his bullying could not shut it out. He had to evade his own regulations by granting licences to deal in English goods, and he was even reduced to purchasing English cloth for the backs of his own soldiers. Then, in a desperate effort to make his system effective, he had bonfires of English goods lit at various European commercial centres, which did little harm to England in comparison with the collapse it caused in Continental business, and steadily swelled the tide of his unpopularity.

Nevertheless, distress in England was very acute, and in 1811, when Napoleon seemed at the height of his power, she was beginning to be hard pressed. The South American markets, on which she largely depended, had been overstocked, there was a grave dislocation of business, and unemployment was added to the other miseries of the artisan. Gangs of desperate men were abroad smashing the

machinery that they vaguely associated with their troubles. Wheat, of which England, despite the fact that even such unpromising tracts as parts of Dartmoor were forced into tillage, was still unable to produce enough, soared to fabulous prices. But at this very juncture Napoleon, with that capacity for making colossal blunders that went along with his genius, missed his one chance of starving us out by permitting the export of corn to our shores. He appears to have got into his head the old balance of trade fallacy, in its crudest form, and to have imagined that by letting us exchange gold for corn he was draining us of the only sort of wealth that really mattered! Thanks largely to this unintentional generosity we were enabled to live through the darkest hour.

It was not only in her manufactures that England's strength lay. The unseen and—to this day—unappreciated powers of international finance were working on her side. Early in the nineteenth century a Frankfurt Jew called Rothschild had built up a fortune and a reputation for negotiating financial transactions on the largest scale, no less by his sterling Jewish honesty than by his business genius. His sons, working in family alliance as only Jews can, established the business at various European capitals, and the ablest of them all, Nathan Meyer Rothschild, came to England. He was a man justly respected—it was not everyone who could stand up to the Duke of Wellington as he did in 1834, and tell him that he must go with the times or the times would not go with him—and he had an unfaltering belief, on which he was ready to stake his whole fortune, in England's strength and greatness. He rapidly became indispensable to the government, and towards the end of the war all their important financial business with Continental powers was transacted through him. He was, in the latter stages of the Peninsular War, an unseen power behind Wellington's armies. Always pinched by the government for his expenses, Wellington had one day presented them with some drafts that they could not meet, but which Rothschild instantly took up. Henceforth the business of supplying Wellington with the sinews of war was immensely facilitated through his mediumship.

In 1812 the Continental system, which Napoleon could not enforce but which he would not drop, brought its nemesis. The Tsar Alexander could stand it no longer, and the Eastern Front awoke into life again. With the doubtful support of the Central European powers, Napoleon raised an enormous army, less than half of whom were Frenchmen, for something like three hundred thousand of his

best French troops were pinned to the Peninsula by Wellington and the guerillas. With this motley horde he found it difficult to manoeuvre, and impossible to obtain a decision. In his frantic efforts to close with his enemy he pushed further and further through the vast plains of Russia to deserted Moscow. More than half of his army melted away in the advance; practically the whole of the remainder perished in the attempt to get back to Germany. This disaster was the signal for Prussia to shake off her chains and add her forces, now fired with the spirit of nationality, to those of the Tsar.

Napoleon's difficulties had been the measure of England's strength. Wellington started by storming the two frontier fortresses that constituted the gates of Spain, before the French could get together sufficient forces to oppose him, then, advancing into the heart of the country, he overthrew their main army at Salamanca, a veritable classic of tactics, occupied Madrid, and then, having forced the French to abandon Southern Spain in a supreme effort to overwhelm him, retired unperturbably on Portugal. The necessity of reforming his Eastern front now compelled Napoleon to starve his armies in Spain, and the necessity of maintaining his Western front compelled him to rely on masses of raw conscripts, obtained with ever-increasing difficulty. These boys were only able to push the combined Russian and Prussian forces back upon the Bohemian mountains, where an Austrian army was already beginning to assemble awaiting the moment for a possible intervention. It was then that Napoleon consented to a six weeks' armistice, in which all depended on the attitude of Austria, which still remained in doubt even at Vienna.

But Wellington had not been idle. In the spring of 1813 [1] he had waved adieu to Portugal, and then advancing through Spain he made a masterly use of sea power by shifting his base along the Northern coast as he went. Near the source of the Ebro he closed with the puppet King and his army, destroying it in the most workmanlike way. The French, with the exception of a few isolated forces, were now flying from Spain with Wellington at their heels, and this resounding news, which arrived during the armistice, was probably the determining factor in inducing Austria definitely to throw in her lot with the allies and thus compel the Emperor, with

[1] Even now, when every man, gun, and guinea was needed for Wellington's advance to victory, the Cabinet was toying with the idea of diverting forces to Southern Italy.

forces deficient in quantity and quality, to meet for the first time a combination of the three great Continental despotisms, shortly to be reinforced by the arms and national spirit of all Germany.

There is no need to follow the steps by which Napoleon was forced back from the Elbe to Paris, while Wellington without any sensational victories or dazzling coups, maintained a businesslike, remorseless pressure, forcing his way through the Pyrenees well into South Western France, maintaining strictest discipline and paying for everything he took, diminishing Napoleon's recruiting area and engaging what was now his best remaining army.

It was during this final closing in upon Napoleon that Lord Castlereagh, now Foreign Minister, came to dominate, with his cold and courtly personality, backed by England's power of the purse, the by no means harmonious counsels of the allies. From the very commencement of the Franco-Russian war, when he had skilfully brought the Turks to a peace with Russia by revealing to them a scheme of Napoleon's for their partition, he had bent all his energies to the attainment of a peace that should bring back France to her pre-revolutionary frontiers. In 1814 he crowned his work by visiting the allied headquarters, and bringing about a formal agreement by which the powers bound themselves to carry on the fight to a finish and listen to no more offers from Napoleon. He was also instrumental in putting pressure on the doubtful loyalty of the King of Sweden—an old marshal of Napoleon's who had joined the alliance for reasons of his own—to supply much needed reinforcements.

So the allies reached Paris, Napoleon was sent to reign over the little Isle of Elba, and the Bourbons came back to Paris. The Man of Destiny had set out to ruin England when he might have had peace with her, and the effort had proved too much for him. What had brought about his fall was the steady, persistent drain on his resources caused by the presence of the British army, working in concert with the guerilla bands in the Peninsula, behind which lay the power conferred by the mastery of the seas, and behind this again the economic supremacy conferred by energy stored up in England's buried forests of the carboniferous age and applied through the machinery of the Industrial Revolution. It is easy to wax sentimental over the majesty of the British soldiers in the Peninsula, but we must not forget that this army was a force of poorly paid mercenaries recruited from the dregs of the population, from the jails and ne'er-do-wells and men whom the starvation, that haunted town and countryside, steeled to face the horrors of a discipline, which

alone—and that not always—could keep them from degenerating into a mob of ruffians. It was not even, as the struggle drew to a close, altogether a British army, for it was to an increasing extent recruited from amongst the Irish Catholics whom poverty and a natural love of fighting—but assuredly not of England—drove into the service. When we talk of the valour of our soldiers—and no doubt it was honourable to men so unfortunate that they should perform such prodigies—we must not forget that when in 1807 Sir Francis Burdett criticized in Parliament the hellish torture of flogging, which we shared with no other army except that of Russia, he only got three members to support him in a modest request for a return of sentences and lashes.

It remains to mention that dramatic episode of Napoleon's return from Elba, the rally of the whole French Army to his eagles, the brief re-establishment and final overthrow of his Empire. It was a hopeless attempt from the moment when the former allies agreed to lay aside their differences and devote all their energies to his destruction. Armies from all over Europe began to muster along the Eastern frontier of France, and the first in position were a composite force under Wellington covering Brussels, and a Prussian army on its left along the line of the Sambre and Meuse. Everybody knows how Napoleon dashed at the point of junction of these two armies, at Charleroi, hoping to divide and destroy them separately, and how this attempt ended on the field of Waterloo.

What the critics of this, the most discussed campaign in the world's history, have failed to appreciate, is the consistency of Wellington's attitude with that which he had maintained throughout the Peninsular campaign. He had an entire contempt for the brilliancies of war, and on this occasion he was staking on the certainty of ultimate victory. Although, had such a sacrifice been demanded, he formally expressed his willingness to throw in his lot with the Prussians, what was evidently uppermost in his mind was his communication with the sea through the fortified ports of Ostend and Antwerp. If he could stand and beat Napoleon in front of Brussels, well and good, but if he was forced back towards the sea, he would keep his army in being and, with overwhelming allied forces mustering to the South, the Emperor would be worse off in Brussels than he would have been behind the frontier.

Wellington's correspondence shows that up to the last moment he did not believe the enemy would venture on so desperate a move as an offensive in Belgium, and, once having embarked on it, he

thought to his dying day that the best chance would have been a stroke at his right flank, to sever his communications. It was about this flank that he constantly displayed the most sedulous care, and its protection was evidently in his mind when he left a considerable force detached at Hal on the day of Waterloo. So long as the road to the sea was safe, nothing could be lost.

In the final battle, fighting, as he himself said, with the worst army he had ever commanded, he succeeded, in his quiet, businesslike way, in outclassing Napoleon at every point as a tactician. The opposition of line to column, of fire power to mass, was as triumphant at Waterloo as it had been at Poictiers.

Wellington's use of ground in concealing his troops so mystified his opponent that even in the calm of Saint Helena he seems to have had the foggiest idea of what had actually taken place, and he fought like a man in the dark. Finally Wellington's use of both infantry and cavalry was as exactly timed and economical as that of Napoleon was the reverse. The credit of his victory, from a tactical standpoint, is not affected by the fact that, as he probably realized, it would have mattered very little had Waterloo gone the same way as the Prussian defeat, two days before, at Ligny. Certain it is that both that night, when he rode over the field of battle, and next morning, when he went through the casualty lists, the Iron Duke dissolved in tears of revulsion against the horrid argument of human butchery in which he was actively engaged for the last time.

11

The Evangelical Revival

It is now time to turn from the great struggle that desolated Europe and retarded human progress for nearly a generation, and, casting our eyes back a little, to concentrate our attention on energies more beneficent than those of hounding on ignorant men to each other's destruction. Beneath the wars and revolutions that distract attention to the surface of things, the great Emotional Revival was at work, with its enthusiasm and glowing sympathy marred by its lack of balance and all too narrow intellectual basis.

As might have been expected in England, some of the most important manifestations of this spirit were in the religious sphere. The new Puritanism of the Wesleys, if it had drawn off large numbers of earnest folk from the Anglican communion, kindled an answering revival within the Church itself. The sturdy, commonsense religion

that had sufficed for Dr. Johnson was no longer enough for men whose heightened sensibility made them hunger for a more intimate and passionate experience of divine grace. Accordingly a group of earnest Evangelicals began to leaven the stolid lump of the Anglican priesthood.

This new movement differed from Wesleyanism in making its strongest appeal to the well-born and well-to-do. This was largely due to the fact that among its earliest and most notable converts was William Wilberforce, the close friend of Pitt, whose election by the Yorkshire freeholders in 1784 in the teeth of the local magnates had been the most conspicuous event of that famous appeal to the constituencies. He was one of a small group of friends who gathered round two-strait-laced but munificent financiers named Thornton, father and son, and were known as the Clapham Sect. These men, in one respect, were the very opposite of the old Puritans. They were eminently safe and conservative as far as this world's politics were concerned; they leaned towards that school of thought which had prevailed in the Anglican Church ever since the Reformation and treated the powers that be as ordained of God, and to be obeyed accordingly. After the French Revolution the Church greatly gained in favour with the possessing classes by the fact that it came to be regarded, not without reason, as a bulwark against Jacobin tendencies, and the Evangelical movement, backed as it was by such eminently respectable people as those of the Clapham group, accorded with this conservative tendency and profited thereby not a little.

Their doctrine, though the kindly illogicality of the English nature shrank from the terrific extremes of Scottish Calvinism, was sufficiently Cimmerian. Wilberforce, whose *Practical View of the System of Christianity* was the mediocre best that the Evangelical Fathers could produce as a statement of their principles, follows on the lines already trodden by the Wesleys and before them by the Moravian brethren. He roundly challenges the commonsense morality of the eighteenth century; nothing will suffice the true Christian or save him from the utmost tortures that divine malevolence can inflict but a constant sense of his own damnworthiness—if we may present theology with a much needed expression—and an implicit belief in the efficacy of an innocent Victim's sacrifice in occasionally appeasing the Creator's just wrath with the corruption of His creatures. Nothing less than a whole life, incessantly dominated by the one thought of getting right with God, will suffice.

It follows from this that the earnest Evangelical will be anything

but favourably predisposed towards the joys and amenities of a world which he regards as a sink of corruption. "Yes, my brother," says the Reverend William Romaine, one of the shining lights of this movement, "you may be in health, your body may be perfectly well, but you have a miserable, sinful soul within you, which is infected with all the plague and foul leprosy of original sin, and which has been wounded with thousands of actual crimes. That is your case and," almost superfluously adds this cheerful psychologist, "it is most deplorable." This, be it noted, is obviously intended not for brother this or brother that, but for any and every damned brother. It is natural that the pleasures of such degraded creatures will smell strongly of brimstone to the devout nose, that their comfort and temporal welfare will be of minor importance when viewed in the ruddy light of their probable abode.

Accordingly, even among the well-to-do, the Evangelical movement threw a depressing shadow over life. The perpetual auto-suggestion of a nature every day and in every way growing worse and worse, unless snatched like a brand from the burning, did not conduce to high spirits. And the God of the Evangelicals, however much trembling lip-homage might be paid to His mercy and lovingkindness, was too obviously obsessed by the passions of wrath and vengeance to be anything but an object of fear. It was instinctively felt that His satisfaction with any particular kind of conduct would be measured by its repugnance to the desires and preferences of Old Adam. Accordingly the most innocent diversions were frowned upon. Sunday, being the Lord's day, must be purged of any diversion whatever, and even the services must preserve a holy freedom from guilty concessions to the aesthetic tastes of sinners. Anything connected with the stage was peculiarly diabolical, and we read in the life of a typically Evangelical nobleman, the fifth Earl of Darnley, how he refused to sully his eyes with a private performance by Mrs. Siddons, who happened to be a guest of his father's.

How, it may be asked, did an upper class so addicted to paganism and so sceptical in matters of faith come to be so powerfully affected by a doctrine inimical to the more or less legitimate enjoyments that their wealth and position secured for them? The fact is that they had been seriously frightened by the collapse and ruin of the French aristocracy. The eighteenth century aristocratic ideal was like an arch with the keystone knocked out of it. These magnificently self-assured squires and noblemen began to feel that their prosperity

might be built on a quicksand. The first sign of the transition in gentlemen's costume from the colour and variety of the eighteenth to the sombre uniformity of the nineteenth century, is the appearance of the top hat, that cylindrical denial of exuberance and individuality, the one thing that the Anti-Jacobins willingly adopted from the Jacobins.

Respectability was, in fact, beginning to insinuate itself even into the drawing room. The institution of family prayers was of Evangelical origin, and the country churches began to be patronized to an unprecedented extent by the gentry. Now that an evil association had been established between Tom Paine and the guillotine, it was no longer the fashion to sneer at religion. The motto of the infidel sansculottes might be "woe unto you rich", but not even the sternest Evangelical doubted that this earth, though vile, was the proper inheritance of Dives. In some ways, it was maintained, the poor had actually an advantage in being removed from so many temptations to sinful indulgence, and to anybody who sincerely believed in Evangelical principles, it was not cant but the merest commonsense that the importance of keeping a soul from everlasting torture infinitely transcended that of providing decent conditions for a vile body, and a reasonably happy life in this vale of tears.

But the English nature is not completely logical, and, like most products of the Romantic movement, the Evangelical revival was not remarkable for strength or consistency of thought. A few poems and hymns are the only part of its literary output that are of any but a merely historical interest. An uncritical acceptance of the Bible as infallible from beginning to end, an acceptance, equally uncritical, of an assurance of salvation as its guarantee, are neither the causes nor the effects of a critical theology. The most grotesque absurdities were taken with grave seriousness. The sport of twisting the Hebrew prophecies in any required sense was one that became extremely popular under Evangelical auspices. The candidature of Napoleon for the little horn of Daniel's celebrated Beast was freely discussed, and of course the Pope did duty for a veritable menagerie of Antichristian chimaeras.

Outside the fold of the Church, an anarchy of new sects reproduced on a somewhat milder scale that of the Commonwealth. The Plymouth Brethren exchanged the offices of regular ministers for those of any bore who might be moved to get up and testify—an innovation that proved a sore trial to the founders of that excellent

community. An illiterate woman, called Joanna Southcott, obtained a great vogue as a prophetess and as a sealer of the elect, and announced her immaculate conception of Shiloh. The fact that she died on the eve of her expected accouchement did not prevent her from being the origin of more than one sect, nor of her resurrecting in the form of a certain Mary Boon of Staverton. One of the chief Southcottian apostles was a certain John Wroe, who was circumcised in public, more than suspected of gross immoralities in private, and who died full of years and sanctity as the leader of the "Joannas" or "Beardies".

We must then look on Evangelicism, whether within the Church or without it, less as a doctrine than as an emotional tendency, a part of the great Romantic revival that was stirring Europe. And if this particular manifestation tended to quench the joy and drain the fullness of life, if by constant suggestion of human degradation it tended to degrade it sometimes in good earnest, and if it was very bigoted, provincial and intellectually half baked, it at least produced an amount of good which may fairly be held to have outweighed its disadvantages. In spite of its pre-occupation with sin and a well-nigh implacable Deity, it shared in the philanthropy which was the best quality engendered by Romanticism. And where the Bible is cherished and read, some of Christ's message of mercy and loving-kindness is sure to penetrate.

Wilberforce and his friends were among the kindliest and most self-sacrificing of mortals. Their vision was fatally narrow, and they entirely failed to realize the urgency of the problems created at home by the Industrial Revolution; they were naturally conservative and apt to scent a revolutionary tendency in the most obvious measures of social reform. But where they clearly saw their way, they could act with a courage and persistence worthy of all praise. The Evangelicals were particularly revolted by the national disgrace of the Slave Trade. One of their most eloquent divines, John Newton, had himself been captain of a slaver and knew the horror of it at first hand. The struggle against the slave trade was carried on with a noble persistence, not only by the Evangelicals but also by the Liberal section of the Whig party. It was in 1807, exactly twenty years after the formation of the Anti-slavery Committee, that the Whig Ministry of All the Talents, inspired by the spirit of the recently deceased Fox, passed an Act which formally abolished the Slave Trade so far as the King's subjects were concerned, and this Act, though constantly evaded, was followed by another,

promoted by that most unevangelical Whig, Henry Brougham, making the traffic felony. Nor did Britain's efforts end here, for at the Congress of Vienna, in 1814, our representative, the Tory Castlereagh, who had been personally opposed to abolition, sacrificing our interests to our honour, made it a point of the first importance to get abolition recognized by the other nations, at least in principle. It is probable that by sacrificing the slaves and sticking to our own interests we might, by an equal exertion of firmness, have gained some or all of the Dutch East India colonies. But what shall it profit a nation to gain the whole world and lose her own soul?

This was not the only direction in which the Evangelical movement tended towards the betterment of human conditions. John Howard, a devout Independent who was married to an Anglican, passed a long and strenuous career and finally laid down his life in the betterment of prison conditions all over Europe, though it must not be forgotten that, according to Charles Lamb, he actually introduced the barbarity of solitary confinement for children into Christ's Hospital, for which Lamb declares he could spit on Howard's statue.

The Evangelicals can also fairly be credited with much of the enthusiasm displayed for elementary education. True to their principles, souls and not minds were their first consideration, and the Sunday School movement, popularized under the auspices of Robert Raikes of Gloucester, was inspired in the first instance by the educational ideal of good old George III, who wished that every poor child in his dominions should be taught to read the Bible. But nobody can read the Bible without the capacity for reading most other things in the English tongue, and though one is inclined to shudder at poor little half-starved factory children being herded for long hours within school walls—not to speak of a couple of services thrown in—on their one holiday in all the week, there is no doubt that this stern discipline trained such of them as survived to take their part as citizens.

Not only in education, but in every direction was there a marked increase of charitable activity. If the upper class were jealously concerned to maintain their privileges, they at least, according to their rather dim lights, recognized that they were to some extent the keepers of their destitute brethren. All the many improving childrens' books, dominated by the shadow of an awful and evangelical papa, are agreed on the excellence of doing good, though in a horribly superior way, to the poor. We suspect that even Lady Catherine de Burgh, in her unquestioned domain, must have been a Lady

Bountiful after her fashion. Those who make villains of any class, and most of all in England, are apt to miss the point of the social tragedy. English ladies and gentlemen were probably more kind-hearted than those of other lands, but like nearly all human beings, they saw facts in the light of their own interests.

Of the influence of the Evangelicals, for good or evil, in the development of the Empire by the impetus they gave to missionary enterprise, we shall speak in due course.

12

The Seeds of Social Reform

We must not fall into the error of crediting the Evangelicals, powerful as their influence was, with the whole impulse towards philanthropy and social reform that is manifest at this time. It is part of that Emotional Revival which in England tends especially to find expression through religious channels. In France, on the other hand, humanism and the Catholic religion were in almost invariable conflict, and here at home was a considerable body of social reformers who were anything but religious in the formal sense. The Liberal wing of the Whig party inherited the genteel scepticism fashionable at the height of the eighteenth century, and bridged the transition to nineteenth century rationalism. Fox, Holland, Brougham and Romilly, to instance a few among the leaders, were rather humanists than Christians, and it was the atmosphere of infidelity that was popularly supposed to invest Liberalism that, by reaction, was to start the Oxford Movement.

We cannot make any absolute generalization, but we shall be roughly correct if we say that the Tory party was that of Anglicans, old-fashioned and Evangelical, whereas the Dissenters and Rationalists were generally to be found in some section of the opposition. But all alike were in their varying degrees under the softening and quickening influence of the Emotional Revival, now at its height, and, as we have seen in respect of the Slave Trade, godliness and humanity were able to work together in any good cause.

It is not our intention to examine in detail the various measures of social reform that were either mooted or carried during the strenuous years of the war, and in the hard times that followed the conclusion of peace. The ideal of improving human conditions was all this time inspiring an uphill struggle against the terrified determination not to introduce the thin end of the Jacobin wedge. Even

Pitt had the desire if not the determination to grapple with the general misery, and introduced a comprehensive but thoroughly amateurish measure of Poor Relief in 1796, which, however, met with such a storm of criticism that he was fain to drop it. But the motto of the Tories was generally to sit still and maintain, or even strengthen, the existing system. The boldest of Parliamentary social reformers was the Whig brewer, Samuel Whitbread, an ardent but somewhat unstable idealist, who in 1796 advocated a minimum wage, and, in 1807, a comprehensive reform of the poor law, coupled with a scheme of free, universal education.

A larger, though still exiguous measure of success, attended the efforts of Samuel Romilly, a lawyer, who, perhaps owing to his Huguenot descent, was peculiarly sensitive to Continental influences, and had made a study of the great Milanese jurist, Beccaria, by whose enlightened and humane doctrines almost every criminal code in Europe was beneficently affected. That of England was cruelly severe, the death penalty being imposed for comparatively trivial crimes against property, which, characteristically enough of that class-ridden age, was a good deal more sacred than the person. It was even more severe in theory than it was in practice, and that arch-conservative, Lord Chancellor Eldon, was able to put up an eloquent defence even of the death penalty for horse-stealing, on the ground that in all ordinary cases the judge would not dream of inflicting it, but that it behoved him to have the power of ridding society of an incorrigible rogue. This typically English makeshift had the effect of investing judges with powers of capricious tyranny, and of making juries return deliberately false verdicts in order to save themselves from the reproach of blood-guiltiness. Romilly managed to get the death penalty remitted for thefts from the person, but the forces of reaction took alarm and closed their ranks successfully against further reform during his life, which he elected to end on his wife's death in 1818. But his work survived him and was crowned by the gradual softening down of at least the more clamant brutalities of our criminal code.

This was also a time of marked educational progress. We have already seen how, before the end of the eighteenth century, the Sunday School system was well under way, and in 1802 the State imposed upon factory employers the responsibility of securing at least the rudiments of training for their child employees. But England was already falling behind the best Continental standards. Under the auspices of Frederick the Great, Prussia, while still

exhausted from the effects of the Seven Years' War, had adopted a system of universal compulsory education, and this excellent example had been followed by Revolutionary France. The result was, in both these countries, enormously to strengthen the centralized power of the State, and to give it the same sort of authority that the medieval Church had exercised.

This was natural in countries where the principles of Roman Law prevailed, but England possessed a stubborn individualism, nurtured by centuries of her Common Law, and did not take kindly to such comprehensive levelling. And the difficulty of imposing any adequate national scheme was increased by what has proved the curse of English education—the sectarian bias. Anglicans and Nonconformists were more concerned to get the children brought up according to their particular dogmatic tenets than to make them useful and enlightened citizens. Accordingly we find, at the very opening of the nineteenth century, the educational world torn asunder between the elementary systems of the Anglican, Andrew Bell, and the Quaker, Joseph Lancaster. On the other hand, this very rivalry was a great stimulus to voluntary effort in which the Church, with her greater resources, easily led the way. By 1831 she alone had endowed 13,000 schools educating more than 400,000 pupils.

But a scheme of national education did not yet mature. Whitbread's comprehensive proposals failed to gain acceptance and his mantle fell upon Henry Brougham, a strange blend of genius and self-advertisement, one of those clever but unreliable statesmen who seldom succeed for very long in securing the confidence of an English Parliament or of public opinion. Had he possessed a character proportionate to his talents, Brougham might have proved one of his country's greatest benefactors, for enlightenment was the very soul of the policy he advocated. He was responsible for a famous committee on endowed charities which was appointed in 1816, and in 1820, partly on the strength of its inquiries, he drafted a scheme of national education, which was split on the sectarian rock.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, we find no small amount of goodwill to alleviate the ever increasing social evil, caused by abnormal conditions resulting from the Industrial Revolution. These efforts were not only hampered by the timidity that the French Revolution had fostered in the possessing classes, but the would-be reformers had seldom thought out the subject at all thoroughly, and it was generally easy to pick the best-intended schemes, like that of Pitt, to pieces. Even when measures were

passed, like the first Factory Act, of 1802, they too often failed of their purpose and were easily evaded. The very poverty of constructive thought provided a fatally obvious argument for those whose philosophy and interests alike led them to let the whole matter alone, and trust to a chaos of conflicting self-interests to work out the maximum possible happiness of everybody concerned.

No generous mind, even in the most cursory survey, would wish to overlook one of the sweetest and most beneficent results of the Emotional Revival in the extension of legal protection to our brother animals. The English Common Law took no cognizance of any wrongs but those of the human species, and it was hard to convince public opinion that legislation for the benefit of brutes was anything but ludicrous. The new sensibility, however, was doing its work, and more and more were people of education and refinement coming to be of Coleridge's mind that

> "He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things, both great and small."

The great champion of animals, whose portrait deservedly stands in the board-room of the society he founded for their protection, was Richard Martin, an Irish gentleman of the most attractive type, reckless and high spirited, a very Mercutio for pugnacity, who once turned with a diminutive pistol on an infuriated Dublin mob, some thousands strong, and threatened, to their great delight, to destroy every mother's son of them. But Martin's heart was even warmer than his temper, and he had a redoubtable ally in the great Liberal lawyer, Lord Erskine. It is sad to think that the Devil's cause, in this matter, was fought by another chivalrous gentleman, William Windham, who was all for preserving the good old brutal sports of the people from fist-fighting to bull-baiting, and subsequently, with all the resources of eloquent sophism, by Robert Peel. Nevertheless, in 1822, Martin's efforts were rewarded by an act of limited application which, however, he exerted all his powers to make effective, securing many convictions of men guilty of brutality, and then, as often as not, paying their fines because they were poor.

BOOK IV

THE MACHINE AGE

CHAPTER I

THE YEARS OF REACTION

1

The League of Despots

At long last—and after how prolonged an agony—the task light-heartedly assayed by the despots of Valmy had been accomplished, the French menace to Europe was of the past, the march to Paris had reached its goal. Europe was at the mercy of the armies that had fought for her deliverance from tyranny. It remained to be seen with what wisdom the victors would avail themselves of so great an opportunity of setting an exhausted and bleeding Continent to rights.

What was it that had triumphed over Napoleon? Surely not mere Anti-Jacobinical reaction—*that* had had its fling with all the odds in its favour, and grievous had been its failure. It was not until the spirit of nationality, the invincible determination of the peoples themselves not to be governed against their will, had been aroused, that the blue armies had been rolled back from the plains of Russia and the mountains of Spain, and Germany, like the strong man bound, had risen and snapped her chains. Nationality had triumphed, but in the name and under the leadership of the associated despots. And these despots were little less afraid of the liberty they had invoked than of the tyranny they had overcome. From their point of view, they had had to call in Satan to cast out Satan had invoked the spirit of the Revolution to conquer the child of the Revolution. They were wise enough in their generation to see that the spirit of nationality was fraught with mortal peril to themselves that they must either curb it or it would destroy them.

The three principal despots were by no means on the level of the sorry and half-insane gang that had first opposed the Revolution The Tsar, despite his complicity in his own father's murder, proved

a high-principled and, on the whole, a lovable sovereign, and the rulers of Prussia and Austria were well-intentioned and God-fearing, if very stupid men. But the three of them, and their heirs after them, were bound together by complicity in a crime, whose nemesis was ultimately to involve their houses and realms in awful disaster. They had enslaved, but not destroyed, the proud and spirited Polish nation. They had torn her asunder, they had wiped her name off the map, but her soul and her will to be free they had not destroyed. These three powers, then, by the very fact that they were accomplices in Poland's crucifixion and fearful of her resurrection, were almost inevitably driven to a partnership in despotism. If that partnership could hold together, the complete triumph of Liberal principles was forever barred. In this fact we shall find the key to the diplomacy of the next hundred years.

These three were the strangest of allies for an England which, with all her lapses, had nevertheless been the stronghold of constitutional freedom, and whose very spirit, enshrined in her Common Law, was the denial of despotism. But it must be remembered that England had kept the flame of her national spirit burning unquenchably throughout the long war, and it was largely by her inspiration that it had been kindled on the Continent. And England, as represented by her governing class, was participating in a mood of reaction against the French Revolution and its principles which was rife throughout Europe.

This reaction was not towards the *status quo* of the eighteenth century and the aristocratic cynicism of Versailles. Not only in England had men discovered the value of religious emotion as a hiding place from the dry light of reason. A school of French writers went so far as to advocate a return to the theocratic supremacy of the Pontiff over the temporal sovereigns. The Romantic spirit had discovered its affinity with the Middle Ages, without at all understanding the element of democracy in the age of chivalry and the schoolmen. Moreover that "*doctor subtilissimus*" the philosopher Hegel, who in 1818 accepted a chair at Berlin University, discovered that the true freedom of the spirit could only be realized in a state suspiciously resembling the Prussian bureaucracy.

If the Tory government of England was swayed by anti-Jacobin sentiment, ten times more so were the three potentates with whom Castlereagh had concluded a twenty years' alliance for the crushing of Napoleon and the safeguarding of Europe from French aggression. But they were, according to their lights, sincere men, and the spirit

in which they dealt with a power which had done them so many injuries and overthrown so many reigning dynasties was by no means ignoble. When they first entered Paris they had been greeted with positive enthusiasm, and having given back France her old dynasty and frontiers, with a fairly liberal constitution, they retired without even compelling her to restore the treasures of art which she had stolen, still less to exact an indemnity.

In the conclusion of peace, and in the subsequent Congress of Vienna, in which every Christian nation of Europe was represented, England's part was a singularly disinterested one. She had made tremendous sacrifices and, in consequence, was loaded with a national debt which Napoleon believed would be too much for her to bear, and France, which had incurred none whatever, might not unplausibly have been supposed to have won the peace. But the men who represented England were above the short-sighted calculations of *Realpolitik*. This was the more remarkable as our all-powerful Foreign Minister was the cold and unbending Castlereagh, whom the advanced thinkers of his own time were at one in branding with the stigma of murderous reaction. But Castlereagh was, by the admission of so uncompromising an opponent as Brougham, pre-eminently a gentleman, and, though almost untouched by sentiment, above the vulgarity of reckoning a nation's greatness by the amount of territory she can daub her own colour on the map, or the amount of money she can put into her purse.

His abstinence was ridiculed by wags who declared that he gave up Java because he could not find it on the map, and that arch-materialist, Napoleon, was dumbfounded at what he considered to be Castlereagh's utter imbecility and ignorance in throwing away conquests that nobody could have prevented us from keeping. But Castlereagh, with an exceedingly acute eye for the map, only insisted on our keeping a few scattered possessions necessary for the safeguarding of our long trade routes, and for the most important of these, the Cape of Good Hope, compensation was actually paid. All our other acquisitions were quietly handed back to their owners. What he did however insist upon was—to our eternal honour—that the other nations should stand in with our policy of suppressing the Slave Trade. And in so doing he was merely giving voice to a public opinion that no statesman could ignore.

It was after Napoleon's restoration, which was acclaimed by the immense majority of Frenchmen, that the danger of a peace of vengeance was most acute. It might well be argued that generosity

was thrown away on a people like the French, and the predatory instincts of the German Powers, and particularly of Prussia, were now fully aroused. It was proposed to saddle France with a crushing indemnity and to cripple her by the deprivation of territories which had been filched by Louis XIV and his successor. The wrong done to Germany by the piecemeal annexation of Alsace-Lorraine cried for redress, in the impartial opinion of Prussia, whose representative had informed Talleyrand at Vienna that might was right and that Prussia did not recognize the law of nations to which he had appealed. The scheme might well have appeared not only just but expedient to England, one of whose ablest statesmen, Carteret, had made it an object of his policy, and she had some reason to regard the power it was now proposed to cripple as her natural enemy. The Cabinet, including the Premier, Liverpool, were strongly inclined towards the Prussian standpoint.

It is therefore much to the credit of our representatives, Castlereagh and Wellington, that they should have stood firm not only against our allies in Europe but against Castlereagh's own colleagues in the Cabinet. Wellington was the last man to be carried away by the sentimental violence of militarism—he saw no reason why the mere brute courage of a Marshal Ney should militate against his being shot for aggravated treason and perjury—and as for Castlereagh, his clear intelligence showed him that the only alternative to a generous treatment of France was her total destruction. His words to the Premier[1] are pregnant with wisdom.

"It is not our business to collect trophies, but to bring back the world to peaceful habits. The more I reflect upon it the more I deprecate this system of scratching such a power. We may hold her down and pare her nails so that many years shall pass away before she can again wound us . . . but this system of being pledged to a continental war for objects that France may any day reclaim from the particular states that hold them, without pushing her demands beyond what she would contend was due to her own honour, is, I am sure, bad British policy."

Had the Prussian statesmen of 1871, or the Entente statesmen of 1919 acted in the spirit of the much execrated "Derry-down Triangle", how different would the history of the world have been, and how much happier! As it was, backed by the chivalrous Tsar, the generous policy prevailed. Only trifling readjustments of frontier were insisted on; France was mulcted in an indemnity that she easily

[1] Quoted in *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy.*

and quickly paid off, and a five years' military occupation was ultimately reduced to three through the powerful insistence of Wellington. Much more than after the Congress of Berlin could England claim to have secured peace with honour, to have stood before Europe not only as a victorious, but as a magnanimous and Christian power.

Due honour, then, must be given to the allied powers for the use they made of their victory over France. Credit must also be given them for a sincere desire so to order the affairs of Europe as to make the curse of war a thing of the past. Projects of perpetual peace were no new thing—the idea had been more than once mooted during the eighteenth century—and in the revival of Christianity, that was part of the reaction against Jacobinism, it was felt that argument by bloodshed was unworthy of Christian powers and of the Lord's Anointed. It was this sentiment that inspired the Tsar Alexander to formulate for the signature of his brother sovereigns the impressive declaration of principle that has gone by the somewhat misleading title of the Holy Alliance, and in which the despots who had divided Poland piously undertook to order their reciprocal relations according to the teachings of our Saviour. Practically alone among all the sovereigns of Christian Europe the Prince Regent refused, on constitutional grounds, to sign what Castlereagh characterized as "a sublime piece of mysticism and nonsense."

This declaration of principle had nothing binding about it, and the real business of ordering the affairs of Europe was to be accomplished by the continued alliance of the four great powers that had defeated Napoleon, and which, after three years' probation, France was allowed to join. It was provided that from time to time the representatives of these powers should meet together to consult as to their common interests and for the taking of such measures as should be considered "the most salutary for the repose and prosperity of Nations, and for the maintenance of the peace of Europe." The concert of powers was, in fact, to act as the League of Nations aspires to act to-day.

To understand England's part in torpedoing, as she did, this hopeful and at least partially sincere scheme for avoiding future wars, it is necessary to understand what, in practice, the fraternity of sovereigns amounted to. A settlement of Europe had been arrived at—not without imminent peril of another European war—which was no doubt highly satisfactory to its authors. The Congress of

Vienna, so far as what Byron called the Holy Three were concerned, was a share-out of territory, in which the wishes of the inhabitants were the last thing to be thought of. The Hapsburgs, for instance, in addition to the heterogeneous and centrifugal collection of peoples, nations and languages over which they already exercised an uneasy sway, imposed their paternal offices upon the unappreciative inhabitants of Venetia and Lombardy, while Alexander, under cover of a constitution that he may perhaps have thought was going to work, seized the lion's share of Poland, compensating his Hohenzollern brother by planting the latter's jackboots firmly on the Rhineland and Westphalia, not to speak of half Saxony.

All this was perfectly in accord with the anti-Jacobinical principles for which the Three stood. The doctrine of nationality had been one of the main planks in the revolutionary programme, and besides, once they admitted the right of peoples to choose their own governors, what excuse could they have for denying this right to their own subjects? Above all, so long as Poland remained enchained, so long the three jailers were committed to the championship of despotic principles, however cleverly these might be camouflaged. And the version of Christianity implied in Alexander's manifesto contemplated a relation between sovereign and subject based not upon free choice but upon Divine Right. Let every soul be subject unto the powers that be.

The Holy Three, then, were undoubtedly aiming at peace, but they were aiming at something much more than peace. They visualized a Europe under the firm but benevolent rule of divinely appointed sovereigns vested with practically unlimited powers of control, and putting down any rebelliousness of thought, word or deed with an iron hand. They had their differences, which were acute enough, but the force of circumstances inevitably drew the Three together. It equally inevitably drew England into opposition to the Three and to their project of European stability.

It is of interest to consider the attitude of Castlereagh at this juncture. The most ardent of his apologists will scarcely acclaim him as an enthusiast for Liberal principles—he spoke of Italy's first struggles to be free as an uprising against " mild and paternal " (!) governments—and yet he accomplished more for the freedom of Europe than almost any other statesman of the nineteenth century. This was because, without bothering about theories and systems, he inherited Pitt's tradition of an enlightened patriotism in foreign politics, and because in playing the game for England

he was too clear-sighted to be the victim of any political theory.

From the first he was determined that the alliance for the purpose of defeating Napoleon and preventing any revival of the French menace should not be turned into an instrument for governing Europe in the interests of the Holy Three. By so doing he was, on the one hand, deliberately wrecking the most hopeful scheme hitherto propounded for perpetuating European peace, but on the other he was saving Europe from an euthanasia of despotism; he was—if we look at the matter from the standpoint of an English historian—ensuring that the spirit informing the English Common Law should not perish from the earth, and that Europe should be saved from going the way of old Rome. It is hardly necessary to add that Castlereagh himself cared for none of these considerations, which would no doubt have struck him as "mysticism and nonsense". His greatness consists in the fact that he never allowed his reactionary opinions to deflect him, as Foreign Minister, from the pursuit of his country's sound and traditional policy.

Accordingly, when the next of the great congresses was held, in 1818, at Aix la Chapelle, Castlereagh took an uncompromising stand against Alexander's proposal to turn the alliance into a permanent association of sovereigns for the guarantee of all existing rights, and therefore for interfering with overwhelming force all over Europe towards the suppression of revolutions. England's prestige and authority, thus thrown into the scale, had the effect of converting what might have been an effective mutual-insurance league of Kings into an informal alliance of the three principal despots, an anticipation of the famous Dreikaiserbund of the seventies. The next two congresses, held significantly enough at Troppau and Laibach, were, in fact, mere re-unions of the Holy Three at which Castlereagh refused to allow England to be represented by a plenipotentiary. The danger to European liberty had already begun to define itself.

There was good enough reason for these meetings. The people of Naples and Piedmont had broken into open revolt, and here was the obvious opportunity for putting the machinery of a general alliance into action. Castlereagh himself had no sympathy with the rebels, who he thought were revolting against "mild and paternal governments", and he had no objection to Austria, as principal Italian power, settling the matter on her own account. But he was not going to play the game of the three despots, who had now settled

their own differences and were thoroughly united under the influence of the Machiavellian and cynical Metternich, the Austrian Chancellor. Castlereagh protested vigorously against the principle of armed interference, as he did also against the Carlsbad Decrees by which Metternich throttled the young democracy of Germany.

The plot was now thickened by a revolt in Spain against her unspeakable King Ferdinand, and a rebellion of Christian Greece against Moslem Turkey. A new congress was summoned to meet in enslaved Italian territory at Verona, and Castlereagh (now Marquis of Londonderry) drafted instructions to our representative in which he uncompromisingly committed him to opposing intervention. But before the Congress could meet, the great Foreign Minister had overworked himself into madness and suicide. His mantle fell on his old duelling opponent, George Canning, who differed from him not in the essentials of policy, but in a cast of mind at once more clear-cut and more philosophic, and in a far greater felicity of expression. Canning had none of Castlereagh's somewhat platonic but none the less genuine desire for European solidarity. A wholesome state of international politics he defined as "every nation for itself and God for us all".

The old Anti-Jacobin had never been a blind reactionary, but had based his opposition to the abstract theories of the republicans upon a whole hearted love of English constitutional principles, to which, as time went on, he became more and more inclined to give a Liberal interpretation. During the war he had consistently championed our cause as that of the freedom of nations, and he had been fully alive to the importance of fostering the spirit of nationality in Europe. Shortly before taking office he had indeed declared it to be England's duty to maintain herself on the basis of her own Constitution and refrain from partnership in the Continental struggle between monarchy and democracy, but he plainly declared his own sympathies when he wrote in 1828 that between the monarchist doctrine enunciated by the King of France "and its antagonist principle the sovereignty of the people, I should feel myself compelled to acknowledge that the former is more alien to the British Constitution." And his sympathy with the rights of peoples burst out in a flash of splendid eloquence, on the occasion of our dispatching troops to prevent the Spanish reactionary coercion of Portugal:

"We go," he said, "to plant the standard of England on the heights of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted, foreign dominion shall not come."

The great difference between Canning and Castlereagh was, however, not in principle but in opportunity. Castlereagh's work, though of momentous importance, was not marked by any dramatic stroke or illumined by any declaration of principle that has struck the imagination of posterity. His reserved temperament made him a lover of quiet and unostentatious courses. But even a Canning would not have found, during Castlereagh's period of office, any opening for a stronger line than his predecessor's against the Holy Alliance. England's power and prestige were indeed at their height, but on the Continent, against the military strength of the three despots, she could do nothing. She could not, even if she had desired it, have prevented the enslavement of Poland or the muzzling of Germany or the crushing of Italy, and it is very doubtful whether she could have effectively intervened to keep a French army out of Spain. England's power was on the sea, and there it was overwhelming. Canning no less than Castlereagh realized, that to take a strong line without the power to sustain it, is to invite humiliation. "Our true policy," he laid it down, "has always been not to interfere except in great emergencies, and then only with commanding force."

Thus Castlereagh had perforce to confine himself to abstention and protest, and so long as Canning could not bring our sea power into play he did the same, in spite of ardent Whigs who urged him to fight against French intervention in the Peninsula. But when the Spanish monarchists threatened the liberties of our old ally Portugal, then, indeed, operating from our tried and impregnable base at Lisbon, we did interfere with commanding force.

Canning's great opportunity, however, came when the Holy Alliance attempted to make its power felt on the other side of the Atlantic. The Spanish colonies in South America had broken free from their decrepit mother country, and it was at least hinted at by Alexander's ministers at the Congress of Aix la Chapelle, that the monarchs of Europe should employ something more than peaceful persuasion to reduce them to obedience. Such a policy would have been thoroughly in the traditions of Catherine the Great, and would have conveniently embroiled the Western powers while leaving Russia free to pursue her own line in Eastern Europe. But it was not very seriously pressed, and all that came of it was that Russia obligingly made over to Spain, for a consideration, an armada consisting of a few old ships too rotten to put to sea. A more serious danger was when a French army, acting as mandatory of the Holy

Alliance, marched across Spain to Cadiz to restore the tyranny of the unspeakable Ferdinand VII, and there appeared to be some prospect of France extending her not altogether disinterested activities to what once had been the Spanish Empire in South America. This was a scheme that England not only could but must prevent. It was not only a question of her political principles, but of her most vital commercial interests, for the South American market, important enough to us during the war, had become even more important since, and to allow the Latin Powers to set up the old exclusive system in our faces would have spelt ruin to our manufacturers and destitution to many a workman.

Canning's riposte had the simplicity of genius. So long as the British fleet rode the sea, he was determined that not a single Continental soldier should make the Atlantic passage but he was minded to achieve his ends by peaceful means. Now, therefore, according to his own splendid phrase, he called a New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old. Our old, revolted colonies of the United States had an even more potent motive than ourselves for keeping kingly hands off America. As early as 1811, Congress, on the recommendation of President Madison, had passed a resolution affirming that the United States could not see without serious disquietude any Spanish territory pass into the hands of a foreign power. The transition was easy from this to the veto enunciated in 1823 by President Monroe, against any extension of the European state system to America without the consent of the United States. This exactly suited England's book; she had no more desire than the United States to see militarist tyranny crushing the new republics —even Castlereagh had in 1815 insisted that Spain should treat her colonies on Liberal principles—and she had an equal interest in keeping open the door for trade. She therefore cordially co-operated in establishing the position of the United States as policeman and predominant power of the American Continent and thus began the rebinding of those invisible bonds, that ought never to have been snapped, between the two Anglo-Saxon powers.

The power of the leagued Kings stopped short at the coast, and the Holy Alliance was enclosed by a wooden wall. The natural grouping of the powers was now becoming apparent, if anyone had had the eye to distinguish the temporary and accidental from the enduring tendencies of history. The two Anglo-Saxon and Liberal peoples on either side of the Atlantic had already begun to gravitate towards each other, though many circumstances, and above all the

tragedy of Ireland, were to militate throughout the ensuing century against their complete harmony. The rivalry between England and France had also ceased to be a dominating factor of international politics. France had definitely broken with the idea of an Indian or an American empire, and her thoughts were soon to turn towards that expansion into Northern Africa which was to prove so much more fruitful than her old overseas development. Besides, post-revolutionary France in her own way—so very different from that of England—was Liberal at heart, and possessed what was for that time a Liberal constitution, however much her natural tendencies might be masked by the uneasy experiment of a Bourbon Restoration. And France, thanks to the kind offices of the Allies, had no subject peoples over whom to tyrannize.

But over Central and Eastern Europe brooded the seemingly impregnable despotism of the three dynasties, bound by their own past and circumstances to the cause of reaction, however much expediency or the caprice of individuals might induce them to concede in appearance. It was the tragedy of the Tsar Alexander that his Liberal tendencies and aspirations were everywhere thwarted by the necessities of his situation—being a Romanoff he must be a despot or nothing, and there is a legend, none the less significant from being groundless in fact,[1] that the broken-hearted and disillusioned Caesar did at last, through a feigned death, choose the nothingness of a poor hermit's life. The three dynasties formed an invincible stronghold of reaction on one condition—that they did not fall out among themselves. On most points their interests more or less coincided, and they had always their Polish blood-guiltiness to hold them together, but there were two ominous rifts in their friendship. There was the rivalry between Prussia and Austria for the leadership of Germany—an issue that proved eventually capable of settlement by the sword—and the rivalry between Russia and Austria in the Near East, which was destined, at last, to work the destruction of all three.

This Eastern Question had already began to loom large at the Congress of Vienna, which indeed proved the last of this series of attempts to regulate the affairs of Europe by Congress. Greece had thrown off the fetters of Turkey, and broken into a revolt,

[1] An English doctor attended Alexander's last moments, and his record is conclusive as to his death. The doctor's son, Mr. Sidney Lee, kindly gave me the details. The body was buried privately by the Empress—hence the empty coffin recently opened at Leningrad.

that kindled both Liberal and Christian sentiment all over Europe, and especially in Russia and England, though Metternich, who hated Liberalism and cared nothing about Christianity, only wanted to keep Russia's hands off Turkey, which he did through his sheer personal ascendancy over Alexander till the latter's death in 1825. Canning had an extremely difficult part to play, and played it with consummate skill. He had inherited from Pitt the policy of opposing Russia's advance in the East, even when she appeared in the role of Christian champion. But, unlike Castlereagh, he had an ardent sympathy for the cause of Greek freedom, in which he was thoroughly at one with British sentiment. It was a masterpiece of diplomacy by which he managed to hold back Russia, not by opposing, but by co-operating with her, to bring France, even under a reactionary King, into line with his own Liberal policy, and, by a momentary anticipation of the Triple Entente, to shatter the almost triumphant Turkish and Egyptian tyranny in the harbour of Navarino.

It is true that after his death his work was to some extent marred by the bungling and reactionary diplomacy of Wellington's Tory ministry, but he had given a lead to British policy that was to determine it, at its best, for the next century. A sympathy with freedom all over the world, tempered by a refusal to strike or intervene except with the strength to make our demands effective, and a perfect appreciation of what, with our command of the sea and our diminutive army, we should or could not do; a hand of friendship to the United States and co-operation when possible with France; a watchful yet courteous aloofness from the system of politics favoured by the three despots of Central and Eastern Europe—these were the distinguishing features of Canning's policy.

Thanks chiefly to the attitude of England as represented by Castlereagh and Canning, the attempt to provide for the permanent peace of Europe had failed, but the attempt of the leagued despots to veto constitutional government and national freedom by force of arms had been fatally compromised. True, the Metternich system of repressive stagnation still reigned over most of the Continent, but not unchallenged. Teuton and Slav despotism had already found its path blocked by Anglo-Saxon liberties, and the nineteenth century was to see the Latin races come into line on the Liberal side. The stage was already being prepared for the tragedy of 1914.

2

The Aftermath of Victory

Not for the last time in her history, England made the discovery, after Waterloo, that for a modern civilized power to be victorious in a great war is only a little less unprofitable than to be defeated. The contest had come at a peculiarly unfortunate time. England was going through a process of headlong transition which, under the most favourable circumstances, would have taxed the utmost resources of statesmanship. As it was, thanks to the French Revolution and the monarchist reaction against it, she had for nearly a generation been dissipating blood and treasure, expending the utmost of her strength, in a struggle to the death with a gigantic adversary. Every other consideration had been subordinated to the supreme object of breaking the French will to conquest. Thought, which, in the wholly new circumstances created by the Industrial Revolution, demanded unrestricted play, had been forced into orthodox grooves by what had practically been a regime of martial law. The generous Romantic enthusiasm, which might have centred round the distribution and enjoyment of the kindly fruits of the earth—now vouchsafed in such unprecedented abundance—had mostly burned for the liberation of Europe and deliverance of England by force of arms. And the material energies, which might have made cities beautiful and men prosperous, were poured with a lavish profusion into the business of destruction, or allowed to cancel each other by cut-throat competition.

We have a right to be proud of the bravery of the British and Irish poor we hired to fight our battles, and of the constancy of national purpose that supported us, sometimes single-handed, against the might of Napoleon, but it would be well if we were also to regard the sum total of all this butchery and squalid horror, whether amid the hills of the Peninsula or on the plains of Flanders, as an unmitigated disaster to mankind, if in contemplating in our mind's eye such a tragedy as that of Waterloo, we could follow the example of the Iron Duke, and, if we have tears, shed them. But the tragedy of the war was more profound and more lasting than that of torn limbs and gaping stomachs, of the women of Badajoz defiled by blood-drunken and wine-drunken ruffians, of discipline maintained by torture, of innocent Copenhagen under a rain of death—of these things we can say that they are long over and done with, that a hundred years after it is all the same. What was done

is past and forgiven—what was not done, what was neglected and allowed to drift, has left a nemesis that has darkened over civilization ever since, and may yet prove to be its ruin.

We know that even before the war the prevailing tendency of thought about society was tinged by a vague mysticism of natural harmony, by a more or less qualified belief that things had only to be allowed to drift in order to bring about the best possible conditions. Every man for himself and God for us all! And when the issue with France was fairly joined it was almost too much to expect of practical statesmen that they should not only undertake the salvation of Europe from tyranny, but that they should at the same time embark on a comprehensive reorganization of society to bring it abreast of its rapidly changing requirements. While the war was on, it was not unnatural that those in authority should have concentrated all their energies on maintaining the will to victory and have regarded projects of domestic reform as merely irrelevant or dangerous. Therefore they pinned their faith to the established order of society, and ignored the fact that it was every year becoming more obsolete and out of date.

So long therefore as the nation could be kept going and made to present a united front to the enemy, they were inclined to favour any hand to mouth expedient that would tide over an immediate difficulty and eschewed anything like a comprehensive attempt to grapple with the social problem. They put down combinations of labourers because strikes in war-time are inopportune, and because where two or three poor men are gathered together the seeds of revolution may be sown. They made no practical attempt to regulate the murderous conditions of labour, because the great thing was to quicken production at all costs. Owing to the ever-present fear of famine, the pace of enclosure was speeded up in the Midlands and the Eastern Counties. In 1797, when ruin stared us in the face, it was reported by a select committee that nine million acres of English soil were either uncultivated waste, or cultivated on the old inefficient, common-field system. At a time when it was necessary to mobilize every possible acre in the war against France and famine, it is not surprising that Enclosure Acts should have followed each other more rapidly than ever, and that, in 1801, an act should have been passed for speeding up the process. It is also characteristic of the time that various far-sighted expedients that had been mooted by legislators for the purpose of keeping enclosed land in the possession of the peasantry, never got passed into law. Hand to mouth was

the order of the day, and the hand was the hand of him who joins house to house and field to field.

The most far-reaching of all these wartime expedients had been that which was adopted for meeting the necessity of keeping the poor from actual starvation during this time of necessary stress. Pitt, we have seen, tried his hand at tinkering the Poor Law, but soon gave it up, and as the politicians in Westminster would do nothing, the men on the spot, the Benches of county magistrates, had to hammer out a solution, in characteristic English fashion, for themselves. Accordingly the Berkshire Justices, who assembled at Speenhamland, in Berkshire, in the hungry year 1796, met a situation that was rapidly becoming desperate by the crude socialistic expedient of supplementing wages out of the rates. Their example was eagerly followed all over the country; the wolf had to be kept from the door, and here was one way of doing it. The country was practically in a state of siege, and this amazing instance of justice-made law was putting it on siege rations. The motives were humane, and the poor were kept alive somehow. But there is all the difference in the world between the economics of besieged garrisons and the permanent organization of a great industrial power. The "Speenhamland Act" had come to stay, the justices had obligingly saved the legislators from the necessity of thinking out a system of their own, and the results were disastrous. Wages, of course, now that the rates were always available to supplement them, slumped below starvation point, and in times of distress as many as a quarter of the population of free England would be on the rates—paupers! Self respect was naturally destroyed, all incentive to honest labour was taken away, and the system by which extra money was drawn for all children, including bastards, stimulated a headlong increase in the population, legitimate and illegitimate.[1]

So long as the war lasted, so long as England was to a large extent suffering herself, agriculture boomed and the worst effects of Speenhamland were masked. Indeed, as a war measure, it may be said to have succeeded. But when the war was over and the inflated prosperity of the farmer collapsed like a pricked bubble, though Speenhamland may have provided the best temporary expedient for keeping land under the plough, easing the burden on the farmers and providing some sort of employment for the labourers, the plight of the countryside was catastrophic. The ratepayers, many of whom

[1] Though perhaps the effects of this have been exaggerated—see, e.g. Dr. Chapham's *An Economic History of Great Britain*, Bk. I, Ch. 4.

were themselves on the verge of destitution and who were, besides, crushed to the earth by enormous taxation, could not afford to be generous. Relief and wages combined were forced down to the bare pittance necessary to keep soul and body together, and this level was steadily depressed until the countryside of England, which had not so long ago been famed as the land of roast beef and plum pudding in scornful contrast with that of the "skinny Frenchmen", was peopled by gaunt and half-starved wretches shirking about on Sundays—as Corbett puts it—"in ragged smock frocks with unshaven faces, with a shirt not washed for a month and with their toes peeping out of their shoes," droves of slaves, under the arbitrary tyranny of the parish overseer, often harnessed, men and women together, to the parish cart. And yet the squires and big landowners were basking in the noontide of prosperity, trapping and transporting men to preserve pheasants, and spending long days on horseback in the pursuit of vermin.

We can only glance, in passing, at the meanest and most shameful of all the rural oppressions of this time, the scene of which was not the English countryside, but the Highlands of Scotland. Under the influence of the Romantic movement, and particularly of Sir Walter Scott, there was much fine sentiment about clan loyalty, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and so forth. The kilt and tartan, which were now again legalized, became symbolic of

> "Old, unhappy, far-off things
> And battles long ago."

But the chieftains, whose function as military leaders of the tribe had lapsed since the strong hand of Butcher Cumberland had brought the King's peace into their remotest fastnesses, were by no means sentimental where the main chance was concerned. Poor soil and primitive methods of cultivation might maintain a hardy population in contentment, but as a business proposition it would pay to get rid of the clansmen and turn the whole land into pasturage for sheep and cattle—only in the fullness of the Victorian era did the claims of pleasure demand the replacement of men by deer. Even before the "forty-five", evictions had started in the Isle of Skye, but it was towards the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth that the practice became common of the chieftain turning on his tenants and driving them out of their homes, with every circumstance of brutality to shift for themselves or perish miserably. The first Duke of Sutherland, in the second decade of the century, gained an infamous

pre-eminence by the wholesale eviction of his hapless people, who were forced out when their crops were standing, whose roofs, furniture, and even sick were burnt, some of whom were generously offered allotments on the barren sea-shore, without boats or the money to buy them—nay, a notice was posted on a church door threatening with eviction anyone giving shelter to those already evicted. The black list of robber and traitor chieftains then and subsequently includes such names as Campbell, Macdonald, Fraser, Cameron of Lochiel, Hamilton, Gordon, and many another whose tartan figures proudly at Highland gatherings to-day, as if the colours of Judas were an honourable distinction.

Such then, was the condition of those who tilled the soil which a generation of warfare had kept inviolate from any but British plunder. If we turn to the towns, to the manufacturing and mining districts, we shall find a condition of things equally revolting to humane sentiment. It was probably more by machinery than by guns that we had won the war, but the price was terrible. The period of transition during which, under more favourable circumstances, we might have evolved a new social order, had seen all our energies devoted to beating the enemy and keeping ourselves from actual collapse. Provided this could be done, that the furnaces could be kept roaring and the wheels buzzing, nothing else counted with those in authority. The new industrial system was allowed to evolve itself, and evolve it did in the most wasteful, slipshod, and cruel of all possible ways.

Even for the employers, the struggle for survival was desperate and the spectre of ruin seldom very far off. Markets fluctuated, booms and slumps trod on each others' heels in the most bewildering way. The course of business was left not, as theorists supposed, to the free play of enlightened egotism, but to the reckless optimism and mad panic that alternate nowhere more disastrously than in the mass psychology of business men. This alternation of slump and boom was no new thing, it had gone on continuously at least since Tudor times, but no one had thought out a financial system for regulating it—the very nature of the evil was hardly realized. The Bank of England, protected from any serious competition by Act of Parliament, occupied a position of dominating importance, and used its power positively to aggravate the evil it might have mitigated. Before the great panic of 1825 when capital was being demanded recklessly for every sort of wild-cat enterprise, the Bank was adding fuel to the fire of speculation by cheapening credit and lowering its

rate, in spite of the fact that gold was being drained rapidly out of the country and its own reserve was diminishing to vanishing point. Then, when the first symptoms of a slump appeared, the Bank sharply contracted its credit and precipitated a general smash. Henceforth the recurrence of a decennial panic became a regular part of our financial anarchy, with untold consequences of misery and unemployment. With the coming of peace, the freedom of the seas, and the opening of the world's markets, a period of prosperity had been confidently anticipated. Unfortunately the first result was to plunge the nation more deeply than ever into the trough of misery. It was no good having access to markets when the war had drained our customers of the money to pay, and the other nations, which were now trying belatedly to build up industries of their own, were by no means minded to expose them to the full blast of British competition—in Europe and the United States tariffs were rapidly put up against us. Then the government, which during the war had been a huge employer of labour, civil and military, ceased its abnormal destructive activities, and thereby flooded the labour market with idle hands at a time when works were everywhere closing down. The state of hopeless misery into which the country was plunged in the black year 1816 baffles description.

The immense strength of our industrial position and the lead we had acquired in the mechanical arts enabled us to rise out of the trough of depression and to enjoy such prosperity as is indicated by statistics of increasing trade. The increase was not steady, but proceeded by alternate expansion and shrinkage; prices raced up and down; employment was now plentiful and now not to be obtained. Even in the best times the lot of those who were hired to tend the machines was grim enough. There is no need to detail here the oft-told story of the horrors of mine and factory life. Owing to the frantic increase of population, which was doubled in less than three generations, and the influx of multitudes of Irish peasants, who could work and live for next to nothing, the labour market was nearly always glutted, and until 1825 the men were not even allowed to combine to obtain decent terms. As in the country, the workers were forced down to a subsistence level of wages which itself was continually being depressed. The hours they laboured were too long and the nourishment they obtained usually too small to support a normal existence. In the cotton trade it was said that a spinner seldom survived the age of forty. The generations were cut short before their time, and it was perhaps better to die early

than to eke out an existence in which such physical hardship was aggravated by a slavish discipline, and in which even the miserable pittance was cut down by constant arbitrary fines.

Grimmest of all was the lot of children [1] who were herded into the factories almost as soon as they could walk, whose hours were from five in the morning till seven or nine at night, in a steaming and overheated atmosphere and amid unfenced machinery into which the poor little victims often dropped through sheer exhaustion, or imprisoned alone and in the dark down in the bowels of the earth. Every species of cruelty had to be practised to keep them up to the mark; the employer would often wait with a horsewhip in the small hours of the morning to flog the half drowsed infants into their daily Hell, and as the day went on and agonized appeals for the time were heard, conscientious foremen would apply the scourge with ever more industrious assiduity until the bruised and haggard little boys and girls reeled home for a few hours' insufficient sleep, broken by dreams of the day's torture. The parents, where they were not brutalized by their own misery out of all natural feeling, watched with bleeding hearts the sacrifice of their children, but the industrial Moloch was inexorable, it was a choice between Hell and starvation—conscientious overseers would not grant relief to idle hands, however diminutive.

What of the men who swayed the destinies of the nation, the Tory ministers who were now so securely ensconced in office that it seemed that nothing short of a revolution could unsettle them, and under whose auspices these horrors flourished and increased? Were these men king devils of the Hell that was England, selfish and cunning tyrants whose one object it was to maintain themselves and their class in power and luxury? To the frenzied eye of England's most sensitive poet, of Percy Bysshe Shelley, this and nothing less was the fact. Castlereagh, Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, and Eldon, the Lord Chancellor, appeared to him the veritable embodiments, respectively, of murder, hypocrisy and fraud. Never was an estimate of character more absurdly wide of the mark. How well Castlereagh served his country and Europe, even to the death, we know; the Chancellor was an honourable and too painfully conscientious judge besides being a singularly loyal and lovable old gentleman; while as for Sidmouth, the worst that can be said of him is that he was a religious and well-meaning, but abysmal fool. The ministers who had piloted the country to victory in the great war were doing their

[1] For the best account see *The Town Labourer* by J. L. and B. Hammond.

laborious best under circumstances of terrible difficulty, but nothing in their training had fitted them for seeing or feeling the realities of the domestic situation.

For long years they had been obsessed by the spectres of conquest by the foreigner, and of the triumph of Jacobin principles at home; the existing social and political system had become invested in their eyes with a halo of sanctity, and the mere thought of tampering with it was regarded as treason against our happy and glorious Constitution. Those who advocated any substantial measure of reform, even if they would have gone no further than Mr. Pitt at the beginning of his career, were looked upon as dangerous firebrands, with whom no terms were to be kept. As for the children in the factories and the pauperized labourers in the villages, they knew little more than they could obtain from interested and rose-coloured reports; their sympathies had never flowed into such channels—having eyes they saw not and having hearts they felt not.

Conscientiously, therefore, they performed their duty as they understood it. The country was seething with unrest and to their excited imaginations was being worked up by agitators for a revolution. They therefore felt themselves constrained to strengthen their hands by maintaining the conditions of martial law in time of peace. In 1817 the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended for a year, and in 1819 a series of measures was passed aimed not only at nipping in the bud any attempt to arm or drill the populace, but also at muzzling the popular press and suppressing the right of free assembly.

Government at last enjoyed the advantage of overwhelming military force. It was Pitt who, less from reasons of military efficiency than his desire to maintain the home front against the Jacobins, had started the practice of housing the troops in barracks instead of billeting them among the people. This system was continued after the peace, and had the effect of widening the gulf between the soldier and the citizen. The old army of Wellington—"the scum of the earth" as he had called it—was now a caste of highly trained mercenaries, engaged for life, saturated with the pride of victorious achievement and regimental tradition, and ready, in the most literal and sinister sense, to "go anywhere or do anything." And there were other forces by which law and the existing order could be maintained, special constables, various more or less reliable bodies of volunteers, and the yeomanry cavalry whose military inefficiency was compensated for by their extreme readiness to prove their prowess against unarmed mobs.

Amid all this array of force the government lacked the one thing most needful of all in a trained and efficient police. As a result they could hardly avoid clumsy and bloody methods of military repression, and for information they were dependent not, as they would be nowadays, on a competent detective force, but on the tales of miserable spies, who often earned their wage by fomenting the very conspiracies they betrayed. In point of fact, the poor were too crushed and downtrodden to strike an effective blow for themselves, and the few feeble attempts they made, whether of their own accord or by the incitement of spies, to compel the redress of their grievances, might have excited pity in the minds of men less obsessed by the fear of revolution than the English ministers. The climax of repression was reached when a vast and unarmed crowd that met peaceably to listen to reform speeches in the neighbourhood of Manchester, was charged by some undisciplined louts of yeomanry on no greater provocation than that of having cheered their arrival. The troopers saw red, and imagined themselves very terrible fellows, riding about, sabring men and women and chasing the various banners, as if they were so many Lifeguardsman Shaws capturing French eagles. It is significant that a regiment of Hussars, which was also present, and understood something about real fighting and military discipline, harmed nobody. It is even more significant that the Prince Regent should have been made publicly to thank his heroic yeomen—but then George, by his own account, had been at Waterloo!

It was during the seven years dating from the battle of Waterloo to 1822, the year when Castlereagh died and Sidmouth resigned, that England made the nearest approach to coming under the system of despotism under which the greater part of Europe had fallen after the Congress of Vienna. But with what a difference, even in this darkest and most hopeless hour! There a man might be flung into secret imprisonment, limited only by the caprice of some minister or understrapper, for wearing a round hat, or humming a patriotic song, or doing any of the thousand and one things that might draw upon him the suspicion of the police. Here the Constitution, though blind reaction might stunt its natural development, lived, and the Common Law, grossly though it might be abused, was still its informing spirit. Habeas Corpus might be suspended, but only as a desperate and temporary expedient, as the ordinary machinery of government may be suspended in a besieged city. English ministers —even the most bigoted of Tory Anti-Jacobins—were not of the stuff of which successful despots are made, and the voice of the reformer

was never still. This was partly because the governing class itself contained a considerable Liberal and democratic leaven, and to put down men like Sir Francis Burdett, or Radical Jack Lambton—subsequently Lord Durham—was an entirely different proposition from proceeding against such low fellows as Will Cobbett or Orator Hunt.

Besides, Will Cobbett was very far from being put down, though he had to fly the country while Habeas Corpus was suspended, and his thunderous voice continued to defy the governing class, in the hearing of the whole nation, through the medium of his *Twopenny Register*. And that greatest safeguard of English liberty, the Jury, and especially the London Jury—always a bulwark against encroaching authority—approved itself now as in the days of Mr. Pitt's Anti-Jacobin Terror. In the very heyday of reaction, in 1817, a memorable blow was struck for English liberties, in the old and true sense, when the government attempted to make an example of a poor bookseller named Hone, who had published some rather profane and very vulgar anti-governmental skits on the Litany, the Catechism, and the Athanasian Creed. In three successive trials, on three successive days, this insignificant and obscure man, defending himself, successfully defied the utmost terrors of judicial partiality, though the last two trials were conducted by no less a personage than the Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough, who was famous for his power of bullying juries, and threw the whole of his energies into securing a conviction. But the bulwark stood firm, Hone went free, and it was the Lord Chief Justice who died—it was alleged—from the effects of his discomfiture.

3

Individualists of Science

All this time the Industrial Revolution continued in full swing. The machines grew not only in numbers but efficiency, enterprising capitalists were constantly picking the brains of inventors, and goods in increasing quantity, if often declining quality, were thrust on the market. It is a difficult and highly controversial task to measure the exact increase of the national wealth, though the pace at which things were moving is hinted at by the fact that the annual value of our exports had almost doubled during the first thirty years of the century. But it is doubtful whether, in computing the average wealth per head of the population, the increase of the productive

numerator is not compensated for, until the forties, by that of the human denominator, for population was increasing at the same phenomenal rate as wealth itself.

The day of the practical and comparatively uneducated inventors was still at its height. Neither the new textile machinery nor the first steam engines owed much to scientists properly so called. The railway and the steamboat which were soon to revolutionize both land and sea transport, to pull Great Britain together within the compass of a day's journey and—since the latest science has taught us to consider time in the light of another dimension—to grapple our colonies by invisible chains and draw them many months nearer to the homeland, these crowning discoveries of the Industrial Revolution owed little to the calculations of the study, but were developed by workaday, mechanical craftsmen.

This series of epoch-making discoveries by men with no greater qualifications than sheer native shrewdness is the peculiar distinction of England during the Industrial Revolution. No other nation or time can show anything remotely comparable to it. But the time was approaching when the very completeness of his achievement would bring the supremacy of the workaday inventor to an end, and drive commerce itself to seek counsel of the theorist to whom knowledge is an end in itself quite irrespective of its practical uses. Mechanical ingenuity might evolve a workable steam engine, but to realize the full possibilities of modern engineering a science of thermodynamics is needed such as no Stevenson or Brindley could ever have dreamed of mastering. The advance of pure science proceeds in majestic indifference to its uses, but upon that advance commerce and the practical affairs of life must depend ever more completely.

It was in this movement of pure science that Britain had, during most of the eighteenth century, failed to sustain her promise of Newton's day. Where she had planted, France had watered. This was largely owing to the fact that, in conformity with our stubborn individualism, science had been left, so far as the British State was concerned, almost entirely to its own resources and devices. It is the greatest permanent achievement of Louis XIV's government that, under its auspices, the importance of science was recogniz and an Academy of Sciences endowed. As a result of this far-sighted policy, the French *savants* of the eighteenth century established a European pre-eminence, whereas the Royal Society, which had been merely chartered but not endowed, sank into a position of comparative

insignificance. And it was not only such achievements as the crowning of Newton's work by Laplace, the development of the calculus by Lagrange, the foundation of modern chemistry by Lavoisier and of comparative anatomy by Cuvier, that completed France's work for science during the eighteenth century. She brought science into the interest and parlance of educated men and women; she infused it into literature and created an atmosphere in which it could thrive as an essential part of culture. And the Revolution, though it parted Lavoisier from his head on the ground that the Republic had no need of *savants*, served in the long run rather as a stimulus than otherwise.

From France the enthusiasm for pure science had spread to Germany, which, though disunited politically, had already begun her wonderful organization of freely co-operating universities. The inspiration of Goethe, who stood in Olympian majesty above the wars and hatreds that agitated ordinary mortals, was of priceless service in directing German thoroughness and German profundity to an end not national but human. On the other hand, the germs of a culture distinctly national were planted, under the stress of Napoleonic tyranny, by the previously cosmopolitan philosopher Fichte.

But England was by no means destined to play the part of utilitarian Martha to the Maries of pure science on the Continent. She had no Academy of Sciences and her national genius was not of the sort that finds academic expression. Her two great universities, as they awoke from their lethargy of the eighteenth century, cultivated an ideal of liberal education in which the specialization of the scientist was suspect as affording an incomplete mental training—few of the great scientists who flourished at the beginning of the century were Oxford or Cambridge men. On the other hand the Scottish temperament, so much more akin than our own to the German, had evolved a system of universities similar in principle to those of Germany, and to be a scientist in Scotland implied always the membership and usually the professorship of a university.

English science displayed all the advantages and evils of extreme individualism. It was quite unorganized; its pioneers, often very poor men, were dependent upon their own means for carrying on their researches, and there were no orthodoxies and schools of thought to continue their work, which too frequently lacked recognition and publicity. Often the greatest geniuses suffered from a stubborn provincialism that made them neglectful of keeping in touch with

progress elsewhere—Dalton, for instance, the discoverer of the atom, declared that he could carry his library, of which he had not read half, on his back. British science was more pragmatic, more immediately occupied with the pursuit of practical ends, than tended to be the case either in France or Germany.

To the orderly Scottish mind, this state of things must have appeared sheer anarchy, and the early Edinburgh Reviewers are inclined to speak in tones of unjust disparagement of British as compared with Continental scientific achievement. Britain has tended to produce men of isolated but supreme genius in their special departments, and without any suspicion of national vanity it may be asserted that since the Renaissance the two outstanding landmarks of scientific progress are inscribed with the names of Newton and Darwin. Even apart from her galaxy of inventors, Britain can, at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, claim a record of pioneer achievement second to that of no country whatever. Genius welled from the most diverse and unpredictable sources. What could have afforded a greater contrast than the three great chemists, the learned and republican theologian, Dr. Priestley, discoverer of oxygen, whose library and laboratory were destroyed by an Anti-Jacobin mob who at least agreed with the Jacobins in having no use for *savants*, a scion of the ducal house of Cavendish, and the uncouth and ungainly little Quaker, John Dalton.

The spirit of science was, in fact, abroad, in despite of the official and academic cold shoulder, and it transcended every distinction of class or vocation. It was perhaps part of the Romantic impulse that drove men to nature, and the line between poet and scientist is almost obliterated in such a typically English genius as that of Gilbert White, the parson naturalist of Selbourne. The scientist may probe patiently by doubt and experiment while the poet conquers by intuition, and yet both are seekers of the same truth which, when perfectly apprehended, is goodness and beauty.

Space forbids us to record the progress made in every department of science by British investigators between Priestley's discovery of oxygen in 1774 and the foundation of the British Association in 1830. But at least some mention is due to one of the most hopeful and least regarded features of this time, the diffusion of scientific knowledge and interest among the working class. This was particularly remarkable among the engineers, a class of men whose practical acquaintance with machinery naturally stimulated the desire for a wider and more

generalized knowledge. In 1800 George Birkbeck of Glasgow had started the course of lectures that developed into the first Mechanics' Institute, and in 1826 the London Mechanics' Institute, under his auspices and those of the indefatigable Brougham, was opened. Mechanics' Institutes played a great part in working class education during the second quarter of the century, though they ultimately developed a tendency to pass out of the hands of the genuine mechanics into those of what we can best describe as the lower middle class.

4

The Human Calculus

Thus, with unprecedented rapidity, man was enlarging his knowledge of and control over the world around and without him. He had now explored the depths of the heavens and had analysed matter into what were then thought to be its ultimate particles, he had unlocked one source of energy in steam and was beginning to discover another in electricity, he was perfecting every day an instrument of exact thought and analysis in the mathematics. Despite the fact that Hutton in England was laying the foundations of modern geology, and Buffon and subsequently Cuvier in France those of biology, the eighteenth century may be described as an age essentially mathematical, dominated throughout by the genius of Newton and conducting its most fruitful researches in the realms of inorganic matter. The science of the living organism was to come to its own in the nineteenth century, culminating as it did in the work of Darwin.

We must not forget that the tendency of thought since the Renaissance had been to concentrate on the knowledge and control of man's environment, or at best man's body, to the neglect of the inner and spiritual man who had almost monopolized medieval interest. If this standpoint be justified, we should look for the most startling scientific developments on the side of mechanics and chemistry, whereas we should expect comparative stagnation in all that concerns the mind, the social organism, and religion. Progress must be conceived of not in line, but in echelon.

Such a method of advance is not without its dangers. Man has not only improved but revolutionized his surroundings. In so doing he has set before himself the choice that confronts every species whose environment has changed, the task, that is to say, of adapting himself to it or perishing. Most species, under similar circumstances, have perished; even the gigantic lizards of the mesozoic age could

not survive some subtle change in the world's climate. Man, not by any outside agency but by his own action in revolutionizing his environment, has put himself in mortal peril, and forced upon himself the necessity of an adaptation, an inward and spiritual revolution, to meet this change of circumstances. But by concentrating on his surroundings and neglecting himself he cuts himself off from his only possible way of escape.

This is not to imply that during the Industrial Revolution no effort was made to effect the adaptation in question, or that the urgency of an inward as well as an outward revolution was unappreciated. We shall doubtless be reminded that this was an age not only of chemists but of political economists, and that the masters of the French Enlightenment, particularly Condillac and Helvetius, had devoted special attention to founding a scientific psychology. But these efforts, however praiseworthy in intention, were cursed with barrenness, they failed to form the basis of any sure or accumulating body of knowledge. The human sciences did not go forward, but progressed in circles, always returning to the starting point. The political economists of the first half of the nineteenth century did indeed build up an imposing edifice of theory, only to have it knocked down and blown to scorn in the second half.

This was no doubt largely due to the fact that the would-be social scientists usually started building their edifice from the top downwards. To understand mankind collectively it is first necessary to understand them as individuals, in other words, a reliable sociology presupposes a reliable psychology. But it was just where man himself was concerned that human knowledge failed to progress. While the other sciences one by one shook themselves free from traditional authority and association with metaphysics, psychology remained obstinately fast in the ruts. The cautious and unbiassed experimentation that had become a *sine qua non* of the more material sciences was allowed to play but a very minor part in that of the mind. Long after Galen had ceased to be an authority on medicine and Ptolemy on the motions of the heavenly bodies, orthodox psychology continued to be swayed by the pronouncements of such ancient worthies as Aristotle.

It was however inevitable that the scientific impulse, that was producing such startling results in other fields, should urge a certain number of thinking men to extend the reign of science over the mind and spirit. But at that time the seriousness, and indeed the very nature of the problem, were hardly realized. Mathematical methods

reigned supreme, and it was seriously considered possible to make a calculus of human affairs.

Such was the life-long aim and—in the opinion both of himself and of a band of enthusiastic disciples—the achievement of an eccentric and lovable old gentleman, endowed with a massive force of intellect and yet with the unpracticality of a big baby, who died at a venerable age and with an immense reputation, in the year of the great Reform Bill, leaving his body to be dissected for the happiness of his fellow-mortals. His name was Jeremy Bentham, and the influence he wielded probably did more to determine the course of English thought on social subjects during the nineteenth century than that of any other man.

Bentham's philosophy is the singularly direct outcome of early circumstances. A naturally puny child, his education was forced on with a monstrous ineptitude of good intention by his parents, so that, at the age of three, the poor little fellow was running home from walks to bury himself in Rapin's History. A mind so prematurely crammed could hardly fail to grow prematurely rigid and inelastic, so that the mature Bentham displayed all the power and all the weakness that characterize the man of one idea. The philosopher in petticoats developed into a weakly and hypersensitive boy, to whom school life was a hell and a subsequent University course purgatory. Bentham therefore grew up a shrinking recluse, but with the physical weakling's desire to compensate for his inferiority by asserting his power with the one weapon of which he felt himself a master—his pen. It is therefore not surprising that he should have passionately reacted against any kind of established authority, and that the mildest and most benevolent of mortals should have proved one of the most brutal and bludgeoning of controversialists.

The direction of Bentham's activities was determined by his father's choice for him of the bar as a profession. His sensitiveness shrank from the rough and tumble of advocacy, and his keenly sharpened sense of fair play between strong and weak made him hate the chicanery and heartless delays of legal procedure as much as he had hated bullying at Westminster. Retiring, therefore, into solitude, and resorting to that one mightiest weapon of which he was master, he set himself to wage uncompromising battle against the whole legal system, and consequently—as so shrewd a critic could not fail to perceive—against the whole constitutional system which had arisen out of the English Common Law. There was nothing petty or ignoble in this lifelong undertaking; it was as if the weak

boy of the school—having undergone some witch's transformatior into a mighty athlete—were to have constituted himself the champior of all weak boys against all strong ones. Surely there is no mor pleasing instance of what the latest psychology knows as sublimation, than this of the friendless boy growing up into the friend of all mankind.

But emotional reactions are dangerous things when imperfectly understood, and particularly when they disguise themselves as the workings of cold reason. Bentham was strangely like a very different person, Shelley, in his verdict on most existing authorities and institutions. He regarded them with the intense and undiscriminating aversion of the weakling for the bully, and waged war against them in as uncompromising a spirit as that of Prometheus against Zeus. Nothing would satisfy him but to sweep away the whole existing edifice of law and government, and to put in its stead a new heaven and a new earth fashioned after the most exact intellectual calculations. And just as the weak boy, in our fairy tale, might make the first use of his magic transformation to thrash the head of the school, so did Bentham, at the outset of his career, launch an attack of undiscriminating violence against that arch-apologist for the English law and Constitution, Judge Blackstone.

Bentham's repeated assaults on authority and tradition no doubt had a salutary effect as solvents of the blind and panic-stricken reaction that had come to regard the Constitution as something fixed and finished—not to be adapted to circumstances nor allowed to grow under any pretence whatever. Among a group of talented and influential disciples it was common ground that most of our institutions were honeycombed with stupidity, and that the sole test by which they could be judged was that of practical efficiency. It was at least something that while statesmen like Sidmouth and Eldon were hard at work fighting down any sort of change, energetic Benthamites should have been inciting all and sundry to cut the cackle about authority and get ahead with the business of making the world a fit place for men to live in.

Unfortunately Bentham had made the mistake of imagining this desirable task to be infinitely simpler than it was in reality. The very fact that he could have dreamed of constructing a human calculus is enough to convict him of a fatally defective psychology. Few men, probably, had less understanding of human nature than this amiable recluse, and when he sets out upon the uncongenial task of elucidating it, his usual shrewdness appears wholly to desert

him. Anyone perusing his table of the springs of human action, arranged in three neat columns, eulogistic, dyslogistic, and neutral, will be much put to it to comprehend the very meaning of a writer who is usually a meticulous stickler for verbal precision. In these tables—if I may be permitted to quote from my own *History of English Patriotism*—" interests of the purse, of the heart, of the gall-bladder, of the altar, of the bottle, all jostle one another on terms of perfect equality. It would be easy enough for a man of moderate ability and a taste for conundrums, to pass the whole of his leisure in drawing up alternatives to this scheme, all equally plausible, ringing infinite changes on headings and sub-headings and multiplying distinctions even more subtle than those between sycophantism and toad-eating, faint-heartedness and chicken-heartedness, vainness and vanity."

It was not only in psychology that Bentham was lacking. In common with a good many other professed champions of common-sense, he was by no means a subtle or penetrating philosopher, and it would have been well for him if he could have sat at the feet of the old schoolman, William of Occam, and comprehended the full implication of his warning against multiplying entities. For in grasping after something definite and measurable on which to base his calculus, he lit upon the word " happiness ", which he took to represent a thing as homogeneous and as easily measurable as the currency. This happiness he regarded as being the supreme good of life, which, in fact, everybody pursues, however blindly and under whatever religious or idealistic pretence. The end of all enlightened legislation is comprised in the formula " the greatest happiness of the greatest number ". So eager is Bentham to treat the national dividend of happiness on a business footing, that he admits no distinction, save that of quantity, between the happiness to be derived from reading poetry and that from playing a now forgotten game called push-pin. It will be noticed, by the way, that Bentham's calculus amounts, at best, to no more than an addition sum and the striking of an average.

Now that the utilitarian philosophy—to give it the name John Stuart Mill adopted to replace Benthamite—has passed into history, it is not necessary to demonstrate at length the confusion of thought and the ignorance not only of psychology but even of physiology on which it is based. Now that our view of life is no longer static, like Bentham's, we have come to realize that pleasure and pain are merely the rough means with which nature has furnished us for registering a sense of well-being or warning us of something wrong. On the

pleasure side of the register is inscribed " carry on ", on the pain side " leave off ". Bentham's supreme aim is to keep the index hand pointing all day long, and under all circumstances, to " carry on ", in other words, to improve life by tampering with the register.

And this particular register, like most products of evolution which man has taken over from the animal, is at best a crude and often a misleading guide. So much have the ascetics of all ages been convinced of its inadequacy for human requirements, that they have made a lifelong practice of making the register point to " leave off " and then ignoring the message—in other words, of conquering the old Adam, or old animal, for whose requirements the register was intended. There is a form of delusion, well known to the doctors of lunatic asylums, which exactly realizes the utilitarian ideal so far as the individual is concerned. The patient, who perhaps imagines himself to be God or Charlie Chaplin, will pass his whole time in the exuberant enjoyment of the fact that though his real life may be one of sordid delusion, he has triumphantly nailed the index hand to the face of the register on the rose-pink side of the dial.

Moreover Bentham fell into a fallacy to which men of his sincere goodness of soul are peculiarly liable. He was forced to assume that when once men became quite enlightened, they would see that by promoting the greatest happiness of all they would at the same time be pursuing their own. This would be all very well if you could put it to men in the mass and rely on them to act honestly and with one single purpose for the common good. But put it to Smith or Jones, and he may reply that his own greatest happiness will be best obtained by refusing to play the game, and looking after number one first, last, and at everybody's expense. To pursue the greatest good of mankind is more often the part of the man of sorrows than the man of joy. Nor does it in the least affect either Smith or Jones that their conduct, if pursued by everybody, would spell general ruin. They are content to let other and worthier people sustain the social organism on which they batten, and who, among the utilitarians, shall convince them of sin ?

It is hardly necessary to say that neither Bentham nor any of his followers made any serious attempt to put into practice their idea of measuring against each other the amounts of happiness possessed by different individuals. Old John Donne's problem of catching a falling star and getting with child a mandrake's root would appear simple by comparison. Even supposing instruments to be obtained so delicate as to measure the exact excess or defect of nervous energy

accompanying any given situation, to enable us to measure my happiness against yours, we should have to make the monstrous assumption than an equivalence of physical reactions implies an equivalence of mental states.

It would, however, be unfair to condemn the utilitarians out of hand because their idea of a human calculus, and their formula of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, will not stand the test of criticism. They were a small, but singularly earnest and public-spirited body of men, and they used an influence, powerful out of all proportion to their numbers, in a policy of active reform, as against the blind and panic-stricken stagnation of the Anti-Jacobin tradition. They were, almost without exception, men of conspicuous talent who accomplished valuable work in their respective departments of activity.

But it is impossible to escape the consequences of building on inadequate foundations, and a terrible price had to be paid for the ignorance of psychology displayed by these hard-headed apostles of light and reason. Whatever their philosophy may have been, their practice was to make a fatal simplification of human nature, to regard men for the purposes of the legislator and economist as if they were moved by no other impulse than that of an intelligent and calculable selfishness. The soul, which to the social philosophers of the Middle Ages had been all in all, was now eliminated with a vengeance, and the new school of scientific thought had, without realizing it, set themselves the impossible task of building up a stable and progressive social organism out of units possessing no principle of cohesion whatever. This was what James Mill, a dour and humourless Scot, endeavoured to accomplish in his article on Government in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, thereby bringing upon himself a historic slating by Macaulay who, materialist though he was, had at least enough knowledge of history and the facts of life to see the absurdity of Mill's Chinese puzzle arrangements of inhuman abstractions, which never did, nor, by the grace of God, could exist.

This fatally simplified psychology had the effect of confining thought to a world of imaginary egomaniacs, and positively discouraging any checking of theory by fact. Long chains of deductive reasoning became fashionable, and it was generally assumed that the validity of reasoning about society was in direct proportion to its abstraction. It was on such a basis that the fabric of economic doctrine was erected that, from its supposed universality, acquired

the name of classical. This was intimately connected with the utilitarian philosophy, and its high priest was a Dutch Jew, called Ricardo, who had retired on a handsome fortune which he had made on the stock-exchange during the war, and who, when he died in 1823, had become one of the most respected and useful members of Parliament.

Few of the leading exponents of this school of thought were either heartless or unpractical men. Ricardo himself had probably not an enemy in the world, he subscribed to almost every charity in London, and his Parliamentary record shows him to have been one of the most shrewd and constructive of all critics of contemporary life. He himself was often well aware to what an extent his generalizations about society required qualification, though his foreign origin and unliterary training made him almost incapable of expressing his thought with either clearness or accuracy.

But most unfortunately the utilitarian influence induced not only him, but most of the rising school of economists, to aim at building up a science of universal validity and applicable to all civilized peoples. Unlike Adam Smith, who had throughout maintained a close touch with the facts of life, they endeavoured to construct a sort of economic calculus and to deal with men not in the infinite variety of history and practical experience, but in the abstract. And it was not altogether unnatural for business men to make the assumption that men could all be considered as acting on business principles, which is what the idea of the economic man really amounted to.

By a somewhat ironical nemesis, what the classical economists usually managed to do was to lay hold of some truth of quite limited and temporary application, and treat it as if it sufficed for all time. Such, for instance, is the so-called Ricardian law of rent. It had been perfectly true that during the war the inadequacy of the home land for supplying the people and the restriction of foreign supplies had caused poorer and poorer soils to be taken into cultivation, had immensely enhanced the value of those already cultivated, and allowed the landlords to grow fat out of the necessities of the community. It was also true enough, as Ricardo was never tired of pointing out, that the heavy corn duties imposed after the war by a Parliament of landowners were artificially prolonging this far from desirable state of things. So far, so good, but the classical economists, despite the fact that some of them were wise enough to qualify their theories, succeeded in creating the impression that

the rent of land was on a different footing from the profits of capital, and that while the capitalist was benefiting society as well as himself by making wealth multiply wealth, the landlord was more or less the villain of the piece, maintaining his own monopoly at everybody else's expense.

Such a view was perhaps natural for a middle-class stockbroker, but Ricardo was treading on more dangerous ground than he knew when he formulated his principle of rent against the landlords. For, as Karl Marx was to demonstrate with terrible logic, rent, in the Ricardian sense, is a form of monopoly aimed at by every capitalist. If I invest in land, I stand the chance of my rents being doubled (or falling indefinitely), in exactly the same way as, when I take up shares in a cotton mill or railway company, I want them to appreciate while I sleep, and though I may have bought in at 5 and be drawing cent per cent, the workers will not necessarily be drawing another sixpence a week out of the enterprise. In starting this idea of economic rent, Ricardo and his followers imagined they were arming the capitalist in industry against the capitalist in land; they were, in fact, providing the workers with the most formidable of all weapons against capitalists of all denominations.

The second cornerstone of the classical political economy was likewise a truth of temporary invested with a universal validity. This was the principle of population, formulated in the writings of a philanthropic clergyman called Malthus. It was undoubtedly a fact that during the first forty years or so of the nineteenth century, the people of this country bred children with such unprecedented rapidity as to swallow up the increase of the national dividend, and to keep the average wealth per head, which had increased so greatly during the last half of the eighteenth century, more or less constant. Malthus, who was more of a historian than Ricardo, jumped to the depressing conclusion that every increase of wealth tends to be nullified by an increase of population, and in consequence he was able to pour buckets of the iciest water on dreams of a humanity increasing from age to age in prosperity and enlightenment:

> "Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher
> Glares at one who nods and blinks beside a slowly dying fire."

Modern research has gone to show that the classical economists were more aware of the limitations of their theories than has commonly been supposed. But history is concerned less with their personal vindication than with the general effect that their writings produced on the no doubt prejudiced minds of their contemporaries.

And it is in this light that we must read Carlyle's characterization of political economy as the " dismal science ". Dismal it certainly was as interpreted by pushing or comfortable members of the capitalist middle class, in justification of a state of things which enabled them to profit by the stunted lives and virtual slavery of their employees. Capital was visualized as the good fairy of industry; it was the capitalist who furnished the wage fund by which the employees were kept alive, which no strike action could increase and which legislative interference could only diminish. The one thing necessary to economic salvation was to give capital as free a hand as possible. Let any measure be proposed for restraining the slow murder of women and children in factories, for enforcing some standard of decency and humanity in industrial conditions, for alleviating the condition of the aged or helpless poor, for mitigating the scandal of absentee landlordism in Ireland, in short, for improving by any human contrivance whatever the existing social order, and it was sure to start some expansively whiskered gentleman, primed with economics and respectability, to cast it out. Popular treatises of an offensive lucidity were turned out, to drive into the stupid heads of workmen the absolute, scientific impossibility of improving their conditions by interfering with the free play of capital. Only put your trust in Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, and something will eventuate that will no doubt be highly satisfactory to these gentlemen.

How far these prejudices were shared by the economists themselves, and how far they were a straining of their teaching to more or less consciously self-interested ends, it is not our province to determine. How deep-rooted they were we may realize from the fact that even so fervent a reformer as John Bright could be as stiff as any profiteer in opposing factory legislation. A cynic might be tempted to remark that the very success of the dismal science is the best proof of its assumption of universal selfishness.

But when all is said against the heartlessness, the pedantry, and the sheer wrong-headedness that either characterized or arose out of the " dismal science ", or the " pig philosophy " that lay behind it, it must be admitted that their exponents played the game with consistent fairness according to their own assumptions. For these assumptions comprehended not only the selfishness but the enlightened selfishness of individuals. If the utilitarians believed in allowing a free hand to the capitalist, they believed also in allowing a free hand to the labourer. It was one of the staunchest and most

attractive of the Benthamite group, the ex-breeches-maker, Francis Place, who was mainly instrumental in securing the repeal of Pitt's law forbidding the workmen to combine in their own interests. Bentham himself, whatever he thought about social reform, was a " whole-hogger " about political reform, and if his followers doubted whether the people would do themselves any good by interfering with capital, they may at least be said to have advocated the best remedy for whatever limitations they may have possessed, by putting the decision in this momentous matter into the hands of the people themselves through their elected representatives.

Sensibility on Canvas

No doubt the dynasts at Vienna had imagined that it would be a comparatively simple matter to put back the hands of the clock to before the French Revolution. But they had judged without vision. The tricolours and eagles, the guillotines and trees of liberty, were no doubt under the veto of armed force ; Central and Southern Europe might lie quiet for awhile under the most highly organized system of despotism that the wit of man could devise ; but for all that, not only the peoples but the very rulers had changed, and though the black fog of the Metternich system might hide its face, the clock still went on remorsely ticking out the minutes of mortal greatness.

But under the shadow of despotism hope grew sick. German philosophy ceased to produce creative humanists like Kant and heroes like Fichte, but culminated in the awful figure of Schopenhauer, who could see in the world nothing but will gone wrong, and who counselled only resignation. The despair of murdered Poland sobbed and stormed on the piano of Chopin, and the gloom that enshrouded Italy is palpable in the writings of her Leopardi. Even in France, before the awakening of 1830, the Romantic spirit voiced the impulse of reaction.

It is only when we see her by comparison with these other nations of Europe that we realize in how true a sense England, even in the time of her darkest reaction, stood for freedom. The Anti-Jacobin spirit had certainly permeated the upper class during the first two decades of the century, but never to a sufficient extent to check the natural development of the Emotional Revival. The Lake poets may have shed the somewhat callow republicanism of their youth,

but they were very far from becoming mere reactionaries. The war with Napoleon witnessed Turner at his zenith and the sunrise of Byron. It was under the shadow of Eldon, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth that that other triumvirate of Shelley, Keats, and Byron were doing imperishable work—too untimely cut short!

By the time the smoke had drifted off the shambles of Waterloo, England had travelled an immeasurable distance from the world of Chesterfield and Gibbon. The polished and urbane culture that had emanated from Versailles was now but a memory, which the Romantic imagination was one day to invest with an almost medieval glamour, strangely incongruous with its somewhat unfeeling reality. The light touch of a Horace Walpole, the massive commonsense of a Dr. Johnson, were things not to be recovered. Sensibility, as Miss Austen would have put it, had conquered sense.

And yet there would probably be few, nowadays, found to deny that the conquest, imperfect as it was, was on the whole beneficent. Life may have lost something in spaciousness, but it had certainly gained in depth, in sensitiveness, and in sympathy. For one thing, England had entered, as never before, upon the heritage of her own past. Sir Walter Scott had crowned the work of Chatterton, of Gray, and of Percy, by lifting the Middle Ages out of the contempt into which they had fallen and refashioning them in the glowing likeness of his own mind. If the chivalrous lords and ladies on the canvas were little more like the real thing than the mere barbarians visualized by Gibbon, the error was one on the right side, for a sympathetic interest is the parent of accurate inquiry. The Elizabethans and writers of the sixteenth century had, at the same time, come to their own, and the light of Charles Lamb's critical genius, the most illuminating, in spite of its fitfulness, that modern times have produced, played deliciously over them. The very language became, in consequence, richer, more flexible, more expressive of the nuances of feeling.

Then, again, nature, which the taste of Versailles would have banished from the court and disguised with an iron mask of classical convention, began to be seen and loved. This was, both in literature and painting, England's peculiar province. How lovingly such amateurs of science as Gilbert White had observed her workings, with what powerful intuition poets like Blake had entered into her soul, we have already seen. It was, however, for the painters to afford the most memorable and distinctively British revelation of her truth in beauty.

The early eighteenth century had seen English landscape painting, such as it was, following with heavy steps those masters of an artificial convention, Claude, Poussin, and Salvator Rosa. The grotesque landscape by Lambert in the National Gallery is typical of the sort of thing that men of undoubted talent could produce by painting not what they saw, but what they imagined they ought to have seen. It is, in fact, a long time before English painters can get out of the habit of looking at their own country through foreign glasses. And yet a discerning foreign critic, Rouquet, can write as early as 1755 to the effect that few masters in this art can vie with the leading English landscape painters.

Even the tragic genius of the nearly starved Robert Wilson did not succeed in shaking itself free from the Franco-Italian classical obsession, and the first of our supreme masters of English landscape, John Crome the elder, caught some of his downright truth to nature from the influence of the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, and particularly of Hobbema. It is, indeed, not surprising that the East Anglian counties of England, with their grave, Netherlandish vistas and their generous sprinkling of Dutch blood, should have inherited this tradition. The sombre gravity that inspires such a picture as Crome's of Mousehold Heath is typical of the best Dutch landscape interpretation. But the more lively and coloured imagination of the English Romantics was destined to go far beyond anything that Holland had achieved in this branch of painting, and, besides, British scenery was perhaps the most varied and opulent in the whole of Europe.

This was the discovery of another East Anglian, John Constable, who had such a passionate love for every detail of what he called his dear old England, that it sufficed him to paint her just as she was, with a robust honesty that scorned any embellishment of classic stage property or conventional arrangement. And then London gave birth to the supreme genius of Turner, another passionate lover of England, who not only visioned all nature with faultless accuracy, but who transfigured everything that he saw, and whose genius at last flamed to heaven in a superb attempt to express the inexpressible, to render the pure glory of light and colour.

It was not only upon wild nature that the Romantic imagination loved to dwell. The glamour of the past affected painting as much as literature. The pathetic ruins of the monasteries, the still inviolate Gothic cathedrals, castles whose grim and tyrannous associations were now happily forgotten, antique streets and bridges,

were found to possess more charm and dignity than the merely conventional temples and columns that Claude and Poussin loved to scatter all over their pictures. And yet when Turner did turn his brush to these glories of old Rome, as he saw them in Italy, how immeasurably did his reality surpass the mere graceful artifice of these his predecessors!

One branch of art England might claim almost for her own. This was painting in water-colours, a medium that afforded hitherto unsuspected opportunities for the rendering of the most fleeting moods and impressions. It is a fact worth remarking that English water-colour painting may claim a royal though illegitimate ancestry, for Peter, the great Tsar, begat Alexander Cozens, whose talent has only lately come into recognition, and Alexander begat John Cozens, whose delicate and dreamy interpretations of nature are among the first undoubted masterpieces in this medium, and show strong traces of Chinese influence. The earliest English water-colours are generally of a peaceful and remarkably sober tone, but here, as ever, the flaming mastery of Turner broke all bounds and anticipated the most daring flights of the ensuing century. Scarcely less remarkable is the way in which a Norfolk painter, John Cotman, found the way of impressionism long before the term was heard of —witness his almost Whistlerian "Greta Bridge"—and Richard Bonington, cut off in the flower of his youth, was yet able to light the spark which fired, in France, the outburst of the French Romantic genius in nature painting which is associated with the names of Fontainebleau and Barbizon.

It is perhaps natural that in art as well as in war England should decisively have asserted her mastery over the sea. This was, like the development of water-colour painting, her peculiar achievement. The Venetian Republic had indeed solemnized yearly her marriage with her protecting sea, but she shrank from depicting the moods and visage of that awful bridegroom. Those mighty seafarers, the Dutch, had painted the sea with the honesty with which they painted everything else they saw, but her majesty and her terror alike proved beyond the scope of their vision: their calms are too pondlike, and their storms somehow fail to gather strength.

The earliest English marine artists were men who had trained themselves, like Mr. Masefield's Dauber, on board ship or as dockyard hands, and acknowledged no other tutor than the sea. The naval wars of the eighteenth century created a lively demand for the painting of ships, and the artist often had a hard task in satisfying

hard-bitten old naval skippers who understood nothing whatever about art, but displayed a minute and aggressively exacting knowledge of nautical detail. With the ground thus prepared, the great nature painters at the end of the century took to the sea as a matter of course, and here again Turner displayed a mastery never equalled by any of his contemporaries or successors. Such was the man's passion to wrest the very heart of her secret from the sea, that he would have himself lashed to the mast of some small boat in darkness and tempest, taking it all to his soul with a lover's eagerness, remembering, reproducing, transfiguring it all. It was but fitting that Turner should have depicted the last victory and death of Nelson, for he too had taught Britannia to rule the waves.

6

THE QUINTESSENCE OF ROMANCE

With the close of the war, the Romantic movement enters upon a new phase. The three great Lake Poets had all of them been carried along the surge of national enthusiasm for the liberation of Europe from Napoleonic tyranny; even Blake had seen visions of Pitt riding Behemoth and Nelson bridling Leviathan, heroic and awful figures; Sir Walter Scott had been an out and out Tory, a British as well as a Scottish patriot, while his compatriot Campbell, though a Liberal, had evinced a martial enthusiasm not less ardent. The cause of democratic liberty had naturally suffered an eclipse from its association with the national enemy, and the spectacle of Jacobinism degenerating into tyranny had revolted even those who had started with the keenest revolutionary sympathies.

A nation is seldom capable of being strongly moved by two enthusiasms at once, and when we were fighting—sometimes alone—against half a continent, it was apt to be forgotten that, whether we won or lost, multitudes of Englishmen were in a state of misery that no defeat could worsen, and that the reaction born of martial necessity was putting in peril those very liberties for which we professed to be fighting.

There were never wanting, even during that darkest hour, men with some inkling of the truth that it profits a nation little enough to conquer a Napoleon if she thereby loses her own soul. The Whig rump, after the secession of 1794, contained many politicians who, whether from statesmanlike or factious motives, gave liberty and reform at home the precedence of conquest abroad; and beyond

the Whigs, though but exiguously represented in the House, stood those somewhat heterogeneous representatives of democracy who took the name of Radicals, which is but the Latinized revival of "Root and Branch Men", as the more intransigent Ironsides had been called.

So far as these new Root and Branch men had a philosophy it was that formulated by Bentham and subsequently expounded in *The Westminster Review*, but Radicalism in England was more of a tendency than a consistent doctrine and, in fact, so far a product of the Emotional Revival as to be weakest on the intellectual side. Even among the most extreme democrats, it is rather the exception than the rule to find the least inkling of the scope or complexity of the problem created by the Industrial Revolution. A deliberate adaptation of society to its man-created environment, a constructive effort of unprecedented magnitude, and based on the exact study of human nature, was the last thing that most of them visualized.

What they could see was that the political system of their own country had got hopelessly out of date, that Parliament was no longer representative of the people but of a small class of rich and interested men. They wanted to get back to the Leveller's principle that no man born in England ought to be exempted from the choice of those who are to make the laws for him. So greatly had the corruption of our electoral system begun to stink in the nostrils of thinking men—at a time when seats in Parliament were openly advertised for sale in the newspapers—that the Reform of Parliament began to be regarded as something not far short of a panacea for all social evils. Dear, old, simple-minded Major Cartwright had already dotted the face of England with Hampden Clubs for the purpose of achieving universal suffrage.

We may not linger long over the personalities and views of this not uninteresting body of men. There was the slim and rather dandified Sir Francis Burdett, an immensely rich man with those ineffably gracious manners with which aristocrats who dabble in democracy are wont to overwhelm their proletarian comrades. Reform was his aim, a genteel self-advertisement his method, and at the end of his days he was safely gathered into the Tory fold. This rather euphemistically nicknamed "England's Glory" achieved the triumph of his life in 1810, by taking such a rise out of Parliament by an article on the liberty of the press that they committed him to the Tower. Burdett, who shut himself up with much ostentation in his house, attracted a delighted mob by announcing his intention

to resist, and when the soldiers broke in he hurriedly got hold of his little boy and commenced an impromptu lesson in the Latin original of the Magna Charta. When, at the end of the Session, he ceased to enjoy His Majesty's hospitality, that honest breeches maker (though assuredly not for such as Burdett) Francis Place, organized an immense procession to celebrate the hero's release. This was altogether too much for the sorely tried nerves of Francis, Bart., who got it into his head that Francis, breeches maker, was a government spy and fairly bolted from his admirers, with the result that the procession had to parade London heroless. No wonder that Place cut him afterwards for a coward and a poltroon!

The most fascinating of all these Romantic democrats was Admiral Cochrane, afterwards Earl of Dundonald. His very career was one continuous romance, a series of feats as incredible as those of Jack the Giant Killer. Where he was given the opportunity, which was never on a scale commensurate with his abilities, his brilliance puts even that of Nelson into the shade. But his character was tinged with that fatal instability from which so few of the Romantics seemed able to escape. The constant opponent of corruption in the navy, he was not by any means above profiting by the very abuses he denounced, and he was sentenced in 1814 to a fine, the pillory, and a year's imprisonment on a not wholly unplausible charge of sharp practice in the stock market. Thus lost—most unfortunately—to the British Navy, this singular champion of political purity became the knight errant for any people that might be struggling to be free. He did this as a matter of democratic principle, for he refused to be made an admiral in the service of Spain, and joined insurgent Chile on the ground, as he proudly stated to the Spanish Viceroy at Lima, that "a British nobleman has the right to assist any country that is endeavouring to re-establish the rights of aggrieved humanity." It is probably owing to his efforts—rewarded though they were with base ingratitude—that Chile achieved her independence.

This particular phase of the Romantic movement is especially *en evidence* in connection with the Greek struggle for independence against the Turks, a cause that united the sympathies of Liberals all over Europe. In England the most prominent of the political Radicals were members of a pro-Greek committee, and the indefatigable Cochrane, after an interlude in the Brazilian service, went to command the Greek fleet and soon found that even genius is incapable of snatching victory for pirates and cowards. The

glamour of Greece exercised an extraordinary fascination over the minds of Englishmen reared in the classics. Gallant gentlemen were proud to fight beneath her standards, and English officers were found side by side with old and honoured enemies of the Peninsular War. One ultra Romantic nobleman, Lord Frederick North, brought himself into some notoriety by going about Greece in the costume and under the name of Plato! Lord Byron, had he lived, might not improbably have become the Agamemnon of an independent Greece.

Of all the Romantic democrats—and their name is legion—none is a more authentic product of the movement, nor exercised a greater influence, than William Cobbett, perhaps the most English Englishman that ever lived, sprung from peasant stock, a self-made man, with all a self-made man's aggressive self-confidence and egotism. To work one's way to fame and affluence from a smock frock and a private's uniform argues an uncommon force of will, and in Cobbett the will dominated every other faculty; if he once determined on championing a cause he would do so with an energy that blinded him to everything except what he wanted to see, and even warped his naturally upright character—for he was capable of a thumping lie when in a corner, of gross libel when up against a personal enemy, and of bilking an inconvenient debt to a rich friend like Sir Francis Burdett. He was like a bull charging at first one and then another of a pack of dogs, and his style is a series of explosions.

These defects of temper and delicacy were compensated for by another product of Cobbett's upbringing, a direct vision of life itself, undimmed by the coloured glass of a merely conventional orthodoxy. He did not, like the political economists, move about in a world of abstract egotists, nor, like the more reactionary Tories, in a land of roast beef and plum pudding, of a free constitution and a jolly peasantry, but he, almost alone of his contemporaries, had the innocence to see his beloved old England exactly as she was—and what he saw appalled him, roused him to Berserk fury against anyone who could possibly be held responsible for creating the Hell she was as compared with the Paradise she had been.

For Cobbett, with all his singleness of eye, could not escape the spirit of his time—he was a thorough-paced Romantic with a historical outlook to match. That staunch Tory, Sir Walter Scott, had indeed cast the glamour of romance over the Middle Ages, and had conjured up a world of chivalrous gentlemen and enchanting

ladies. Cobbett cared little enough for the amenities—such as they were—of hall and bower, but he discovered something of more interest to the class from which he was drawn: an England in which poor men ate meat regularly and wore gloves, in which a day's toil produced two or three times as much food and clothing as in his own time, in which the country was dotted thickly with monasteries providing in a spirit of Christian hospitality, so different from the cruel mercies of a modern poor law, for the wants of the indigent. Cobbett—remarkably enough for such an obstinate John Bull—drew a rose-coloured picture of the medieval Church, which a more accurate knowledge of the ecclesiastics and monks of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries would have prevented, but he had the historical insight to perceive the essential democracy that pervaded the medieval social organism, and the decisive importance of the Reformation period in starting the new order of things which had culminated in such dire misery as that of his own England.

Cobbett was too much of a fighter to be a constructive statesman, despite the surprising flashes of intuition that he constantly displayed. He was almost incapable of thinking calmly, men were to him either angels or devils. The existing social system was corrupt and damnable, the Industrial Revolution an unmitigated calamity, the great towns were "wens", of which London was the most bloated and poisonous, modern finance a swindle, national debts and a paper currency being its worst features. The whole governing class, being in corrupt conspiracy against the people, was lumped together under the comprehensive title of the "Thing". Cobbett, who realized as well as any man living where the shoe pinched, who had marked, during his own lifetime, the poor slipping from depth to depth of misery, who had seen British soldiers robbed by their officers, who had suffered glorious imprisonment for denouncing their torture by hired Germans, who had probed more jobs than any man living, who had ridden from end to end of the country recording everywhere the signs of tyranny and desolation, this Ajax, in perpetual heroic defiance of

> "the old gods, the austere,
> Oppressors in their strength,"

laid about him without mercy or discrimination on the principle of "do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?" Thwack! would fall the cudgel on the saintly head of a Wilberforce, the hard head of a Malthus, the respected top hat of a Peel, and now the friend of the people would be dancing with ghoulish glee over the freshly

closed grave of a Castlereagh. But this remorseless hater was even more of a lover; he loved every acre of English soil with true Romantic ardour, and he loved with all his great heart, with all his terrific strength, that English people whose sorrows he understood so well, being bone of their bone and soul of their soul.

If he could not lead them into the promised land, he could at least arouse them, as nobody else could, to defy the lords of their bondage. Fashioning to himself a prose style of matchless simplicity and directness, he became the greatest of all popular journalists. Week by week in his *Political Register*, he turned out straight, hard-hitting stuff that went to the hearts of peasant and artisan, inspired them with a hope and an indignation equally divine, and made them feel that things had once been merry for the English poor, and that, by God, they should be merry yet, despite the whole army of ministers, judges, pensioners, squires, financiers, clergy, spies, and magistrates who were the authors and maintainers of England's shame.

It may seem a far cry from the burliest to the most ethereal of Englishmen, one who was, after all, a fellow Romantic and of good Home County stock—Percy Bysshe Shelley. Shelley had certainly arrived at his point of view by a very different road from that of the rough man of action and essentially conservative patriot. He was the linear heir of the French eighteenth century Enlightenment in its most advanced phase; he had sat at the feet of his father-in-law Godwin, who had derived his philosophy largely from Condorcet, that ill-fated Girondin apostle of human perfectability. Curiously enough, for so emotional a being, Shelley had imbibed from this teaching a limitless faith in reason—once allow that full scope, and original virtue, or rightness of thought, would lead inevitably to the golden age. Unfortunately, it seemed that an age-long conspiracy of tyrants and priests, who had somehow escaped original virtue altogether, had kept the human mind, and consequently the human race, in fetters.

What was, to the French thinkers and to exact-minded Godwin the quintessence of pure reason, came to Shelley as an intense emotional liberation. He was a shy, solitary boy; a stricken deer fleeing from the herd of schoolboy companions and feeding his mind partly on the tales of mystery and romance that were so much in vogue just then, and partly upon the wonders of experimental science. "Sudden," he cries, to the Spirit of Intellectual Beauty,

> " thy shadow fell on me ;
> I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstacy !
> I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
> To thee and thine ; have I not kept the vow ! "

Henceforth there were for Shelley two worlds, that which he saw and found almost wholly evil, and that which he visioned as the Kingdom to come after the overthrow of tyranny and the liberation of the human mind. This latter world his spirit invested with such perfection as had seldom, if ever before been clothed with words. There all would be love, joy, freedom, there woman would attain to her rightful equality in godhead with man, there the very animals would be drawn into the brotherhood of universal benevolence.

But between the world of bitter reality and that of inspired imagination, between what was and what might be, was an unbridgeable gulf fixed. A Hell ruled by devils is by no means to be conjured into Heaven, and Shelley was almost incapable of seeing anything or anybody not wholly good or wholly bad. The very witchery of his verse resides in the fact that he flees from reality into a dream world of his own creation, he cannot dwell, like Wordsworth, in communion with Nature. He must needs transfigure her, he is more at home in the clouds and luminous mists than on earth, and to his eyes the glory of the skylark is in the feeling that

> " Bird thou never wert."

Shelley's ethereal sensitiveness brought him to a view of society not substantially different from that to which Cobbett's thick-skinned pugnacity had brought him. To both of them the condition of the people was one of unspeakable misery, nor could Cobbett have asked for a better summary of his message than :

> " Nay, in countries that are free,
> Such starvation cannot be
> As in England now we see."

The spectacle of oppression, of cruelty, and of brutal stupidity that made Cobbett roar, made Shelley shriek with indignation, and his scarification of everyone in authority, the Royal Family, the King's ministers, the Tory reviewers, is not surpassed by anything in the *Political Register*. What Cobbett calls the Thing, Shelley symbolizes as the Zeus who binds the friend of man, Prometheus, to his rock amid the frozen Caucasus.

Here the resemblance ends. Cobbett, if he had no very practical constructive programme, was at least an invincible fighter ; the best counsel that Shelley could give to a Peterloo mob, assailed by the myrmidons of the three arch-fiends, Castlereagh, Sidmouth, and

Eldon, was to allow themselves " with folded arms and steadfast eyes " to be hacked to pieces, after which the soldiers would be overcome with shame and the people—such of them as survived—would, in unvanquishable number, shake off their chains like dew. To ascend to the realm of imaginative symbolism, the good Prometheus has no power of himself to help himself, the most he can do is to endure until a shadowy and unimaginable Power, called Demogorgon, is introduced for the sole purpose of overthrowing Zeus at the height of his malign omnipotence and disappearing with him, after which Prometheus is unbound and the perfectly evil world becomes in the twinkling of an eye perfectly good. In this and still more in the final drama, *Hellas*, it is evident that Shelley is beginning to doubt the possibility of his ideal kingdom ever coming, save as a figment of the mind.

Less delicate and spiritual, but a force of immeasurably greater potency, was Shelley's friend and fellow poet, Lord Byron. Through him, for the first time, the influence of the English Emotional Revival becomes European. His view of society, though tinged by a certain aristocratic scorn that made him, in a squib to his friend Hobhouse, refer to the " peoples' men " as—

> " Yourself and Burdett, gentlemen,
> And blackguard Hunt and Cobby [1] O ! "

was substantially the same as that of the last-named " blackguard ", than whom his lordship, alone among Britons, wielded a more formidable fighting pen. Never were the woes of the industrial labourer expressed with a more persuasive indignation than in his maiden speech in the House of Lords, pleading for mercy on the stocking frame breakers. But the scope of Byron's vision was wider than that of Cobbett; Byron early found cause to shake the dust of England off his feet, and become the champion of a Continent groaning under the slavery of the Holy Three and the Metternich system. The young British nobleman, whose romantic personality made him the cynosure of all eyes and the darling of all women, dared and could thunder forth, in tones that reverberated through Europe, what nobody else, on peril of life and liberty, dared to hint or whisper. And when the oppressed peoples heard, their hearts glowed with a hope that tyranny had almost quenched, and their blood warmed to the music of

> " Still, freedom, still, thy banner, torn and flying,
> Streams like a thunder cloud *against* the wind ! "

[1] Cobbett.

And yet Byron, champion of Europe, like Cobbett, champion of England, remained a force and a force alone, though of earthquake strength, after whose shaking the edifice of tyranny never quite recovered its former cohesion. He had no constructive philosophy nor any more definite programme than that of warring against tyrants and sycophants wherever he might find them. He had no illusions even about the Hellas for which he gave his life. At the age of thirty-six he had come to desire nothing better than to choose his ground and take his rest. Indeed, we may attribute its despairing melancholy, its wish to cease upon the midnight, its sense that

> "The world is weary of the past,
> Oh might it die and rest at last!"

to this besetting weakness of the Romantic mind, that it was seldom capable of working out its philosophy to a conclusion, that its richness in emotion was not reinforced by a corresponding strength of thought, and that though it could feel how grievously the time was out of joint, it was yet despairingly conscious of its impotence to see steadily or comprehensively enough to point a remedy.

Of the great trio whose names will always be associated together, not Shelley nor Byron, but the young man of the people, John Keats, came nearest to finding a solution. He was closer to the earth than Shelley, and, despite his disadvantages of education, possessed a mind naturally more balanced and philosophic than that of Byron. He was, like the other two, an ardent Liberal, though he allowed fewer evidences of it to be seen in his works. But towards the end of his all too brief career he showed that he was capable of rising to a standpoint to which neither of the others showed signs of attaining. It was in his unfinished drama *Hyperion*, where the overthrown Titans are debating—after the precedent of Milton's devils—how to restore their former state, that the aged Oceanus counsels them to take comfort in the contemplation of a progress through strife towards a perfection in which the vanquished participate as truly as the victors, and of which the primal law is that

> "First in beauty should be first in might."

Keats, if he had lived, might have developed this germ into a philosophy of life more comprehensive than any which that dawning century was to produce, not a hopeless strife between an Ormuz of dream and an Ahriman of actuality, but a creative evolution in which even a Castlereagh might be working, in his own way, to the same end as a Shelley.

The New Toryism

The democratic Radicals, then, whether scientific or Romantic, cannot be said to have offered any acceptable solution of the problem created by the Industrial Revolution. They were able to lay their fingers on much that was wrong and they did at least keep alive a divine discontent with things as they were. But their historical sense was unformed and their psychology superficial; they were more powerful to destroy than to create. None of them, from Bentham in his study to Shelley among his clouds, was capable of visualizing a complete readjustment of the social organism to its new, self-created environment.

The elder generation of Romantics, with their more serene outlook though waning inspiration, were in some ways more fitted to the task of practical reconstruction. It is a mistake to imagine that the Lake Poets cast away their popular sympathies with their red caps of Jacobinism. They were Tories, it is true, but all Tories were not blind reactionaries, and very shortly after the war it became evident that the heirs of the old Royalist and High Church tradition numbered a progressive wing among their own ranks, before which the mere obstruction of men like Eldon was bound to give way. Speaking very roughly, and in full consciousness of the many qualifications to which the statement is liable, we may say that after the first quarter of the nineteenth century the Tory Conservatives tended to become the party of a cautious social reform, and the Whig Liberals of an equally cautious political reform. Universal suffrage was the first plank in the Radical programme, but where social reform was concerned they were often positive reactionaries. On the other hand, the new type of Tory, as represented particularly by Peel, was inclined to distrust any alteration of the franchise, but had more liberal notions about bettering the condition of the people.

It was to Toryism, thus conceived, that the Lake Poets devoted the enthusiasm that had once burned for the overthrow of kings and the defeat of British arms. Even Southey, with his incurably second-rate mind and that peculiar smugness that made him the easy target of such critics as Byron and Macaulay, had ideas that placed him in the van of social reformers. He was a keen sympathizer with Robert Owen's schemes for co-operative social betterment; he looked to a continuous improvement in working class conditions by means of universal education, humanization of the law, diffusion

of cheap literature, Savings Banks, sanitation, an efficient police and machinery of local government, as well as the development of our colonies for purposes of emigration. Wordsworth was a no less ardent reformer upon similar lines, and was a believer in universal education. Nor was the championship of such benevolent ideas in the Tory ranks the monopoly of the poets. Two of the doughtiest champions of humane principles against middle-class economics were Richard Oastler, the " factory king ", as he was called on account of his efforts to bring the law to the protection of the workmen, and Michael Sadler, who ruined his health in unmasking the grim reality of factory conditions, and waged doughty war against the economists, whom he characterized in his haste as the pests of society and persecutors of the poor. All these reformers were deeply religious, not to say prejudiced Churchmen, and must needs treat of man not only as an economic but as a moral being.

Such threads of thought were gathered into a profound and original political philosophy by Coleridge, in the most complete of his usually rambling and diffuse treatises, an essay *On the Constitution of Church and State*. The significance of Coleridge as a philosopher consists largely in the fact that he, more than any other man before Carlyle, was responsible for bringing the German spirit and influence to bear on the English mind. His acquaintance with German thought does not seem to have been extensive according to our modern standards, but he had made some study of Kant and come under the spell of Goethe. What he, like others who drank from the same spring, seems to have acquired, was less any definite system of philosophy than—what was more valuable—a habit of mind at once profound and critical, a determination to rest satisfied with nothing short of ultimate reality.

Thus Coleridge was by no means satisfied with the comparatively plain-sailing piety and benevolence that satisfied other Tories of an advanced school. He was resolved, in the spirit of Saint Thomas Aquinas, whose *magnum opus* he had performed the Herculean task of reading through, to get down to the ultimate purpose of institutions, their idea, to use the Platonic expression. In this sense, the idea of the Nation [1] is its Constitution. Coleridge is a constitutionalist, but in a sense that might have made Lord Eldon's hair stand on end. For he sees in the Constitution no petrified perfection, but something living, dynamic, whose very permanence is progressive.

[1] The word Coleridge here uses is " State ", in that larger sense in which it includes the Church, but as he afterwards uses it in the narrower and ordinary sense, I have substituted " Nation ".

The English Constitution, according to Coleridge, results from the harmonious opposition of the State, whose object is to secure wealth and personal freedom, and the Church, which looks to the moral cultivation of the people. About the State his views are too cautious and conservative to possess much interest. It is only when he comes to the Church that he begins to break fruitful ground.

What he means by the Church is something that existed long before Christianity and might still exist independently of it. It is the nation organized and acting as a moral personality, just as the State is an association of individuals for the safeguarding of their individual interests. Accordingly Coleridge would have the whole property of the nation divided—presumably in fairly equal proportions—into the Propriety, as he calls it, or individual property, and the Nationalty, or property of the whole community. The Nationalty, which was formerly mainly in the hands of the Church, cannot be alienated without foul wrong to the nation, and in the fact that it was so alienated at the Reformation as to upset the rightful proportion of Nationalty to Propriety, Coleridge sees the prime cause of our social maladies.

Coleridge himself would have his Nationalty still administered by the Church of Christ, presided over by the Sovereign, though he admits that this is a matter, not of constitutional necessity, but of the highest expediency. His conception of the Church's function, however, is capable of the most elastic interpretation. Theology forms only part of its objects, though theology to Coleridge, as subsequently to Newman, constitutes the crown and highest synthesis of human knowledge. The objects of his Church would be almost exactly defined in Burke's ideal of a partnership in all art, in all science, in every virtue, and in all perfection. Its personnel, the Clerks or Clergy of the nation, formerly comprised "the learned of all denominations, the professors of all those arts and sciences, the possession and application of which constitute the civilization of a country." They were responsible for national education, for the humanities and for the provision of every parish with "a resident guide, guardian and teacher, diffusing through the whole community the knowledge indispensable for the understanding of its rights, and for the performance of the correspondent duties." [1]

No doubt this is an idealized version of the past, for Coleridge, the philosopher, had not ceased to be the Romantic of the poems, and, like Cobbett, regarded the Middle Age as the Golden Age of

[1] From a summary by his nephew, H. N. Coleridge.

England. What the imaginary social contract had been to the eighteenth century, a more or less imaginary Middle Age was to the nineteenth. But this does not affect the value of his teaching, not as history, but as a practical social philosophy. For he, almost alone, indicates an acceptable *via media* between two extremes of thought, of which one, dominant in Coleridge's own day, concentrated on the State alone in the narrowest sense, restricting its functions to the safeguarding of individual rights and property, and the other would have made of the State a secular Church, overriding all individual rights whatever—the quintessence of socialism. Coleridge looks for salvation not in the triumph of either, but in the harmony—implicit in the British Constitution—of both ideals.

8

The Birth of Socialism

Whatever the economists might claim to have demonstrated about the need for giving capital a free hand, there was no escaping from the fact that whereas, under the existing social order, wealth was being multiplied beyond the wildest dreams of a century back, the whole benefits of this revolution were absorbed by a minority of the population, while the majority were sinking from depth to depth of misery. And this majority comprised those very labourers who—on the authority of Adam Smith himself—produced the whole of the wealth. Nor was the contrast a matter of mere guesswork or intuition. In 1814, the year of Napoleon's overthrow, a certain Patrick Colquhoun, a metropolitan police magistrate, published a statistical estimate of the resources of the British Empire, in which the inequality of the distribution of wealth was revealed, with at least an honest attempt at accuracy, in the dry light of statistics. Here it was stated that whereas some 400,000 of the well-connected and well-to-do were drawing family incomes of from two to four hundred pounds per annum, the labourers in the fields and factories had to keep body and soul together on a beggarly eleven.

Here, then, was the plain meaning of the state of things analysed and favoured by the economists; the landlord growing fat on his rents, the capitalist pocketing everything else above the eleven pounds or so per annum necessary to keep each human machine grinding him wealth for anything over twelve hours in the twenty-four, and the man who turned the soil or tended the loom kept down by an iron law to a natural or unnatural rate of wages which might,

according to a very liberal interpretation of Ricardo, rise, in course of time—perhaps even to an average twelve pounds per annum!

To kick against these pricks might be—and, the whole school of middle class economists would assure you in one voice of ponderous indignation, *was*—quite fallacious and unscientific, but one might at first be inclined to wonder how the poor, once confronted with such arguments as Colquhoun's statistics and their own bitter experience could provide, did not rise, as Shelley—who was after all of squire stock and might be presumed to feel the pinch of the shoe less keenly—counselled them to rise.

> "Like Lions after slumber
> In unvanquishable number—
> Shake your chains to earth like dew
> Which in sleep had fallen on you—
> Ye are many—they are few."

To expect this would, however, be to argue a lamentable ignorance of human, and particularly of English nature. The chain of habit is harder to break than that of economic slavery, and when men are so crushed to the earth and kept in such a state of degrading ignorance as the labouring class of the early nineteenth century, they are seldom able to combine or think for themselves as a class. It was enough for each individual or family to keep alive from day to day even if it were—as so often it was in the industrial districts—by passing their own children through the hands of the capitalist Moloch. Some crude and immediate sensual enjoyment, the oblivion of drunkenness, the excitement bought by some fellow-creature's agony, offered a more alluring prospect than the triumph of liberty or social justice. Besides, many of the men, particularly in the country districts, were genuinely religious; they believed in a vague sort of way that God was responsible for all this and would even up the odds hereafter, and they were often ready to fly at the throat of any would-be deliverer if, like Robert Owen, his orthodoxy was open to suspicion, just as they had burnt Priestley's library because he was not sufficiently patriotic. Holyoake, the veteran agitator, told the story of some Johnny Raw whom he had himself, in his youth, seen condemned to the savage sentence of transportation for life to Norfolk Island. The poor fellow had merely touched his forehead to the old gentleman in the wig, and answered with pathetic respectfulness, "Thank you, sir."

Thus we are able to account for what may at first blush seem an amazing phenomenon. In the time of the greatest misery the English poor have ever gone through, in an age fermenting with new ideas

of all sorts, those often able and eloquent men, who arraigned the whole order of society and tried to point to something better, had seldom any effective influence, and were hard put to it to obtain a hearing. Many of them have been dragged from oblivion by the labours of a foreign scholar, Mr. Beer, whose *History of British Socialism* is one of the classics of modern research. But on turning his pages one cannot help asking, " who, nowadays, has ever heard of John Gray and John Francis Bray, of Ravenstone and Thompson and Edmonds and Minter Morgan ? How many are there to whom even the great Robert Owen is much more than a name ? "

It is therefore only necessary to indicate the general lines upon which most of these forgotten or neglected pioneers were working for the regeneration of society. One vital principle was common to all of them, to a greater or less degree. Wealth, they held, was the creation of labour and therefore the workers were justly entitled to the whole of what they produced. Capital itself was the product of labour, and the capitalist, as such, a parasite who diverted to his own benefit what he had not toiled to produce. Once ensure the equitable apportionment of wealth among its producers and there would be enough—and more than enough—for everybody.

Thomas Hodgskin, a retired naval officer, who on taking up the profession of journalism had by no means shed his pugnacity, counselled workers of all grades, from managers to scavengers, to fight, and go on fighting, till they had eliminated the enemy who sat still and drew dividends. This done, Hodgskin would have trusted to free competition—free for the first time after the elimination of the capitalist—among the workers themselves for the distribution of whatever wealth they might produce.

Hodgskin's candle did not burn very conspicuously, and flickered out altogether in the early thirties. Quite opposite to the spirit of this breezy apostle of class warfare is that of a few typically Romantic idealists, who dreamed of an order of things based on the last and greatest commandment, " love one another." Shelley was too much the kinsman of the dawn-mist and skylark ever to condescend to anything like a practicable policy. More definite had been the scheme of Spence, a shoemaker from Newcastle, a simple and amiable soul who had flourished, or rather languished in jail, under Mr. Pitt's Anti-Jacobin regime, and had dedicated to Citizen Stanhope a broadside modestly entitled *Something to the purpose, a receipt to make a Millennium*, the receipt in question being that every parish should pool its land among its members, raise all taxes on it, and live in

bliss and brotherly love ever afterwards. After Spence's death, which occurred in 1841, a handful of devoted followers continued to propagate his views under the name of Spencean philanthropists, but the idea died a natural death.

"A receipt to make a Millennium!" Never, some tender hearted souls must have deemed, was such a receipt more urgently needed than now, when an egotist and competitive civilization had succeeded in creating the exact reverse! Was it necessary always to fight greed and violence with violence? Might there not after all be sense and righteousness in the slogan of the old Puritan "Diggers":—

"To conquer them by love, stand in now, stand in now!"

Such at least was the spirit of another unconventional economist, William Thompson, of Cork, who looked for the coming of a free co-operative commonwealth, with all wealth equally distributed and every man a capitalist labourer. But he would not hear of force being employed, not if nine-tenths of the community were for his scheme and only one-tenth against it, partly because if force were once used by a majority it would be used again, and partly because "The unconvinced possessors of the real wealth would suffer more than the majority would gain, the sense of injustice neutralizing the pleasures of the majority, and increasing the pain of the privations of the oppressed."

But the gentle Thompson slipped into oblivion as easily as the combative Hodgskin. Men were more easily excited by the idea of reforming the franchise than by that of improving their own condition. But the genius of Robert Owen did at least succeed in making some impression on the imagination of his countrymen; partly because he was one of those men whose sheer energy and concentration of purpose can by no means be ignored, and partly, no doubt, because he not only theorized but most conspicuously put his theories into practice. At a time when tough-gutted employers were whining and protesting against the least attempt to restrain their licence in tyranny, Owen, in his mills at New Lanark, was demonstrating how humane and Christian principles could inspire the management, how a population that had been the terror of the district could be made happy and prosperous, and how, without the employees being sweated in any way, the mills could be made to pay handsomely.

Never was a life more wholly and unselfishly devoted to the good of mankind than this of Robert Owen, who might have been called the Saint Francis of the nineteenth century, but for one besetting weakness, his lack of humility and consequent lack of humour, which

made him the slave of any fixed idea to which he had once taken a fancy, and must often have made it difficult for his hearers to decide whether to acclaim him as a saviour of society or to flee from him as a bore. He was as completely innocent of guile as Fra Angelico; he loved all mankind and all men, and he could never find it in his heart to believe that anybody he came across was not as good as himself. What manner of man, or big, lovable child he was, is apparent from his haste, on seeing an amorous couple committing what was then the awful offence of trespassing on their employer's private domain, to hide himself in order not to disturb their courtship. A belief in the original goodness of human nature was at the root of his philosophy.

In this he was a true child of the French Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. He had the intuition to see that social philosophy must be based on psychology, and his own psychology follows that of Helvetius in making character almost entirely the result of environment. This, at any rate, is what it amounted to in practice, though in theory he did not altogether ignore the influence of heredity. He denied the existence of any form of free will, and he would never hear of his children being either rewarded or blamed, for fear of creating an impression that they were in some way responsible for their actions. Of course this was not what Owen, in his heart of hearts, really believed, nor what any determinist has at any time believed—what it amounted to was a subconscious conviction that the general mass of human beings were as clay for the free and benevolent potter, Robert Owen, to mould to his will.

As men are, so are communities, Owen's fundamental belief being expressed in his own emphatic words, " any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of the proper means."

In consequence Owen, in the true spirit of eighteenth century rationalism, was inclined to put his whole faith in the will of the legislator, of the benevolent despot. Lover of the people though he was, there was never a man who was at heart less of a democrat. This, as well as his lovable disposition, was no doubt the reason that Royalties and statesmen of the most conservative tendencies were inclined to look with so sympathetic an eye upon his schemes; the Duke of Kent, Queen Victoria's father, was his friend [1] and almost

[1] Not to speak of his debtor in this world, and his ghostly counsellor, *post mortem*.

his disciple; the Grand Duke, who was to be distinguished, even among the Romanoffs, as the Iron Tsar, paid an interested visit to his factory; and such was the innocence of Owen's heart that he aspired to make a proselyte of Metternich himself, who received him civilly enough. The Owen and the Metternich systems had this in common, that the people were to have their salvation thrust upon them from above.

But when we make all allowances for Owen's many limitations, we must confess that he, nearer than any man of this time, approached to a comprehensive solution of the problem created by the Industrial Revolution. Realizing, as he did, that civilization had got out of joint owing to the man-made change of man's environment, he prescribed as the remedy a corresponding change in man himself, individually and in the mass. Nothing would suffice but a regenerated man, and a new order of society. It followed that the most sacred beliefs, the most time-honoured institutions, must be brought to the reconstruction factory and, if necessary, scrapped.

Despite his touching faith in the goodness and reasonableness of his fellow men, Owen was aware that in stirring the deep and stagnant waters of accepted convention, he was inviting the fate of all saviours. But he was one of those men who do not know the meaning of compromise. Deliberately, in 1817, at the height of his fame and popularity, he proclaimed that no improvement of society was possible so long as men were divided from each other by competing dogmas; that any religion that denied the fullest freedom of thought and fell short of loving one's neighbour as oneself, of whatever creed he might be, was a curse to mankind. Some clergymen in his audience, who evidently thought that the cap fitted, hissed so damnable a proclamation of heresy, and henceforth Owen found himself, even among the poor men he sought to help, an object of suspicion. Madame Tussaud, instructed by her Jesuit confessor, refused to degrade her company of waxworks, which included the foullest murderers, by association with a philanthropist so tainted with infidelity. And in 1834 that elderly cynic Lord Melbourne, who probably believed in neither God nor Devil, objected to Owen's very presence as one of a deputation to the Home Office.

Scarcely less bold, in its way, was Owen's attempt to purge our financial system by abolishing all existing monetary standards, and frankly recognizing labour as the basis of values. In his model communities, and in the world as he wished to see it, the only medium of exchange would be a currency of paper notes representing so many

hours' labour, which could be exchanged at the stores for so many goods. To adopt this system would be to strike more effectively at the roots of capitalism than even the Bolsheviks have dared or thought of, for it would be the formal recognition of labour as the sole basis of value, and of the equal dignity of all forms of labour. "So long have you worked," says each note, "so much are you entitled to enjoy the fruits of labour." Owen himself, however, was to find that even in model communities a door was opened to swindling by the drawing of notes for labour that had either been scamped or never done at all. But then, even to his dying day, Owen could never realize that anybody was not as guileless and single-hearted as himself.

The benevolent despotism that he exercised over his mills at New Lanark was the one completely successful experiment that Owen undertook. His connection with this, which had achieved a European celebrity, he finally resigned in 1828. But long before this his restless genius had conceived of projects more daring. He proposed to get rid of unemployment and pauperism by the erection of model communities, each organized as a self-governing and co-operative unit, working in common, sharing the results of its labour on communistic principles, and sending its own representative to a central assembly—a community that harked back to the monastery as much as it looked forward to the soviet.

In these communities men and women were to live together in harmony and mutual affection. They were to be lozenge-shaped quadrangles of buildings, with the Church and school occupying the centre, very like monasteries in appearance. Like in spirit, too, for Owen added to his heresies by eliminating as far as possible that stumbling block in the way of all communistic schemes, the family. The idea of tying men and women together when their temperaments—which were formed for and not by them—made the bond a misery, was abhorrent to Owen. Besides, the building up of character was an operation of too much importance and delicacy to be left to parental caprice; from the earliest possible age, children were to be taken in charge by the community and brought up as its members.

When society is ordered on these principles and every member pulling his weight in the boat, the resources that mechanical power has placed at the disposal of mankind will, for the first time, become available for the purpose of making life sane and beautiful. Owen does not think that men will be required to do actual productive work

after the age of twenty-five, though to produce wealth will be as enjoyable as to consume it. Owen, in fact, visualizes a progression for his citizens of a new age not dissimilar from that prescribed for the Brahman by the ancient code of Manu. From 25 to 30 they will devote all but two hours of the day to study and social intercourse, from 30 to 40 they will govern the community, from 40 to 60 they will busy themselves with its foreign relations, and in travelling about in a beautiful and well-ordered world, in assurance of welcome and hospitality wherever they go.

Owen had never the least idea of forcing this scheme on the world by anything but persuasion and example. He believed, with that faith in reason so characteristic of his time, that men must love the highest when it has proved its claim so to be. Never did he lend himself to the promotion of class hatred. He devoted his own resources, with a recklessness that brought him to the verge of ruin, to setting up model communities which should prove an example and inspiration to a world gone wrong. One of these he founded in America, another, the first Communist experiment in England, in that same Motherwell, Lanark, which, almost a century later, sent the first Communist member to a British Parliament. Both communities, and others which were subsequently started, proved failures.

Owen's ideas were too revolutionary and his temperament too guileless and uncritical to give him much chance of tangible success during the remainder of his long life. He was constantly busied with schemes for the betterment of mankind, now with a universal Trades Union, now with an Equitable Labour Exchange, and at last, in the evening of his days, with an endeavour to open up communication with ghosts. At least he can claim, though none of his own schemes lasted, to be the father of modern co-operation. But his influence is not to be measured by the success or failure of any definite scheme. As from Pisgah, he had seen the vision of a Promised Land, where the resources of civilization should be no longer wasted and turned to mutual destruction, but where life should have adapted itself sanely and beautifully to its self-created environment. He was destined to die in the wilderness, but of him most truly can it be said to-day, in the words of a fellow-visionary and philanthropist :—

"He is a presence to be felt and known."

9

The Nemesis of Union

Once the military and economic stress of the French war was relaxed, it must have been evident that the sole excuse for the Anti-Jacobin reaction, with its martial law conditions, had disappeared, and that the Constitution must be allowed to develop freely. Even within the ranks of the still dominant Tory party a new, progressive spirit was beginning to be manifest not only in thought but in statesmanship. The middle class, which had increased so greatly in numbers and wealth during the Industrial Revolution, was not only dominant in the Whig and Radical parties, but had begun to leaven the Tories themselves. After the seven years of reaction from the battle of Waterloo to the death of Castlereagh, the most powerful influence in the Cabinet became that of Canning.

Theoretically the old Anti-Jacobin had not receded from the position he had occupied in the nineties; he was a staunch lover of the Constitution, but he had come to take more and more the dynamic or Liberal view of it, except when it was a question of reforming the franchise. Canning, like the other reforming Tories, argued that the existing system, though logically indefensible, did in practice secure the maximum of ordered liberty. To reform it would be to open the floodgates of democracy, and Canning, with the advanced section of the Tories who supported him, was by no means a democrat, though to some extent, and particularly in foreign policy, a Liberal.

After 1822 the spirit of reform was fairly in the ascendant, and the pace was set by broad-minded middle class men like Huskisson, President of the Board of Trade, and Peel, an opportunist in the best sense of the word, who combined the profession of ultra-Tory principles with a readiness to move with the times at almost any expense of theoretical consistency. The whole fiscal system, which was the legacy of an age of comparatively petty commercial transactions, was overhauled and simplified; numberless vexatious duties were scrapped, more were drastically reduced, and the Navigation Laws, once the bulwark of our commercial system, were so relaxed as to be of little hindrance to our now rapidly expanding shipping. The criminal code was humanized in a manner that would have rejoiced the heart of Romilly, could he have lived to see it, and the war-laws that had prohibited the combination of workmen were swept out of existence. Even the tax on imported corn, which was almost sacred to the landowners who were the traditional support

of Toryism, was about to be modified by the imposition of a sliding scale, when Lord Liverpool, who for seventeen years had been Premier, died, and the progressive and reactionary sections of the Tory party split apart. A brief coalition between the progressives and the Whigs was ended by the death of Canning and the incompetence of his successor, Lord Goderich, and the reactionary section of the Tories found themselves again entrenched in power under the Duke of Wellington.

However, the tide was now running irresistibly in favour of Reform, and Sidney Smith's comparison of the Iron Duke to an old woman trying to keep back the sea with a mop was a singularly happy one. Even at the dawn of Pitt's career, nearly fifty years ago, it had been recognized that the franchise was hopelessly out of date, and its obsoleteness now was so obvious as to be a crying scandal. Not only were the mass of the people against a system which shut them out from any sort of voice in their own destinies, but the middle class was up in arms against the almost unlimited power it conferred on the landowning aristocracy, and the exclusion of the new industrial towns from any sort of representation whatever.

A definite cleavage was now beginning to be manifest in the ranks of the reformers. The extreme left or Radical wing, which included the Benthamites, were for Colonel Rainborow's old expedient of a universal suffrage. But the Whigs, who were becoming more and more definitely the party of the middle class, were at least as much afraid of the mob as they were of the reactionaries, and they were perhaps conscious of a certain inconsistency between the advocacy of a bourgeois economics and the power of a proletariat who would certainly not for long pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the capitalist. Their principal, but not altogether unwavering advocate of Reform, was Lord Grey, one of the old Foxite seceders, who during the nineties had risked his liberty by an advocacy of Pitt's reforming principles which Pitt considered inopportune, and who was a conspicuously respectable member of a powerful Northern family—the worthy progenitor of nineteen children. The younger generation of Whig reformers was led by a scion of the House of Russell, whose name was sufficient safeguard against any measure unduly calculated to inconvenience the possessors of this world's riches. Under such auspices Reform became a much less alarming proposition than when it was associated with mob-orators and inheritors of the Jacobin tradition.

Nevertheless, the old Tory government was back, seemingly more

impregnable than ever in the support of rotten and nomination borough members, whose opinions were those of their patrons and altered not. But the English House of Commons was never quite so unrepresentative in practice as it ought to have been by all human calculations. The spirit of the Constitution, undefinable yet potent, was felt within its walls, and when the heart of the nation was deeply moved no artificial barriers could prevent its will from finding expression. The tide was coming in, and neither the mop of Mrs. Partington nor the sword of the Iron Duke could hold it back. But it might be possible by a little judicious Whig engineering to prevent it from rising to those neat and flourishing middle-class villas that had sprung up so dangerously near the high-water mark.

It was evident from the very start of the Wellington ministry that a policy of reaction could no longer be maintained. The Dissenting interest was very powerful among the middle class, and when Lord John Russell proposed to do away with the last remnants of Restoration bigotry in the shape of the Test and Corporation Acts—which though practically a dead letter were none the less a source of irritation—the Government had to pocket their Church principles with such grace as they could. But the decisive blows were to come from beyond British shores—the first from Ireland, the second from France.

English statesmanship with regard to Ireland has not only been characterized by a most un-English tyranny, but by a singular clumsiness. The authors of the Act of Union may perhaps plead at the bar of history that they knew not what they did, and that their blindness to that Act's fatal consequences extended to their own interests as much as to their victim's. In allowing Ireland to be represented so generously in the British Parliament, they were placing a weapon in her hand that was bound, sooner or later, to prove irresistible, provided only that Ireland could keep her own patriotism alive. For in a Parliament in which parties were so fluctuating and so keenly opposed, it was certain that a solid block of Irish members would be able sooner or later to dictate their own terms.

This consummation, however, might well have seemed indefinitely remote. Not only—owing to the repudiation of the understanding on which Ireland had been induced to give such consent as she did to the Union—was a Catholic electorate represented by Protestants only, but under the corrupt system that obtained, the great landlords were able to drive their unfortunate tenants to the poll under

threat of eviction. But when even the logical and consistent tyranny of Prussia and Russia was powerless to quell the free spirit of Poland, it was not likely that Irish patriotism was going to be quenched by such very half-hearted tyrants as modern Englishmen were at their worst.

If we have been tempted to describe the condition of England after the Napoleonic war as Hell for the greater part of her population, we should have to find some word of more infernal implication to apply to that of the native Irish. Population was multiplying with the fatal rapidity that comes of utter recklessness, and the resources of the country, minimized as they were by inefficient and obsolete methods of cultivation, were less and less sufficient to maintain them. The land system was about as bad as it could be; the landlord was separated from the peasant by a hierarchy of middlemen, each of whom screwed and evicted with pitiless frequency. Rents were high not only on account of fierce competition, but from the necessity of providing a profit for an ascending scale of extortions. The landlords, largely owing to the fact of Parliament and society having migrated to England, became more and more absentees, and steadily drained what little wealth Ireland could produce. At one time they multiplied smal. holdings in order to get voters and then, when the franchise was restricted, set to work clearing and consolidating their estates by wholesale evictions.

As for the people, they had touched the lowest conceivable depth of human misery. They lived for the most part in improvised mud shanties unfit for the very pigs that shared them. They went about in indescribable rags—it was a grim joke in those days that an Irishman's coat, which was not infrequently exchanged for that of a scarecrow, was a lot of holes sewn together. They were lucky if they could get a bite of meat at Christmas—the pig was sold to pay the rent—the potato, which was their staple food, was sometimes accompanied with a little milk, sometimes eaten dry. And the potato is of all vegetable food the most uncertain and liable to disease. There were constant partial failures of the crop—rehearsals on a small scale of the awful impending tragedy of the Black Famine—and then a varying proportion of the people would die. In certain months of the year the peasants would leave their holdings and take to the trade of begging. Many emigrated to England, flooding the labour market and depressing wages. Naturally, where everybody was in reach of starvation, a pitiless brutality was displayed in the struggle for existence. Family feuds and vendettas were everywhere

rife, and a fair seldom passed without rioting and loss of life. Secret societies flourished, and the threat of assassination imposed at least some check on the extremes of oppression.

Ireland had had a ruinous bargain imposed on her by the Union. The proportion in which taxation had been fixed between her and England proved wholly beyond her resources during the stress of the war; she ran so deeply into debt that the two exchequers had finally to be amalgamated and Ireland saddled with a joint responsibility for the whole national debt, including that part of it from which before the Union she had been entirely exempt. From 1817 to 1870, according to the calculation of Mrs. J. R. Green, Ireland had to send over to England more than twice as much of her revenue as she was allowed to spend on herself! She was saddled with an alien and hated Church, which she had to maintain by tithes levied on agricultural land, and therefore on the prime necessities of life for her starving population. And yet all this time the peasantry were maintaining out of their wretched resources, not only an alien clergy, but, with a magnificent devotion, a native and Catholic priesthood.

To complete the tale of Ireland's woes, her industries, which had been carefully protected by her native Parliament, were now again at the mercy of a country which was, in many respects, her trade rival. Until 1824 Irish industries continued to be protected against the full blast of English competition, which they were in no condition to withstand, since the Industrial Revolution had made comparatively little progress in Ireland. In 1824, however, the advocates of *laissez faire* in England succeeded in getting these "union duties" repealed altogether, with the inevitable result that the important Irish industries, with the exception of the Belfast linen trade, were knocked out one after the other.

In these circumstances, it is impossible to over-estimate the debt that Ireland owes to her Church and priesthood for keeping the national spirit alive and giving it direction and leadership. The very language was gradually dying, the ancient culture and learning were now little more than a romantic memory for poets like Tom Moore, but the faith of Rome, which Ireland had been the last of all the nations to assimilate, burned the brighter in the darkness that had fallen upon her. Throughout the nineteenth century the priests were the recognized leaders of the people, and it was against the power of the priests that those who wished to break Ireland's spirit inveighed most bitterly. But that spirit was not to be broken, and not for a

moment did she accept the betrayal of her desire for the measure of elementary tolerance implied in Catholic Emancipation.

There arose, as there has so often arisen in the hour of Ireland's need, a mighty patriot to focus her energies and fire her enthusiasm. This was Daniel O'Connell, a big, eloquent, warm-hearted, though incontinently abusive lawyer, who with all his faults, and they were not a few, was life and soul devoted to Ireland's cause. He was the most skilful of agitators, and after other attempts to secure Emancipation had broken down—partly through royal opposition and partly through the fact that the offer of it was coupled with an attempt to establish the option of a secular veto on the appointment of Catholic Bishops—he succeeded in forming a New Catholic Association, financed by what was known as a Catholic Rent, that succeeded in effectively organizing the whole nation, under the leadership of its priests, against Protestant domination. The effects of this were seen in the election of 1826, when it became evident that the small freeholders were prepared to face eviction and ruin rather than vote at the bidding of their landlords. This election, as Lecky says, virtually decided the fate of the Catholic question.

In 1828 it was evident that not even a Tory ministry could withstand the demand of a now roused and thoroughly determined Catholic Ireland. O'Connell had brought matters to a head by carrying the constituency of Clare against a scion of the popular House of Fitzgerald, who was seeking re-election on being selected for a ministerial appointment. Ireland was now wrought up to the verge of rebellion, and Wellington had been informed by his old comrade in arms, the Marquis of Anglesey, now Lord Lieutenant, that the troops, who were largely Catholics, could not be trusted. The Duke had none of the weakness that makes it a point of honour to defend a position after it has become impossible. He gave way now with as good a grace as he had retreated from Talavera and Burgos. England yielded to the threat of force what she had refused to the cause of justice and honour. Ireland was now to speak with her own voice and through her own chosen representatives, though the patriot was not yet born who was to reveal to her the secret of her power. Thus on two conspicuous occasions the Tory government had demonstrated its powerlessness to stem the tide of progress, and the heart was taken out of it. It only required one more blow to overcome its resistance even to the dreaded reform of Parliament.

10

The Triumph of the Bourgeoisie

That blow was soon to be delivered from the outside, for now the curtain was to ring up on the second act of the European tragedy that had begun at Vienna and was to close—not without the prospect of a sequel—at Versailles. The key of the European situation was at Paris, for between Anglo-Saxondom, on the one hand, and the Holy Three despotisms on the other, lay the doubtful factor of Latin Europe, whose attitude might ultimately turn the scale between Liberal and despotic principles. With Spain moribund and Italy beneath the yoke, the only Latin power that counted, for the nonce, was France, and France, though endowed with a constitution, had showed every disposition, under her restored Bourbon Kings, of ranging herself on the absolutist side. Unfortunately for the reactionaries, the new French King, Charles X, tried to force back the hands of the clock too violently. The French middle class took alarm when their monarch, who like many superannuated rakes was exceedingly pious, delivered over France and her constitution to the mercy of Jesuits and Ultramontanes. There were, for three July days of 1830, fighting and fraternizing in the Paris streets, and then His Majesty, in unmolested dignity, lumbered away in his coach *en route* for England.

Another French Revolution was now an accomplished fact, but this time one exactly suited to the tastes of respectable Englishmen. For it was the middle class that had triumphed; a dreadfully uninspiring elderly gentleman was put upon the throne, and a constitution framed on the best Whig model. France had definitely ranged herself on the side of Liberalism, and it was of so respectable a brand as to cool the ardour of the three despots for a new crusade against this dangerous defaulter. But it was soon evident that a fire had been kindled that all the engines of Divine Right might be wanted to put out. The middle class of industrial and Catholic Belgium had waxed fat enough since the war to kick against the Dutch masters with whom the Congress of Vienna had thoughtfully provided them.

This new revolution, which was supported by the militant sympathy of French public opinion, at last roused the despots to the urgency of the peril. The Tsar Nicholas, the most consistent and single-hearted of them all, was preparing to vindicate the settlement of Vienna. Prussia was mobilizing, France was prepared to support

Belgium. European war threatened; but now the Holy Three found their energies paralysed by the nemesis of their Polish crime. The Poles had proved even harder than the Irish for a suzerain power to come to any stable compromise with, and the generous Alexander had given up his Liberal treatment of them in despair. On the news of the Paris revolution they dreamed of their old ally France coming to their support, and they flamed into rebellion. The Tsar's forces, attacked at once by the enemy in front and the cholera from behind, had all they could do to stamp Polish liberty into the dust, while their two crowned accomplices in crime stood anxiously by, fearful of the conflagration invading their own borders. Germany and Italy tugged at their chains, but lacking as yet a prosperous middle class, failed to break them. East of the Rhine and south of the Alps the bourgeois revolution—for such in effect it was—was crushed, but in crushing it the despots had allowed France and her natural ally, little Belgium, to slip out of their orbit.

On England these momentous events had the effect of an electric shock. In the counties nearest to France, the wretched and starving peasants—it was no out-of-the-way occurrence for them to be found actually dead under the hedgerows—broke out into pathetic rebellion for a living wage of half-a-crown a day, and the abolition of the hated parish cart, to which men and women were harnessed like animals. On one occasion the tricolour actually made its appearance in Kent, along with the black flag. In the North, the newly legalized Trades Unions were closing their ranks for action. Cobbett was employing all his journalistic genius to arouse the proletariat and concentrate its energies on the burning question of Reform; Place was devoting his matchless faculty of organization to the same object. The more respectable classes, with the exception of a small minority of confirmed reactionaries, were delighted at the spectacle of a revolution that followed so closely the precedent of our own more or less glorious performance of 1689. The news, as it happened, came just in the middle of an election, and the county constituencies fell like ninepins before the now jubilant opposition.

If any man could have saved the Tory situation, that man was certainly not the victor of Waterloo, who was as unversed as nearly all men of his profession are in the methods of constitutional government. Even for his good deeds he got no credit. He exasperated the Holy Three by his determinedly pacific attitude towards both the French and Belgian revolutions—exasperated them the more because they had regarded him as one of the main props of their system and

had cherished visions of the redcoats taking up their position again on the allied right, on the well-remembered ground of Flanders. But Wellington, through sheer clumsiness, managed to insert in the new King William IV's speech on the opening of Parliament, a passage into which hostile critics could read a threat of English intervention. In the nervous state of the country this was bound to raise a storm against the government that no explanation could lay, and the indefatigable Place was actually organizing direct middle-class action against a war policy by the refusal of taxes. And to crown it all, the Duke must needs select this very moment for blurting out an uncompromising panegyric of the existing system of government, and for banging the door on even the most moderate proposal of reform. When he sat down, he whispered to a colleague, with soldierly naivété, "I have not said too much, have I?" He had, very decidedly, and the temper of the nation was now sufficiently near revolution point to find expression even within the walls of Parliament. The Tory government crashed, and Lord Grey and his Whigs came in, pledged to reform.

Curiously enough, the best apology for the old system is supplied by the manner of its fall. For as in the days of Sacheverell and of Fox's Martyrs, it was proved that when once the nation was deeply stirred, no party in the Commons could withstand its will. The Whigs brought in a Reform Bill framed on unexpectedly bold lines, for which the nation had probably to thank that great constitutional statesman, "Radical Jack," the Earl of Durham. The whole system of rotten boroughs was swept away, and a uniform franchise adopted which included the shopkeepers in the towns. But nothing was further from the minds of men like Grey and Russell than to adopt the proposal of a really democratic franchise, which should make citizens out of artisans and agricultural labourers; where such folk had already a vote, as at Preston and Westminster, it was taken away from them, and indeed the principle of the great Reform Bill could hardly have been better summarized than in the words "no capital, no vote".

However, the non-capitalist class was far from realizing these things. The unexpectedly bold nature of the Bill had so surprised the country that workers and employers alike acted as if the one thing necessary for political salvation was to force through the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill, in the teeth of the now desperate minority of squires and borough-holders. Throughout the length and breadth of the country passion rose to heights unprecedented since

the days of the Long Parliament. Grave lords and commoners forgot all decorum, and stormed at each other like madmen. The Bill was brought in, the second reading carried by one vote, an amendment carried against it in committee, and amid a wild uproar in both Houses, the guns were heard announcing the King's approach to dissolve Parliament. This time even the electorate of the unreformed Parliament was fairly stampeded, and despite all the anomalies and corruption of the franchise, the Whigs romped home by a majority of over a hundred.

The game was now up, but it was a question whether the Tories would recognize this in time to prevent a national disaster. They were now driven to their last ditch in the House of Lords, where, under the leadership of the Iron Duke, they determined to fight it out to the last. The Commons passed a second Reform Bill, the Lords threw it back in their faces. Then what might have been the first symptoms of revolution began to manifest themselves. Riots broke out all over the country, Nottingham Castle was burnt and the Bristol mob, who had assuredly little enough to gain by enfranchising the middle class, expressed their fury by demolishing the jail and inflicting a fatal injury on their native city by destroying one side of that masterpiece of late seventeenth century architecture, Queen's Square.

There was nothing for it but to recommend the King, in the event of further aristocratic obstruction, to swamp the Upper Chamber by a creation of Whig peers. Even Grey hesitated to take such a step, and when Grey's stern Northern will was at last fixed, the King, himself a friend to Reform, drew back and summoned Wellington to form a ministry. It was hopeless, and the situation was now dangerous in the extreme. Even the memory of Waterloo was no protection for the Duke's person and windows against the now infuriated mob; Place was organizing a run on the banks; at any moment bloody rebellion might have broken out. The Duke, with the sense of fact that never deserted him and the strength of a true patriot, recognized, as Walpole had recognized in a less urgent crisis, that this dance would no further go. He gave up his active opposition to the Bill and a majority of the Lords sullenly acquiesced in the inevitable. The Reform Bill became law, the threat of revolution passed away, and the mob was left to discover at leisure for whom it had pulled the chestnuts out of the fire.

II

The Triumph of Steam

More momentous changes were taking place than those that could be accomplished by Acts of Parliament. In the memorable year, 1830, an incident took place more significant of the dawn of a new age than English reforms and Paris revolutions. A new railway between Liverpool and Manchester was being opened, and no less a personage than the Iron Duke had come down to ride in a procession of trains. Another great man, who had just resigned from the Cabinet, William Huskisson, with the formal courtesy of his age, had taken advantage of a wayside halt for water to stroll across to his sometime colleague's carriage, and stood leisurely chatting on the permanent way. Just then one of the new engines came tearing through the station, and there lay Huskisson, one of his legs half severed from his body, his blood dimming the shine of the new-laid rails. Did the old Duke, who had at Waterloo replied to Lord Uxbridge's "By God, my leg's shot off" with "By God, so it is", realize that a force had come into existence more ruthless than that of gunpowder and more incalculable in its effects?

For the coming of the railway ushered in the final and most drastic stage of the Industrial Revolution. It not only linked up the whole country, and speeded the operations of commerce in a way never dreamed of before, but it represented, in the most decisive fashion imaginable, the triumph of the new mechanical power, steam. Henceforth it was only a question, with our middle-class captains of industry, of how quickly and by what improved processes the new power might be applied. As early as 1831, the question of steam carriages careering along high roads at 10 miles an hour, had been gone into by a Parliamentary committee, and though the report was favourable, nothing seems to have come of it. But the pace of industry was set not by members of Parliament, but by the like of the Mr. G. O. A. Head of Stalybridge, drawn in Disraeli's *Coningsby*, a millowner of uncouth manners, who could say, even of Manchester, "She is behind the times, sir, and that won't do in this age." As the old Puritan had desired to be right with God, even so panted the new industrialist to be in the van of material progress.

The self-made capitalist had come into his own, and his triumph was merely registered by the Reform Bill. The great millowners and ironmasters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a hard-headed and usually hard-hearted breed of men, who had

fought their way to fortunes by sheer cut-throat competition, and with the prospect of bankruptcy never very remote. Of education they had little, of culture none at all. In the Greek quality of magnificence, that had so conspicuously shone in the merchant princes, the Canynges and Jacques Coeurs of the early Renaissance, they had no part. On the other hand they were just as free from the splendid vices of that time as they were from the snobbishness which was destined to transform the Victorian middle class. They were eminently respectable, conspicuously independent. Such vices as they had were rather of the negative order, lack of sympathy, lack of imagination, all that is implied in Ricardo's conception of an economic man. Their ethics were those of the Black Hole, "every man for himself and the weakest to the wall."

How far the old Puritan discipline, which had held peculiar sway over the middle class, was responsible for this state of mind can never be precisely determined. We must not forget that the English squires who enclosed the commons and the Scottish chieftains who evicted their clansmen displayed just as keen an eye to the main chance as that of the first factory owners. But what we miss about the squires is the peculiar austerity that marks these industrial pioneers. The squire was at least as much of a sportsman as a producer, he loved his bottle and the fellowship of his neighbours, but for the typical industrialist the quantity of things produced and not the quality of life was the supreme end, to which he was ready to sacrifice himself and everybody connected with him. In the eyes of his economists, productive capital was that which went to produce more capital, unproductive capital that which went to beautify or sweeten life. As the old Puritans had knocked glass out of church windows and statues from their niches, so these new iconoclasts of progress treated all that did not directly conduce to the maximum of production at minimum of cost. They had no time to philosophize or look ahead, they had faith, a faith as blind and trusting as that of the sternest saint, in the providence that orders all things together for good for economic men. Let Mammon arise and let his enemies be scattered!

The spirit of every age tends to realize itself in matter. Just as Athens and Rome, just as Avebury and the Pyramids, gave form to the thoughts and dreams of those who raised them, so did the new towns, that were springing up in the North and Midlands with mushroom rapidity, body forth the spirit of the Industrial Revolution. With the coming of steam, it was no longer necessary to string out the factories along the rivers, it was more economical to concentrate

production in towns conveniently near to the coalfields and the sources or ports from wh ch came the raw material.

Nobody had any object in building these towns but to get some sort of shelter run up, as quickly as possible, beneath which the men who served the machines might get a little brief sleep to recruit their energies. As all was done by competition and on a basis of quick returns, not only beauty but health and ordinary convenience were allowed to go by the board. Such a thing as intelligent town-planning was undreamed of. The unhappy " hands " were crowded together, deprived of sunlight, breathing smoke into their lungs, in the stench of open drains, and without their eyes being able to rest on any but the meanest and most restricted prospect—for even the sky was darkened. The resources of the Churches were for a time inadequate to cope with the new situation ; education seemed likely to wait indefinitely upon sectarian agreement, and the lot of the average worker seemed destined to be one both godless and illiterate.

No doubt this state of things was partly transitional, and throughout the century a progressive improvement was destined to take place. But the essential soullessness of the towns in which the majority of the population were eventually to be housed, was not to be altered even by the tardy provision of parks and public works and adequate drains. Not by the wildest stretch of imagination can we visualize some future Cook organizing tours to the art cities of Lancashire, nor the Five Towns as being hallowed by any more romantic association than that with Mr. Arnold Bennett's novels.

And this phenomenon of the city without a soul is of the gravest import for the future of civilization, for if men form their cities, men are also formed by them.

12

An Empire Reborn

During the fifty years that followed the loss of our American colonies, enthusiasm for empire was in abeyance. A not unnatural revulsion of feeling had swept over the Mother Country ; the miserable fragments of our overseas possessions seemed hardly worth the trouble of keeping, and Whig statesmanship at the end of the war had been within an ace of throwing away Canada after the United States. Not only had the pride of empire received a deadly blow, but the whole theory on which it had been based had fallen

into discredit. The idea of a cunningly devised system of commercial exclusiveness and co-operation, regulated from London, had not only broken down in practice, but had been branded with the stigma of economic unsoundness by Adam Smith. In the only sense in which men had hitherto thought of using the word empire, Blake expressed the literal truth for England, when he cried,

"Empire is no more, and now the lion and the wolf shall cease."

The lion of despotic dominion had been wounded to the death at Saratoga, and the wolf of commercial greed had been coaxed to more profitable hunting grounds by Adam Smith.

Without any Panglossery of patriotic optimism it is allowable for us to say that the American catastrophe proved a blessing in the long run. Only by dint of such a shock was it possible so to purge our minds of the old conception of empire as to enable us to embrace another so unique and daring as that of a free Commonwealth of Nations. It was the fact that we had lost our old Empire and were resigned to the loss that enabled us to find the new.

All this, of course, needs qualification. It is at no time true to say that this country or its statesmen lost all pride in or care for our overseas possessions. In India we had added to our laurels during the war that lost us America, and with Pitt's Government of India Act we were entering upon a new epoch of imperial development and consolidation. There was also much patriotic pride in our retention of Canada, the scene of such glorious achievements and the home of multitudes of loyalists whom, with as much unwisdom as brutality, the Americans had harried out of the land into whose useful citizens they and their descendants might easily have been converted. And it is characteristic of John Bull that he may instinctively keep a tight grip upon the very possessions he professes to despise.

To some extent the idea of a free Empire had always been the natural heritage of Englishmen, and where they had crossed the seas the spirit of the Constitution migrated with them, giving birth to more or less representative institutions. There was this also that had distinguished them even in the strictest days of the Mercantile system, that they went abroad not only to trade but also to live, they gravitated naturally towards the temperate climates where there was a less immediate prospect of opulence than in tropic islands, but where white men could plant homes and ultimately nations.

Nothing is more remarkable than the way in which, without in the least realizing what she was about, England fulfilled her destiny of building up a second Empire greater than the first. This stupendous

achievement was to all appearances thrust upon her against her will and policy. No statesman or thinker who flourished at the opening of the nineteenth century pinned his faith to such an ideal. Few people at home were particularly interested in colonies when the nation was struggling for her life against France, except at the beginning of the war when Pitt and Dundas were confirming the aversion of ordinary Englishmen from colonial ambitions, by sending armies to their death amid the swamps of San Domingo. Conquered possessions were returned to the enemy, both at the Peace of Amiens and the final settlement, with a light-hearted generosity that might have made Chatham turn in his grave. And yet the end of the war found us established on the Australian continent and in the gateway of South Africa, with New Zealand in our grasp whenever we might think it worth the taking, with the complete conquest of India now a certainty, and with a chain of naval stations and calling ports that might well have been selected with the foreknowledge of steam and the Suez Canal. We are reminded of the old fairy stories where the clever and ambitious elder sons are sent away empty, where the fool of the family blunders into a royal marriage and half the kingdom.

Two decisive advantages we possessed, however little consciousness we might have had of them. One was in the very nature of our people, in the spirit of adventure that drove them forth, often for ends material enough, across the seas, and, most important of all, in the constitutional tradition inherited from the English Common Law, that impelled them to form communities of free men, and directed them instinctively to those temperate parts of the globe where the white races could strike root. The second was in our command of the seas, which gave us a perpetual highway to the remotest shores, and enabled us to close that highway to our enemies. At a time when our rivals in colonial expansion were actually at war with us, this had the effect of putting the unoccupied regions of the world, and such hostile possessions as we were capable of holding, at our mercy. Thus, however blind and ill-directed our statesmanship, we could hardly help, with such a decisive advantage as we possessed, winning most of the tricks in the game.

Napoleon was certainly more alive to the advantages of imperial expansion than any of our statesmen. Towards Egypt, India, the hinterland of the United States, the Mississippi Valley, even towards distant Australia, he cast longing eyes. But he was as powerless to transport his armies across the seven seas as he was to cross the

Channel, though a French expedition, bent ostensibly on scientific exploration, was allowed, by the chivalrous sufferance of our naval authorities, to proceed unmolested to the Australian coast, and even obtained generous help from the Englishmen on the spot. Thus while Napoleon was bleeding himself to death for a Continental empire that he could not hold, England was quietly and even reluctantly possessing herself and her people of one vaster and more durable. But of this, the most important result of all, histories of the war, even from a British standpoint, took little account. The guns of Waterloo made more inspiring reading than the convict ships of Sydney.

To attempt even to summarize the story of that strange expansion would be hopeless within the limits of our space. The most we can do is to bear in mind the spiritual tendencies that, along with the fact of our sea power, made it inevitable. And yet, in the important instance of South Africa, we must attribute the foundation of our supremacy to the sheer good luck of Cape Town being, for the nonce, the most important half-way house on the route to India. Even so we had no hesitation in handing it back to its Dutch owners on the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens, and at the final settlement, with that wise but almost quixotic generosity that we displayed throughout, paid in cash down for what we had already won.

As for Australia, that continent, as everybody knows, struck us at first in no better light than as a convenient dumping ground for convicts. Transportation was then a humanely meant way, not altogether new, of removing these poor devils, who were often more sinned against than sinning, from the murderous squalor of English prison life to where they would presumably have a chance to expiate their crimes by useful labour, and ultimately to make a fresh start in a new land. It was a strange and melancholy beginning for a mighty Commonwealth, and the project of turning convicts into useful citizens proved an unrelieved failure, though it did produce a harvest of ruffianism far into the nineteenth century and sensibly retarded the coming of free institutions. But perhaps it was the most practicable way of marking out the claim of the Anglo-Saxon race, and the convict element of the population, despite overlong recruiting from the Mother Country, left no enduring trace. The convicts did at least supply labour, of a sort, in the process of expanding the few coast settlements into a new land of promise for the white man, and the presence of the governor, with his staff and garrison, helped to make the land safe for free emigrants.

The apathy of Britain with regard to the new Australian lands must not be exaggerated. John Bull, if he was slow to take possession himself, was quick enough when it was a question of forestalling somebody else. When Napoleon's designs on Australia were suspected, the English government was quite alive to the necessity of forestalling him by a formal annexation, and when, as late as 1836, the French were preparing to use Tahiti as a jumping off station for New Zealand, they found that the inevitable Union-Jack-hoisting expedition had got there just before them. In South Africa this apparent attitude of dog-in-the-manger was particularly *en evidence* at the end of the thirties, when we discovered for the first time an insistent proprietary interest in Natal, for the sole and sufficient reason that the Boers, trekking to escape from our rule in the South, had found their way there.

But during the half century between the American War and the Reform Bill nothing like a colonial policy was adopted by those in authority. There was not even any very marked disposition to profit by the lessons of the great revolt, and be content with those bonds which though as thin as gossamer are as strong as links of iron. During the long Tory ascendency, any truckling to democratic principles would have savoured overmuch of Jacobinism. The lesson of the American War was, for the average Tory, not that the colonies ought to be granted their freedom within the Empire—for an Empire based on such apparently anarchical principles would have seemed to them worse than no empire at all—but rather that sooner or later the colonies, like children, would get past the necessity of being governed and set up house for themselves. As for the Radicals, most of them regarded colonies as an unmitigated nuisance, and grudged every penny spent on them. Bentham, the hard-headed, had gone so far as not only to want to get rid of the colonies, but of the navy too, except one or two ships kept for the purpose of hunting down pirates! And yet we must remember that the first Earl of Durham was not only Radical Jack, but also one of the first to conceive of a British Commonwealth of Nations.

One fortunate exception to this Bourbonism of our colonial authorities is supplied by Pitt's treatment of Canada. Perhaps we had some subconscious instinct which impelled us to display an unwonted wisdom in the retention of this most important relic of our American Dominions. At any rate, we here showed a faculty of conciliation, even before the American revolt, strikingly in contrast with our policy towards the older colonies. As early as 1774 we had

made a wise concession to our new French subjects in their string of settlements along the St. Lawrence river, by giving them not a representative assembly, but what they appreciated a great deal more, their own code of civil law. And then Pitt, in 1791, before his alarm at the French Revolution had had time to choke his early Liberalism, divided French Lower Canada from the English province of Ontario—devotedly loyal because so largely recruited from loyalists—and had given to each a constitution based on the same principle of separation of powers as had inspired that of the United States, with a government dependent on the Crown and not on the elected Lower House of the legislature. This settlement was no doubt a makeshift piece of work, and with the children of two nations living side by side under a constitutional theory already outworn, problems were left outstanding that would require some blood letting before they could be solved. But when next blood flowed in Canada, Frenchmen and Englishmen were standing loyally shoulder to shoulder against American invasion, an invasion triumphantly repelled, but stained by the wanton brutality of sacking Toronto. This had no small effect in creating a sense of Canadian patriotism, and a solidarity with the country whose troops would signally avenge the outrage against a colonial city by executing the like upon Washington itself. It may be added that one important factor of Canadian loyalty was undoubtedly the chance that made our commercial system, that had weighed so heavily on other colonies, work to her almost unrelieved advantage, and that England appeared to her less as the author of restrictions than of bounties.

With the coming of the Emotional Revival and the renaissance of Evangelical sentiment a new factor entered into our colonial policy. A great wave of philanthropy was sweeping over the country, though it was a philanthropy that fear and greed stopped strangely short when it was a question of applying it to the poor of Britain. But as far as it went, it was perfectly genuine and represented an advance in civilized feeling that might have seemed miraculous to those who were old enough to remember the unfeeling spirit of the Prose Age. Rousseau had done more than any other man to encourage admiration for primitive and emotional peoples, and the Wesleys had taught that the important thing about a man is not the colour of his skin but the state of his soul, for which Christ died, and which in His eyes is infinitely precious. How powerfully the new Evangelical impulse had contributed, along with rationalist philanthropy, to the ending of the slave trade, and how it affected the policy even of worldlings like Castlereagh, has already been told.

The end of the eighteenth century saw a remarkable quickening of missionary activity, in which all Christian sects had a part, and in which the Church of England, or her Evangelical wing, showed an unwonted willingness to co-operate with Dissenters. To every part of the world, but most particularly to those that acknowledged the sovereignty of King George, set forth single hearted though often narrow-minded enthusiasts, burning to fulfil their Master's command to preach the gospel to all nations. The extent of their influence can hardly be exaggerated. With a capacity for pioneer adventure as much English as Christian, they pushed out into the unknown and unexplored, they insinuated themselves into the confidence of barbarous and primitive peoples, and often, by sheer force of character, succeeded in ruling them like petty spiritual princes.

These good men—for good most of them were according to their lights—were no doubt responsible for an immense amount of harm, and they were at least partially instrumental in bringing about those two chief Imperial setbacks of the nineteenth century, the great Boer Trek and the Indian Mutiny. Their brains were often as small as their hearts were big; they were guilty of such absurdities as the forcing of European clothes on natives of the tropics, and with childish intolerance they would misrepresent,[1] often in scurrilous terms, such venerable faiths as that of the Hindus. They were often reckless and unjust in taking the part of their new or prospective converts against the white settlers, and would represent the most bloodthirsty of aggressive savages in the light of injured innocents. But when all is said that the devil's advocate can bring forward against these men of God, civilization has to thank them for inculcating a view of the more backward races that would have amazed those patriotic subjects of Queen Anne, who went into transports of joy because we had conquered the right of supplying South America with slaves. Even the lowest of natives was no longer to be looked on as a chattel, or as the natural prey of Caucasian violence and greed. He was a man and a brother, and insomuch as the white settler or trader wronged one of these, he wronged Christ Himself. Such a faith was never more called for than in a time when capitalist enterprise was beginning a ruthless and heartless exploitation of natives everywhere, destroying them body and soul with spirits and opium, filching their land, sticking at no chicanery and no aggression so long as these could be made to pay.

It was the strength of the Christian impulse that was responsible

[1] And still do, to judge by certain of their publications.

for pushing to a conclusion the movement against slavery under the British flag. In 1833, under the auspices of the Whig majority that swept the country after the Reform Bill, slavery itself went the way of the slave trade, though it is perhaps characteristic of the worthy gentlemen who carried this reform that they showed much less enthusiasm in dealing with the veiled slavery of industry at home, and that they were careful to pay the owners as compensation not much more than half the value of their human property. Beneficent as this reform was in itself, there was no doubt that it dealt a heavy blow at our West Indian possessions, and the gradual adoption of free-trade principles exposed these and other tropical colonies to the full competition of foreign slave labour. Accordingly, these colonies, which the eighteenth century had valued so highly, became of little profit, and the main interest of the Empire shifts to the white communities in more congenial climates. West Indian and West African prosperity had depended largely upon an elaborate system of commercial exclusion, and with the passing of the old order the control of the tropics became, for a while, a problem of minor interest, a fact that the cynical may hold to have contributed to our generosity at the end of the Napoleonic War.

It was in our new possession of the Cape Colony that the missionary influence is seen at its best and worst. We had taken over the Dutch settlement with neither more nor less regard for the wishes of the inhabitants than other members of the Vienna Conference were wont to display in such transferences, with the sole object of commanding the ocean highway to India. With the same end in view we had fastened on Mauritius. But having once got a foothold on the coastland of South Africa, it was impossible that we could turn back or limit our responsibilities. To the North spread the vast plateau grasslands, inviting settlement, and from the North were pressing down the warlike and aggressive black peoples lumped together under the general designation of Bantu, which means, literally, "men."

Moreover, it was one thing to establish a legal sovereignty over the Dutch farmers who were already on the spot, but quite another thing to govern them. They were a pastoral and intensely independent folk, living in farms, separated often by a long journey's distance from the next white habitation, capable on very slight provocation of taking to their waggons and faring yet further into the limitless veldt, and only asking to be let alone in patriarchal simplicity. They had been troublesome and intractable subjects even for Holland.

and were not likely to be any more tolerant of British interference, though so long as the government left them to their own devices, they were not likely to bother much about a nominal allegiance. But even if the government would have been willing to let the Boers, as they were called, alone, there were the missionaries to be reckoned with, and South Africa soon came to be looked upon as a field especially white—or perhaps we should say black—for the Christian harvest.

Now the Boer was a sturdy Protestant, but that did not prevent him from protesting with peculiar vigour against even the most godly interference between him and the natives. He was, in his own eyes, one of the chosen people, an Israelite whose mission it was to drive out or enslave the inhabitants of a new Promised Land. He was a rough master and inclined to be free with his sjambok, but his nature was not unkindly, and he was by all accounts more humane to his blacks than the average West Indian or Virginian planter. But as for admitting the native to the rights of a man and the affection of a brother, he would sooner embark on another exodus into the unknown than countenance any such doctrine.

The missionaries, with the best intentions, followed the flag and began to work with great apparent success among the natives. Now the Boers had already had experience of missionaries before the coming of the English, when one of the leaders of the devoted Moravian community had descended upon them, and despite his unimpeachable Protestantism and the sufferings he had already undergone for that faith, made the Cape too hot to hold him. But the English missionaries, many of them plain working men, came in great force and with ample financial backing, and the missionary societies at home were now a power in the land which no government could ignore. The evangelists went to work with devoted energy, they not only acted as the pioneers of civilization but also as explorers. Going about generally unarmed, they performed miracles in the way of conciliating the most formidable savages, one of them being received with honour by the King of the dreaded Matabele. And they went to work manfully at the task of obtaining equal justice for the black man at the hands of the rough and often predatory white; they set their faces in particular against the curse of slavery.

It was all very human and noble in intention, but unfortunately the missionaries were mostly ill-informed and narrow-minded enthusiasts, who went about their task with a minimum of tact and commonsense. They infuriated the Boers by treating the blacks as

injured innocents, which they were very far from being, and backing them blindly and on all occasions against the whites. Some of them even carried their principles so far as to take wives to themselves from among the Hottentots. And the missionaries had the ear of the government both at home and on the spot. The first English judicial circuit, made in 1811 and known as the Black Circuit, gave the missionaries an opportunity of levelling wholesale charges against the Boers of oppression and murder, and four years afterwards some turbulent burghers not only broke out into rebellion, but, with singular inconsistency, tried to get Kaffir aid in sweeping the British into the sea. When these men were hanged, as by every standard, Dutch or British, they deserved to be, they became martyrs.

Another score of years sufficed to fill the Boer cup to overflowing. English emigrants were now establishing themselves at various points along the coast, and such company was not welcome. The friction between farmer and missionary continued, neither party being capable of seeing the right on the other's side. The liberation of the slaves came about in 1834, on terms ruinous to the masters, and timed, with incredible ineptitude, to come off in the middle of the harvesting. Meanwhile, the advance guard of the Bantus, in the shape of the warlike Kaffir tribes, were pressing hard upon the outlying farms, looting and murdering. But the missionaries would hear nothing against the Kaffirs, and the Boers could often get no redress even for the most flagrant outrages. Finally a Kaffir invasion in great force was repulsed, after widespread desolation and months of fighting, by British troops, and the governor, Sir Benjamin Durban, advanced the frontier to a more defensible line. But the Colonial Office was then occupied by Lord Glenelg, a devout Evangelical, and completely under the influence of the missionaries, who represented the Kaffirs as a harmless folk, goaded into war. Accordingly the new territory was evacuated under orders from home, and the governor, who received neither respect nor courtesy, driven to resign.

This was the last straw. Large numbers of the Boers decided that the perils of the unknown were preferable to the constant harrying and interference of an alien government; they left their farms, inspanned their great ox waggons, and with their families and belongings fared forth into the unknown. It was a tremendous and heroic adventure. The authorities imagined that their survivors would presently return in a chastened mood. But they did not return. They passed Northwards over the Orange River, they found their

way through a pass of the Drakensburg into Natal, they encountered the terrible Zulus, the most formidable of all African fighting races, and after their leader and many of their folk had perished miserably they triumphed—only to be headed off by the British annexation of Natal. So with new bitterness in their hearts they trekked again through the passes to find a home beyond the reach of the detested British. But even on the remote veldt, Britain had not done with them, had not abjured her sovereignty.

The Colonial Office, that had such immense and growing responsibilities, was the butt of every reformer on account of its red-tape and ineptitude. Charles Buller has left an immortal account of "Mr. Mother Country", some insignificant clerk whose decision might be final on the gravest matters, and of the poky room where neglect and heartless procrastination were the lot of those unfortunate colonials who might penetrate thus far, but no further, in their efforts to approach the authority whose decision might make the difference between prosperity and ruin. This estimate was not the whole truth, though it was a considerable part of it. The fact is that colonial affairs, being of comparatively minor interest to statesmen, passed largely into the hands of one or two permanent officials who might, or might not, be good men. And the right sort of man, when he did come, might exercise an immense influence, as was proved by Sir James Stephen, "King Stephen," as he was called from the extraordinary power he wielded in colonial matters, one of the leaders of the Clapham Evangelicals, and a thoroughly perspicacious and statesmanlike administrator.

It was not until the second quarter of the century, however, that anything like a serious attempt was made to bring a scientific spirit to the study of colonial problems. The way in which we had set about founding an Empire had hitherto been incredibly lax and slipshod. Few people at home, even among those whose business it was to do so, took any trouble to make themselves acquainted with the relevant facts and conditions. The result was that colonial policy, though often inspired by the highest principles, was largely a matter of guesswork. Had Lord Glenelg been capable of appreciating the difference between a Kaffir and a Hottentot, there might have been no Great Trek and no Boer War. The policy of dumping old lags upon white communities that were already beginning to find their feet was on a par with that of the enterprising capitalists who sent skates to the Equator. Most mischievous of all was the ignorance the home authorities displayed on the

all-important question of controlling the distribution of the new lands. In New South Wales, for example, any one could have an estate for the asking, with the result that there were all landowners and no labourers, except convicts, and not enough of them. When the colony of Western Australia was founded, the intelligent system was adopted of allowing the settlers to choose their estates in succession, and accordingly the first man would take all the land in the neighbourhood of the port, the next man his further out, and so on, the confusion being worse confounded by the fact that no one quite knew who had got what. In Canada "Mr. Mother Country" brought himself into odium by setting aside enormous reserves for the Anglican clergy, who were perfectly incapable of developing them.

These and similar ineptitudes attracted the attention of a man of genius, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who had ruined his reputation and provided himself with time for thought by having done three years in jail for abducting an heiress. Had Wakefield only been as straight as he was clever, there is no saying to what eminence he might not have risen; as it was, his influence was potent in every one of our greater colonies, and he was responsible for a saner conception than hitherto of what a colonial system should be. He was the inspiration of a group of brilliant men who formed themselves in 1830 into the National Colonization Society, which continued, with one temporary suspension, till 1844, and had the effect of completely altering the national outlook on matters colonial. Its membership included such shining lights as Durham, Buller, Molesworth, Grote, and Torrens—a veritable galaxy of talent.

These men were capable of seeing in the colonies not so many social refuse pits, but a means of alleviating that pressure of population on the means of subsistence which was a very real menace at this time. There were multitudes of honest labourers for whom capitalist industry did not provide the means of a decent subsistence at home, but who might thrive and get the best out of life by developing virgin lands under the British flag. It was, in fact, soon to become the fashion to look on the colonies as lands of promise where the failures of the old world might be the successes of the new. Everyone will remember how Dickens, confronted with the problem of disposing of certain luckless characters at the end of *David Copperfield*, shipped them off in a body to Australia, where even so hopeful and hopeless a person as Mr. Micawber at last finds that something good and permanent does turn up. This, of course, was a too rosy view of a life which, in too many instances, proved the

reverse of ideal—the whole early literature of Australia is redolent of failure and hope always deferred.

Wakefield and the Colonization Society aimed at organizing emigration on a sound and scientific basis. The principle they advocated was that land should be sold at a price sufficient to pay the expenses of providing a steady stream of emigrants from home, of the right sort, to work it. By this means a colony would pay for its own development, and the evil of cheap ownership and no labour would be avoided. It was a pity that this ingenious plan could not have been supplemented from the first by a provision preventing the accumulation of divers estates in the hands of a few individuals, and the consequent evils of speculation in land. But the reactions of capitalist enterprise upon the colonial social organism were hardly to be anticipated thus early.

The efforts of the Colonization Society were not always crowned with complete success; its activities were not looked upon with any too favourable eye by the Colonial Office or by the still powerful missionaries, who suspected that the rights and souls of their native converts might receive scant consideration in a scientific scheme. But its eldest child, the Colony of South Australia, did make good in the long run, and it was the New Zealand Colonization Company, founded by the same men on the same principles, that forced the hand of the government just in time for us to anticipate the French in taking possession of that most delightful corner of the earth. And it was the influence of men like Wakefield, Buller and Durham that first taught Englishmen not only to think but also to organize imperially; they built a bridge by which we could advance from the Island Kingdom that withstood Napoleon, to the Commonwealth of Nations that was to emerge victorious from a conflict even more terrible.

Perhaps inevitably, history tends to focus attention on matters of war and statecraft, but from such an angle of vision we shall gain a very imperfect appreciation of that tremendous adventure which we call the Expansion of England. The greater part of the average colonial's existence was little enough troubled about things like these. We must picture him as a rough, uncultured and generally unreflecting individual in a perpetual struggle to wrest the means of existence from untamed nature and scarcely tamed barbarism. These early colonials were, by the account even of their best friend, Wakefield, the very roughest of diamonds. Crime, from lack of temptation, was comparatively rare, except where

the Mother Country had deliberately imported it, but what in America was known as "smartness" and by the Boers as "slimness" was all too characteristic of men who were necessarily perpetually on the make. "For the growth of honour," as Wakefield drily remarks, "the colonies are not a very congenial soil." Morals were lax and manners coarse and slovenly—even members of the cultured classes quickly picked them up on adopting a colonial life. Education was almost impossible to get, nor was religion the restraint on primitive impulses it was at home, except in French Canada, where the Roman Catholic Church exercised almost as much influence as in Ireland.

For all that, great and heroic work was being accomplished by these rough and obscure men. Foot by foot they were conquering the world for civilization, bringing the light of knowledge where all had been darkness, causing the earth to yield fruits after her kind, preparing for the time when wheat would pour into Europe from Canada and meat from the Antipodes. But they were doing something more, for they were ensuring that the civilization that should take root and grow should be that inspired by the tradition of English liberties and the Common Law, in opposition to that of centralized and homogeneous Rome. This new Empire tended to be less an Empire in the old sense than a Commonwealth of free peoples. It was only a tendency, and it yet remained to be seen how far the blessings of freedom and equal justice could or would be extended to peoples outside the pale of Anglo-Saxondom. The missionaries—and it is to their everlasting honour—had faith that they could.

18

Progress in India

A very different task from that of peopling virgin or barbarous lands had been essayed by the English when they saddled themselves—without realizing it and much against their will—with dominion over the ancient civilization of India. They had gone there for the sole purpose of turning a more or less honest penny; they had found the factory expanding into the province, and between the province and the Empire there was no practicable halting place. In the same way the speculative association of a few merchants now found thrust into its unwilling hands a responsibility and power to which even the Great Moguls would hardly have dared to aspire. Practical business men that they were, they shrank from such a

grandiose conclusion. They tried in every way to limit their responsibilities, to tie the hands of their Governors-General. But the logic of facts or, as the Indians might have put it, the Karma of their past actions, was too strong for them, and they must play the game to the end. Never, it may confidently be asserted, was there a more unwilling or unambitious conqueror than England in India.

Pitt's India Act, in 1784, opened a new era in the history of our dealings with India. While avoiding the clean-cut simplicity of Fox's rejected measure, it proceeded from the same recognition that the government of our greatest and richest dependency by a private trading company for business purposes was now definitely out of date. But instead of making a clean sweep of John Company's political functions, Pitt adopted a compromise typically English. To transfer the whole of the Company's patronage into the hands of the politicians would have perhaps been to fly from one corruption to a worse. The dignity, the experience, and the traditions of the Company were not assets to be lightly thrown away, and accordingly a wholly illogical system was adopted which, while asserting the paramount authority of the Crown, kept the Company in being with a power by no means to be despised, though one that in course of time tended gradually to become superfluous. But the mere fact of the Company sharing in such awful responsibilities made its original status as a money-making corporation more and more obviously improper. Accordingly, at successive renewals of its charter, which occurred at twenty years' intervals, John Company was stripped of its commercial functions, until in 1833 it became purely a governing body, "the fifth wheel in the coach."

Partly owing to the humanizing influence of the Emotional Revival —displayed so unfortunately in the persecution of Warren Hastings —and partly, no doubt, owing to her chastening by the American Rebellion, Britain had come to take a higher view of her responsibilities than in the days when Bengal had been the happy hunting ground of sharks and plunderers. One of Pitt's reforms had been to put the all-important post of Governor-General in the appointment of the Crown, and to make that dignitary master of his Council in a way that Hastings never was, though still hedged about with anxious restrictions intended to debar him from anything like an adventurous or forward policy. It was none too soon, for Hastings's place, on his retirement, had been automatically filled by the senior member of the Council, a thoroughly crooked character

who gave India her last taste of a systematic jobber in supreme authority.

The governors sent out from England were henceforth, with surprisingly few exceptions, the best men she had to give, upright and able members of her aristocracy, with an invariably high sense of duty and a desire to do the best that in them lay, not only for the Motherland they loved with a passion too deep for outward show, but for that alien race with whose safety and welfare they were entrusted. In the first fifty years of Crown appointments, the only two which can by any means be stigmatized as failures were those of worthy but unadventurous permanent officials who exemplified the almost invariable rule of Indian government, that a long course of bureaucratic service constitutes a positive disqualification for supreme power.

The first of Pitt's governors, Lord Cornwallis, was typical of the burly, John Bullish gentlemen, with whom we are so familiar on the canvasses of Sir Joshua Reynolds. He had distinguished himself by achieving the most disastrous capitulation in the annals of British arms without forfeiting any person's respect—the very sight of his broad countenance, so transparently manly and benevolent, must have been sufficient to inspire trust in the teeth of any record. And Cornwallis's face was the mirror of his soul. From the moment he came out he set himself stoutly to purge the service of every form of corruption and jobbery, and it is needless to add that no one ever suspected his own hands of being anything but clean. But, like the honest, unimaginative squire that he really was, he succeeded in perpetrating one ghastly blunder with which his name will always be associated. In the Province of Bengal the collection of the land revenue was tainted by every sort of abuse. Cornwallis wisely decided to put this on the basis of a permanent assessment. Unfortunately, and with the best of motives, he invested the zemindars, a class of hereditary tax-farmers, with the status of English squires, in the hope that once their position was regularized in this way, they would become improving landlords of the type with which Cornwallis was familiar at home. This incursion into Indian economics had the effect of giving the zemindars unlimited opportunities of oppressing the peasants, and the government of putting the screw on the zemindars, who—precisely as happened in Ireland—were often ruined and forced to sell their rights to speculators, who, in their turn, exploited their wretched dependents with single-hearted thoroughness. We may add that

Cornwallis made it a principle to distrust all Indians, and to employ them as little as possible in any responsible post.

But sterner work was at hand for the British Raj. The position of England, as one among several powers competing for the mastery of India, must plainly develop into one of complete supremacy if it was not to be lost altogether. The whole Peninsula was in a state of unstable equilibrium; the powers with whom we had to deal were neither capable of keeping the peace nor their pledged faith, nor were any of them capable of setting up a government worthy of the name, and containing the elements of permanency. The urgency of our task was doubled when we became involved in war with France, whose rulers were fully appreciative of the advantages of stirring up trouble in India, and whose officer adventurers penetrated to Indian courts and imparted the secrets of European discipline.

Fortunately the hour brought forth the man. In 1798, after a promoted official, Sir John Shore, had for five years endeavoured to keep the peace at almost any price, Pitt sent out Lord Mornington, afterwards Marquis of Wellesley. The new Governor's imperious spirit rapidly divined that we had no choice but to impose our peace on India once and for all. Accordingly he dealt one after another with the three powers that challenged our supremacy. First, by a swift combination of diplomacy with the show of force, he disarmed the Nizam of Hyderabad, and made his province of the Deccan into an obedient vassal state. Next he turned on our inveterate and bloodthirsty enemy, Tippoo Sahib of Mysore, significantly called in France "Citizen Tippoo", and in two months had his power annihilated and himself slain. The Governor-General was now free to deal with our most formidable rival of all, the great Mahratta confederacy, whose chance of becoming the Hindu saviours of India had vanished once for all at Panipat, but whose chiefs ruled over a vast extent of territory and levied blackmail far and wide beyond its borders—even having the impertinence to demand it, on one occasion, from England. Wellesley, if left to himself, would have settled the business of this confederacy for good and all; his armies had smitten hip and thigh two of its most formidable members, and were proceeding to deal in like manner with a third, when the Marquis was recalled and his policy reversed. The Home Government, and still more the Court of Directors, had taken fright at a policy that had added forty million subjects to their dominions—there was even talk of impeaching the Governor-General—and the

old Lord Cornwallis was again sent out, as a safe man, to reverse as much as he could of his predecessor's policy.

What happened was that the Mahrattas were given leisure to recuperate, and what amounted to British leave to harry and desolate their Rajput neighbours. Terrible misery was caused in India by this refusal of England to accept the responsibilities that her position entailed. India was slipping back into anarchy, and worse even than the Mahrattas were the bands of robbers or unemployed mercenaries called Pindaris, whose fiendish cruelty in harrying Rajputana and Central India surpasses anything that even the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle can allege against Stephen's barons. At last, in 1817, the Governor-General, Lord Hastings, one of the hard-living set that had gone the pace with the Regent, but a fine old soldier and a strong man, determined to put an end to the business. He first destroyed the Pindaris, a proceeding that involved him in trouble with their fellow-robbers, the Mahrattas, upon whom he turned with irresistible force and reduced finally to impotence. There was left no Indian power, with the exception of the Punjab in the remote North-West, that had any chance of standing up against us. A now inevitable process of expansion and consolidation extended our rule to the Himalayan barrier. More against her will than with it, England had become ruler of India, and it remained to be seen whether she could use that position to her own advantage and that of her vast dependency.

This at least must be allowed in favour of the ruling race, that nothing which, by the allegation of its bitterest critics, it has brought upon India, can be worse than that from which it delivered her. The break up of the Mogul empire had given over India to a chaos that no Indian power was powerful enough to end. The strong hand of a European ruler was necessary to save her civilization from ruin and to give it a chance of reviving. And it is on the gradual resurrection of India, and England's part in helping or retarding it, that the interest of the historian is rightly centred.

It therefore behoves us to realize, as far as we may, where Indian civilization stood in those days of the English conquest. Certainly there was enough cause for despondency. There was something in the elaborate system of caste and tradition reminiscent of the state of Judaism at the time of Christ. What had originally been the dictates of a lofty morality, inspired by a subtle philosophy, had now petrified into an uninspired system of commands and prohibitions, maintained by an hereditary priesthood. The Brahmans, like the

scribes and Pharisees, had ceased, for the most part, to study more than the dead letter of their law and scriptures, nor had they any idea of penetrating beyond the gross literalness of their religious symbolism. Since they had ceased to be the counsellors of princes, they had taken more and more to catering for the tastes and superstitions of the common people on whom they depended for a livelihood. The last great spiritual revival of Hinduism, the Vaisnavite movement, which had given birth to those master poets Kabir and Tulsi Das, had long since spent its force. The very learning, that the Brahmans had monopolized and handed down from generation to generation, had suffered the decay of all lifeless things; their ancient astronomy and medicine had become abracadabra; for the recovery of much of their sacred lore they had to wait for English scholarship.

But as among the post-exilic Jews, the iron rigidity of form had, through times of stress and servitude, imparted an inextinguishable vitality to the civilization whose finer flowers it killed. Wave after wave of conquest might sweep over Hindustan, kingdom might rise against kingdom within her borders, but the essential framework of her society held together, and her underlying unity of sentiment and tradition survived all differences of race, language, and even religion. And if the learning of India was in a state of abeyance, her art was by no means dead. The Mogul school of painting had decayed with the Mogul dynasty, but it lived on, and the kindred Rajput school, though past its prime, had not ceased to produce works of exquisite merit. It was in Rajputana, most of all, that the traditions of the Indian master builders continued to inspire work of undiminished excellence, certainly not inferior to anything that the Europe of that time could produce. In music, too, India had a tradition of her own that was kept alive by successive generations of musicians, though the Puritan Aurungzebe had fatuously ordered the spirit of music to be buried out of sight.

Even in the eighteenth century, certain Englishmen had begun to accomplish for India a work of deeper significance than mere strength of government and development of material resources. They had seen, however dimly, the beauty and wisdom that centuries of formalism had dimmed, and they devoted themselves to separating the pure gold of Hindu civilization from the dross. It is not the least of the merits of Warren Hastings that, while he had no hesitation in letting the law take its course with such twice-born wretches as the forger Nuncomar, he was an admirer of the Hindu sacred books, and particularly of the Bhagavad Gita. But Hastings had scanty

leisure to spare from the pressing tasks of administration, and it was left to a young English judge, Sir William Jones, to appreciate the full value of Sanscrit literature.

Jones was a typical product of the Emotional Revival, and in his search for colour and romance he had gone not, like so many of his contemporaries, to the Middle Ages of Europe, but to the East—at first to Arabia and Persia and afterwards, from his arrival in India in 1783 to his death in 1794, to the almost unsuspected treasure house of Sanscrit literature. With an acquaintance, more or less intimate, with no less than twenty-eight languages, with a range of interests that embraced most subjects from music to the mathematics, and with the intuition of a born poet, he was admirably fitted to reveal the glories of Hindu civilization not only to Europeans but to Indians themselves. Besides translating much and planning to translate more of the Hindu classics, he had the noble ambition to become the Justinian of India, and left unfinished at his death what was meant to be a complete digest of Hindu and Moslem law. He was, like many pioneers, more a man of intuition than exhaustive research, and he is not to be compared for erudition with the next great English Sanscrit scholar, Henry Colebrooke. But he had a Pisgah vision of the mental paradise that his successors in scholarship were to make their own, along with the priceless gift of humility that sent him reverently to solicit the aid of the most learned Brahmin pundits, who, in turn, were overwhelmed with grief at his premature death. It is significant of the spirit in which he worked that he should have kept an image of one of the gods before him on the table as he studied their scriptures.

These Orientalists, as they were called, performed a work of inestimable value both for England and for India. They were doing for Indian civilization exactly what their fellow-Romantics were doing at home for the Middle Ages, and it is not surprising that, like them, they should sometimes have allowed their enthusiasm to run away with their critical faculty. One of them, Horace Hayman Wilson, actually went so far as to oppose the abolition of *sati*, or the burning alive of widows. But men who are fighting prejudice can hardly be expected to hold, always, the exact *via media*, and how deep the prejudice was against the idea of anything good coming out of India is shown by the fact that Dugald Stewart, who even North of the Tweed was renowned for the prosiness of his metaphysics, scintillated for once in his life with the discovery, to his own satisfaction, that the whole of the Sanscrit literature and language was

the concoction of wily but snobbish Brahmans who hoped, by this means, to establish a linguistic kinship with the West and, presumably, Dugald himself.

In these old days of Anglo-India, when the difficulties of transit compelled the ordinary white man to make his home for long years in the country, and before the Mutiny had left its legacy of hate and fear, it was possible for the Englishman to enter into the life of his Indian neighbours to a far greater extent than is conceivable to-day. In the heyday of Mogul power Europeans had made no difficulties about adopting native costume—we even have a quaint disciplinary admonition to the English garrison of Bombay in the seventeenth century, condemning as unsoldierly the wearing of such picturesque attire on parade! Portraits by Indian artists, in the Mogul style, show right down to the end of the eighteenth century English gentlemen reclining in the garb of nabobs, and well on into the nineteenth we have such Indian touches as the wearing of muslin shirts outside trousers and the smoking of enormous hookahs—even by ladies! A silent witness to one form of intimacy with the native population is furnished by the little subsidiary enclosure, still to be found in certain old bungalows, for the housing of a mistress. And it was a common act of bachelor politeness, after a *bara karna* (dinner) followed by a *nautch* (dance), to offer your guests the pick of the fair dancers.

The standard of uprightness and efficiency that obtains in the government service to-day was far from being universal in that of John Company. A Jos Sedley would hardly be credible nowadays as a type of the modern civil servant, but there must have been enough of his sort in the early nineteenth century. But the old system, with all its advantages, tended to bring Indian and Englishman into more understanding contact than obtains to-day. We have instances of men like Colonel Gardner, who married, and happily, an Indian princess, and of Colonel Skinner, from whom Skinner's Horse takes its name, the son of a Scottish father and a Rajput mother, who lived in Oriental style with a number of wives and displayed generous impartiality by endowing Delhi not only with a church but a mosque. Indians long after continued to refer to him as a king among men.

He was not the only Englishman to whom like honours were conceded. Sir Thomas Munro, who, as Governor of Madras, showed a better way of revenue assessment than that of Cornwallis, by bringing government into direct relations with the peasant, was

canonized as Madava Rishi, while in the middle of the century the superb valour of John Nicholson actually led to the founding of a cult, the Nikkal Seyn. We have only to mention such names as those of Tod, Metcalfe, Elphinstone, and Sleeman to justify the statement that Britain in India was prolific, at this time, of men of outstanding sympathetic genius, men broad-minded enough to work not only for the honour and advantage of their own country, but for the renaissance of Indian civilization.

But salvation, however strongly the obstacles to it may be broken down by help from without, must be worked out from within or not at all. The work of the most enlightened Englishmen must needs prove vain unless Indians themselves can arise capable of performing for their own people what Christ and Paul undertook for the Jewish tradition—to clothe with living flesh and sinew the dry bones of the old law, and to infuse it with the breath of the spirit. It was to such a task that an enlightened and patriotic Brahman, Raja Ram Mohun Rai, addressed himself in the early years of the nineteenth century. He was imbued with that spirit of cosmopolitan tolerance to which Hinduism lends itself more readily than any other faith. In his early youth he had come under the influence of the Sufi, or mystic branch of the Mahommedan religion, a circumstance which largely helped to determine the course of his subsequent activities, and particularly his aversion from anything savouring of idolatry. In later life he was no less strongly influenced by Christianity, and there is a story, though on doubtful evidence, of his having penetrated to Lhasa in order to study the mysteries of Buddhism.

Thus comprehensively equipped, he set himself, in company with his friend, Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, founder of that famous Tagore family with whose name the Indian Renaissance is for three generations imperishably associated, to wage sharp war against the superstitious and the unessential, and to get back to the true spirit of the Hindu and, indeed, of all religion. He had less patience with Brahman priestcraft than many an English Orientalist, and he repaid their sympathy with the East by an ardent desire that India should avail herself of all that was best in Western civilization. He threw the whole of his powerful influence into the struggle against *sati*, whose abolition it was feared, by some nervous Englishmen, would lead to a mutiny in the Bengal army. He flouted, by his own example, the hitherto invincible Brahman prejudice against crossing the sea. Going even further than the Buddha, with whose

work his own has many points of similarity, he traversed the dogma of transmigration. And with a boldness that it needs a knowledge of India to appreciate, he even tried to undermine the sacrosanct institution of caste, by proclaiming that all folk were the children of the same God, and therefore brothers and sisters. And yet he was no mere Deist or unbeliever, but a loyal Hindu, a Brahman of the Brahmans, steeped in the lore of the Upanishads and making his life's work the restoration of the Hindu faith to its pristine simplicity.

It was in 1830 that Ram Mohun Rai founded the Brahma Somaj (literally the God Society) with the object of giving effect to these principles. Though never large in numbers, it has exercised a powerful influence in giving direction to the revival of Hindu civilization, and it was Ram Mohun's especial object to steer an even course between the Scylla of encroaching westernization and the Charybdis of Hindu reaction. He was great enough to see in Hinduism the basis of a universal faith in which Christian and Buddhist and Moslem could join without the sacrifice of any of their essential principles, and in India's destiny no triumph of exclusive nationality, but the lifting of the whole world to a new—and also very old—ideal of love and service. It is a strange and touching evidence of nobility in two naturally opposed natures, that the crabbed old utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham, should have hailed in the mystic Brahman an "intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind."

We must not, however, lose sight of influences that were working in a very different sense from that of the Somaj and the Orientalists. The missionary movement, which had exercised so great an influence in the colonies, was making itself felt also in India. The men whom the various Christian sects sent out to evangelize India were fully as devoted as their brethren in Africa and Australasia, and some of them vied with the lay Orientalists in the knowledge they acquired of the various Indian languages into which they were indefatigable in translating their Good News. But they were, from the outset, setting themselves to a hopeless task in coping with the established faiths of Hindustan. Christianity has never inclined to the tolerance that can see in its own and other faiths different paths winding to the summit of the selfsame mountain. To the missionaries, as to the martyrs, the only hope of salvation lay in the acceptance of their own doctrine and Saviour, and they could see in Hinduism only what Ram Mohun Rai himself saw, its overlay of superstition,

without, like him, divining beneath it the quickening spirit of all true religion. Accordingly they set themselves to the truly forlorn hope of proselytizing the Hindus, who for their part regarded the missionaries as the exponents of a barbarous infidelity, and were unable to believe that men could be really holy who were so much less able or willing than their own sadhus to forego the good things of this life.

It was only in 1813 that the missionaries could get an officially recognized footing on Indian soil, and they had had, perforce, to conduct their ministrations from settlements like the Danish Serampur. The Company, which was out for money, had no use for missionaries, nor can the English government, in pre-mutiny days, be accused of undue partiality for its own religion. Nevertheless, despite all handicaps and their own limitations, the missionaries went to work manfully with the task of imparting not only Christian principles, but Western education, which they believed would be the best means of preparing the soil for the good seed. They founded numerous schools, in which instruction was given in the vernacular dialects, and they may justly claim to be the founders of Indian popular education. They displayed a truly Franciscan charity in ministering to the outcast and the sick, and they opposed with all their might the cruelty to human beings and animals that was practised under the guise of religion. Nevertheless their methods were often singularly ill-chosen. They attacked cherished beliefs with an intolerance that was not infrequently scurrilous and needlessly offensive. Instead of joining hands with Hindu reformers, they sought to depreciate their work; Ram Mohun Rai was opposed by two of the greatest missionaries, by Marshman on the score of heresy, by Duff on that of deism. In the long run the missionary work failed to reap more than a negligible harvest of conversions, and proved to be a source of dangerous irritation.

It was in the early thirties, under the governorship of Lord William Bentinck, that the controversy between Indian and Western methods of education came to a head. This excellent man, who was bold enough to follow Ram Mohun's counsel by abolishing *sati*, who put down the Thugs, a sect of professional murderers, and who displayed a tireless activity in giving India the benefit of Western reforming principles, was nevertheless so Philistine in his attitude to the civilization it was his duty to cherish, that he would have been quite content—had it been found a paying proposition—to have had the Taj Mahal broken up and sold for what

it would fetch. The British government had come, by this time, to recognize its responsibility not only for governing, but also for imparting some measure of education to its Indian dependents. As early as 1791 a Sanscrit college had been founded, under John Company's auspices, by the advice of a distinguished Oriental scholar called Duncan, at the holy city of Benares, upon the model of the Sanscrit "tols" or private schools. In 1813, at the renewal of the Company's charter, an annual £10,000 was definitely earmarked for education, and this led, after an interval of ten years, to similar institutions springing up at Calcutta, Agra and Delhi.

But already the tide was rising in favour of a system of education definitely Western, and, indeed, a college had been started supported by Indian funds at Calcutta in 1817 to answer the growing demand for instruction in the English language, literature and science. This movement received the support of Ram Mohun Rai, who was anxious at almost any cost to lift from the shoulders of his countrymen the dead weight of Brahmin tradition. Hindus themselves were weakening the hands of English Orientalists by crying aloud not for their own lore but that of their rulers.

On the renewal of the Company's Charter in 1833 the sum allotted to education was increased tenfold, and it fell principally to Lord William Bentinck to determine whether this should be used to further the traditional Sanscrit or the new Anglicized method. The two schools were at this time in hot conflict, but the question was decided by an eloquent minute drafted by the President of the Committee of Public Instruction, Thomas Babington Macaulay. Now Macaulay, like another famous Whig, Mackintosh, was one of that type of Briton who regards India as a place of exile, and shuts out every native influence as sedulously as, during the hot season, he closes and darkens his bungalow against the parching atmosphere. With Macaulay intolerance of Indian thought and literature amounted to an obsession: he passed all his leisure in trying to forget his environment by steeping himself in the Greek and Roman classics, and he had no difficulty in demonstrating to his own and his chief's satisfaction that the whole native literature of India (with that of Arabia thrown in as a makeweight) was not worth a single shelf in a good European library, that it was, in fact, a mere string of monstrous absurdities. India is under too great a debt to Macaulay's honest Liberalism not to forgive him for such presumptuous ignorance of the subject which, most of all, his temperament and training disqualified him from understanding. His minute, for good or

ill, turned the scale, and despite the chagrin of the Orientalists, who foreboded serious injury to the Indians from this violent breach with their traditions, Lord William decided that all funds would henceforth be employed in "imparting to the native population a knowledge of English literature and science, through the medium of the English language."

The die was thus cast, and English became the official language of India. One result of this decision, foreseen by Ram Mohun Rai, was to promote the unity of India and the sense of her nationality by providing a sort of Esperanto, by which all her various peoples could escape from their Babel of tongues and communicate with each other on matters of common interest. When the Indian National Congress came into being it debated in English—if an Indian Declaration of Independence should ever be drafted, it will almost certainly be in the same language.

CHAPTER II

THE AGE OF MIDDLE CLASS LIBERALISM

1

THE DISILLUSIONMENT OF THE WORKERS

THE July Revolution in Paris ushers in the second act of the great European tragedy, *From Vienna to Versailles*, whose programme might read somewhat as follows:—

Act I (commencing 1815).	The Time of Reaction.
Act II (commencing 1830).	The Age of Western, bourgeois Liberalism.
Act III (commencing 1848).	The partial triumph of the national principle.
Act IV (commencing 1871).	The breakdown of bourgeois Liberalism and the rise of proletarian democracy. National and racial egotism precipitate universal war.
Act V (commencing 1914).	The incomplete suicide of civilization.

This, like all historical generalizations, needs due qualification in the light of facts, for the stream of history is continuous and its cross currents of almost infinite complexity, but granting such a concession to human frailty as the division of time into epochs, the modern period lends itself thereto with singular facility. And our scheme of a five act tragedy, if it does not tell us all the truth, at least presents vividly to our consciousness the most important part of it.

In England, however, this distinction of epochs is naturally less marked than on the Continent, partly on account of her isolation, and partly because both politically and industrially she starts with an immense lead on her Continental rivals. Thanks to the traditions of her Common Law, the principle of constitutional government was firmly established within her shores. Thanks to her belt of waters and her wooden walls, she might reasonably hope to work out her salvation in peace, or at least without the exhaustion of life and death land warfare.

Accordingly we find that in England the second and third acts of the tragedy are practically continuous. The Bourgeois Revolution was as sharply marked by the passage of our Reform Bill as by the accession of Louis Philippe, and indeed the two are vitally connected,

but the great year of revolutions, 1848, which sent that bourgeois King packing to England in the tracks of his divine predecessor, saw nothing more formidable here than the anti-climax of the Chartist meeting on Kennington Common—the good-natured pricking of a gigantic bubble. England was little concerned except verbally and sentimentally with the attempt of the Continental peoples to throw off the yoke of the Metternich System, and in the series of wars that culminated in the union of Germany and Italy. Her period of middle class rule was begun by a Reform Bill and ended with a Reform Bill, and the thirty-five intervening years form a period of great outward simplicity and assurance. What destructive forces there were, were gathering beneath the surface.

There was a general belief, on the passing of the Reform Bill, that a new era of liberty and ordered progress had been ushered in. Some old fashioned Tories were credulous enough to imagine that the Jacobin Terror had at last come to England, that within a few years the House of Lords, the Church, the Throne, and the rights of property would all be swept away, but the majority of the party showed a surprising alacrity in adapting themselves to the new order of things, and the general sentiment not only among the Whigs but the mass of the people was at first that expressed by the Unitarian preacher Fox in the lines,

> "The people firm, from Court and Peers,
> By union won Reform, sirs,
> And, union safe, the nation steers
> Through sunshine and through storm, sirs!"

And this in despite of the fact that the Reform Bill left the working class as much out in the cold—indeed more than as much, in a few constituencies—as they had been before.

It certainly did appear that the Whigs, whom a huge majority of the new electorate returned to power, meant to pursue an actively liberal policy both at home and abroad. Though almost from the outset the pace was too slow for Radicals like Lord Durham, the new ministers began a thorough overhauling not only of our political but of our social institutions. Royal Commissions became the order of the day, and on the Commission's report followed legislation. In the first year of the Whig ministry negro slavery was finally abolished, and the first Factory Act to be really effective, because enforced by Government Inspectors, showed that a doctrinaire individualism was capable, for this once at any rate, of giving place to humanity. In 1885—slightly to anticipate matters—came the

great Municipal Corporations' Act, opening up possibilities of transforming the hideous collections of houses that usurped the title of towns in the manufacturing districts into something more worthy of human habitation.

These were great and beneficent reforms, and there was much legislative activity of a similar kind in other directions, but after 1835 the pace began to slacken more and more. Durham had gone, and Grey and Brougham; Lord John Russell, once so active in reform, was beginning to earn his nickname of Finality Jack. Within two years of its election, the new Parliament had lost much of its driving power and support in the country, though William IV, with a clumsiness that would have horrified his astute old father, gave them another lease of power by a premature dissolution that brought in a Conservative ministry for a few months, and gave Peel, their leader, an opportunity of showing that between Conservative and Whig principles there was now not much to choose. The Whig Premier who succeeded Grey was Lord Melbourne, whose policy in respect of any inconveniently controversial question was, as he would say, "why can't they leave it alone?" Under his auspices Whiggism became more and more commonplace and stagnant, none of the drastic changes in Church and State materialized, the torrent of reform shrank to a trickle. Administrative inefficiency reigned supreme and the budgets floundered through a series of deficits. Long before the party was driven from office—after its existence had been galvanized on through two extra years owing to a quarrel between the young Queen and the Conservatives over the appointments to the Royal Household—Whiggism was a spent force.

We have purposely hitherto refrained from mentioning the most important Whig measure of all, the Poor Law of 1834. This it was that emphasized beyond any possibility of mistake the antagonism between the middle class that held the power of the franchise and the working class that had helped to give it. The situation created by the wartime expedient of supplementing wages out of rates was demoralizing enough in all conscience, carried out as it was by parish authorities without system and often without humanity. But its intention had been kindly and, with all its faults, it had succeeded in tiding over a period of great distress. The unprecedented misery caused by war, mass production, and the pressure of population on the means of subsistence, left the authorities no choice but to leave multitudes to starve outright, or else to put themselves and the

country to some considerable expense and inconvenience in maintaining them. Nevertheless they were on the horns of a real dilemma, because if relief became acceptable as a substitute for work, the industrious would be burdened with the maintenance of the idle and dragged down to their level. But when work meant acceptance of the hours, conditions and wages of the average factory or agricultural worker, it was difficult to conceive of any lot to which these would be preferable. It ought, in fact, to have been obvious that Poor Law Reform would not stop at the Poor Law, but involved such a refashioning of our social system as to make decent wages and conditions the right of every willing worker.

Such an attempt would have seemed beyond the bounds of possibility to the middle-class economists who had practically a free hand in the framing of the new Poor Law. The utmost they were prepared to concede was already embodied in the Factory Law of 1833. They therefore approached their task in what they imagined to be a scientific spirit, one from which the disturbing factor of compassion was as far as possible eliminated. They acted in the spirit of a certain Christian preacher who, despairing of the commonplace amenities of Hell, was moved to proclaim a special and super-heated Gehenna for those who rejected his claims to divine inspiration. The life of a workman might very often be Hell—well and good!—but the authorities would undertake to make that of a pauper Gehenna. All the resources of scientific ingenuity were devoted to securing that the lot of those who were dependent on the tender mercies of the State should be worse in every way than that of the poorest starveling outside—no light undertaking when we remember that the spectacle of one of the latter starved to death under a hedge was not unknown.

The middle-class legislators were going to take no chances. The aged and infirm who were no longer capable of providing for themselves were doubtless assumed to be suffering from their lack of providence, it was better at any rate that their lives should be allowed to waste away under conditions that combined the minimum of expense with the maximum of affliction. Little children whose parents were imprudent enough to bring them within the clutches of the State would have the sins of those parents visited—with a vengeance—on their heads. The workhouse test was applied with the utmost strictness. With comparatively few exceptions he or she who wanted relief must go for it to the workhouse, a place which the poor, paying it an altogether unmerited compliment, called a

Bastille, and which was really a house of slow torture, torture by underfeeding, torture by every indignity that arbitrary tyranny could devise for the helpless and friendless, torture by the tearing of parents from children, and of husband from wife in their declining days. Lest any element of humanity should mar the exquisite perfection of this system, the parish authorities, to whose feelings some appeal was at least possible, were scrapped, artificial unions of parishes were made the unit of administration, and their Boards of Guardians were merely the mouthpieces of three permanent Commissioners sitting at Whitehall, in comfortable aloofness from all sympathetic bias, and only concerned to enforce the utmost letter of the law. Finally, no step was taken to redress the admitted grievance of the law regarding Settlement.

This Poor Law of 1834 was regarded as a triumph of reforming legislation by the class which the Reform Bill had elevated to power. It had many advantages; it certainly had the effect of enormously reducing the number of paupers, when it was no worse to die outright than to be kept alive by charity. It was likely to provide a cheaper supply of labour, when the alternative to accepting the employer's conditions might be to endure those of the Bastilles. What went on inside those ugly walls might not be nice to think about, but after all it was impossible to make scientific omelettes without breaking a few human eggs, and an old age in the workhouse was not after all a possibility that need greatly disturb the complacency of a ten pound householder voter.

But the working class were more prejudiced on the subject. They were blind to the ultimate advantages of a policy that presented them with the choice of death by starvation, or life just sufficiently maintained to be conscious of its own misery. The violent transition from the old to the new system accentuated their troubles, and the lot of those, in particular, who had been trained to crafts like handloom weaving—now killed by machinery—was pitiable. A succession of bad harvests and, in 1836–7, one of those periodical commercial smashes which had become a feature of the new industrialism, threw multitudes of willing workers out of employment—between the devil of the workhouse and the deep sea of starvation. The workers took these things in far from good part, and, especially in the industrial districts of the North and Midlands, were infuriated at the shabby return they considered the middle class to have made them for their help in securing the new franchise. But it was now too late, the new rulers were in the saddle and short of armed rebellion there appeared to be no legal redress.

But the workers' point of view found voice more eloquent than that of the politicians and dismal scientists. A young, Cockney journalist, called Charles Dickens, was just rising into fame as the greatest interpreter of the English character since Shakespeare. With even less book-learning than the little Latin and less Greek that Shakespeare had brought up to town with him, Dickens had, like him, a heart to which cruelty in any form was intolerable, and a directness of vision that enabled him to describe the thing that was and not the abstraction that was supposed to be. In 1838 appeared his *Oliver Twist*, in which the working of the scientific Poor Law was exposed in all its naked squalor and inhumanity, a description by which that piece of legislation will be branded for ever, though the very names of Chadwick the Benthamite and Senior the economist, its chief devisers, are known only to a handful of specialists. And yet these very doctrinaires were working, according to their lights, for the good of their fellows.

The sufferings of the workers found a more uncompromising champion even than Dickens in the person of a methodist preacher called Joseph Stephens, no Jacobin or Radical, but a High Tory who regarded the middle class as the real enemy and the Reform Bill as a national disaster. Stephens may not have had Dickens's power of seeing and describing the world around him, but he achieved something almost equally remarkable, in the fact that he could open his Bible and read therein not the comfortable things that provided sermons for the well to do, nor the meek counsels of resignation that kept the poor out of mischief, but the divine wrath with which the prophets had blasted those who oppressed the poor of their own days, the flaming passion with which Christ had denounced the devourers of widows' houses and driven the money-changers out of the Temple. Nonconformity spoke, through his lips, with the voice of the old Puritan Levellers, a voice terrible to men who dared call it science to exploit the misery of God's poor.

"The new Poor Law," he thundered, "is the law of devils, i ought to be resisted to the death, even if the first man who may b slaughtered in opposing it should be Lord John Russell himself." He went further than this, if further it were possible to g than uttering personal threats against a scion of so respectable House. "If it is to come," he told an audience of Manchester workers "let it come; it shall be an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth wife for wife, child for child, blood for blood"—and here his voic was drowned by loud and continuous cheers. He was even capable

of proclaiming from the pulpit some of those unfortunate texts that the good taste of other preachers consents to ignore: "Those who are to go to Hell hereafter are, not the Antinomians, not the Unitarians, not the Mahometans, the Pagans, the Catholics, or the Protestant Churchmen . . . there is not a word about creeds or articles of belief; there is not a word about any particular professions; there is not a word about any rites, or ceremonies, or institutions . . . but those who go away into everlasting death, they are men of all lands, tongues, trades and politics, that have refused to clothe the naked, and that have not visited and sympathized with the sick. Christ says so." [1] It was hardly necessary for the reporter of so strange a sermon to add, in parenthesis, at this point—"great astonishment." For it was not the first time that men had been "astonished at His doctrine."

The opposition to the new Poor Law was swelled by the last invectives of the redoubtable old warrior, Cobbett, who argued, cogently enough, that since the rich had, at the Reformation and afterwards, deprived the poor of the Common Lands and ancient sources of maintenance, the poor were entitled to as human and Christian a treatment as they had received in the days of the old religion, and who demanded that Reform shou'd be converted from a fraud into a reality by extending the right to make the laws to every citizen who was expected to obey them.

It was on this issue of the Poor Law more than any other that battle was joined between the voting middle and the non-voting working classes. But the Whig government had shown their lack of sympathy with the workers plainly enough in other ways. One of their first acts had been to repress, with brutal savagery, the feeble revolt of agricultural labourers known as the Swing Riots. The amiable Lord Melbourne, then Home Secretary, had casually thrown out the suggestion of reviving the use of spring guns. It was during his Home Secretaryship that the middle-class fright at Trades Unions nearly led to the reenaction, under a slightly modified form, of the Combination Laws, a step confidently recommended by Nassau Senior, whom we have already mentioned as one of the economic promoters of the new Poor Law. Lord Melbourne's instinct for letting things alone restrained him from such an open attack on the workers, but he characteristically turned the flank of the position by putting the forces of legal chicanery to work. In March 1834

[1] For these and similar extracts see *The Life of Joseph Rayner Stephens* by G. J. Holyoake.

a forgotten statute was revived, almost certainly illegally, in order to strike terror into the movement. Half a dozen labourers in the little Dorsetshire parish of Tolpuddle, who had not even gone on strike, had bound themselves by oath in a Trades Union to resist a reduction of their wages to the lordly sum of 6*s.* a week. For this they were sentenced to seven years' transportation. It was only after a formidable popular agitation and a great deal of shuffling and procrastination that the Whig government, which had hurried the poor men off to Australia, consented to allow their return.

The Trades Union movement was, from the workers' point of view, a great disappointment during these early years. A grandiose scheme, under the auspices of the indefatigable Owen, of forming a union of all trades, broke down hopelessly, and in the lean years after 1836 the Trades Unions failed altogether to hold their own against the employers, or to include in their membership more than a comparatively insignificant minority of the workers. The popular indignation against the rule of the middle class found its chief expression in that formidable agitation which is known as Chartism, and which more than once seemed to threaten actual revolution.

The story of this agitation has been admirably told, in recent years, by two young writers, Julius West [1] and Mark Hovell,[2] both of whose lives have been tragically cut short. We do not propose to repeat the story here of how the populace which had, with the full approval of the Whigs, struck terror into the Tory opposition to the Reform Bill, now found themselves not only disfranchised, but under a government bitterly prejudiced against their class and its interests; how in London, in Birmingham, in Yorkshire and Lancashire, the fury which had unnerved the Tories now burned with double ardour against the Whigs; how a People's Charter was drafted, and so ominous a body as a National Convention came into being; how the crisis came to a head in 1839, with the presentation of a monster petition; how the government, backed by the entire strength of the voting classes, without distinction of party, refused to budge an inch; how the threatened insurrection fizzled out before the display of irresistible force; and how an attempt to present another monster petition in the year of revolutions, 1848, led to every gentleman in London, as Greville puts it, becoming a special constable, and the final collapse of the movement.

Chartism was, from the start, a forlorn hope, because at this

[1] *A History of the Chartist Movement.*
[2] *History of Chartism.*

time the workers, miserably educated for the most part and with little time for reflection, had never thought out their own position. They knew that their lot had been rendered desperately miserable since the advent of machinery and scientific agriculture, the time and the social system were palpably out of joint, but in spite of Robert Owen and such democratic economists as Hodgskin and Thompson, it had never occurred to most of them that this could be set right by a programme of social reform. The six points of the People's Charter were all purely political, and aimed at securing that Parliament should represent, at all times and accurately, the will of a majority of the people, and not, as under the Reform Bill franchise, that of a not unbiassed nor unbribed majority of those more or less comfortably off.

This may have been well enough for a start, but the Chartists and their leaders had only the vaguest and most conflicting ideas of what they meant to do with the franchise when they got it. The political economists, with all their faults, had a perfectly definite notion of what the sovereign power in the community ought or ought not to do. But there were almost as many Chartist Utopias as there were leaders. Some of them followed Cobbett and Stephens in a romantic desire so common at that time, to put back the clock to before the advent of machinery or before the Reformation. Others were for a boldly socialistic programme, for taking away the property as well as the privileges of Dives, whereas others were for giving individualism its first full and free chance. As for the rank and file, they had, as Mr. Hovell puts it, " no policy at all . . . A moving sense of wrong, a fierce desire to remedy the conditions of their daily life, were the only spurs which drove them into agitation and rioting." No sense of wrong, however keen, can compensate for confusion of ideas and conflict of purpose.

Not only were the Chartists at hopeless variance as to what they wanted to get, but as to how they were to set about getting it. Some of them, like William Lovett, would hear of nothing but peaceful persuasion, others, like George Harney, who aspired to be the English Marat, talked cheerfully of tying Members of Parliament neck to knees and throwing them into the Thames. The man who came eventually to head the movement, Feargus O'Connor, was a big, blustering Irishman with more than the ordinary Irishman's flow of words, and no very definite ideas on any subject whatever except that of securing the maximum of advertisement combined with the minimum of personal risk. It was in the North that the party of

physical force was strongest, and the practical turn of mind of these revolutionaries was shown by their fondness for "the puissant pike", which was turned out in considerable quantities and often sold by its recipients for a profit of a shilling or so, which was about all the service it was capable of performing for anyone.

Luckily, in the critical year 1839, the commander of the troops in the Northern District was Sir Charles Napier, a thoroughly capable officer but—what in an officer is somewhat rare—a liberal-minded citizen, one who thoroughly sympathized with most of the demands of the Chartists, and had a horror of using physical force, save in the last extremity. He knew enough about war to realize how completely his trained regulars would have the largest mob at their mercy, and he had made his dispositions for crushing them swiftly and scientifically if it should come to that. But with infinite tact and patience he contrived to avoid the least occasion for strife and, lest his forbearance should be taken for weakness, he took one or two of the Chartist leaders in the friendliest way to see his guns and to realize, from his soldierly explanation, what the resort to pike and tocsin would really mean. It is thanks mainly to Napier that the crisis passed away without a massacre of Englishmen by Englishmen that might have kindled an inextinguishable fire of class-hatred.

With its divided counsels and divided leaders—they were perpetually squabbling among themselves—Chartism was doomed to failure, but what set the seal on its discomfiture was the discovery, by the middle-class, of a party cry capable of diverting the energies of the workers from the pursuit of political reform. The agitation against the Corn Laws, that led to the foundation of the Anti-Corn-Law League in 1839, was a thoroughly middle-class movement, and its leaders were drawn from the ranks of the employers. But these leaders differed from those of the Chartists by knowing what they wanted and how they meant to get it, and the cry of cheap bread was one that echoed in the heart of every working man in the "hungry forties". It was in vain that the Chartist leaders protested that the desire for cheap bread was not unconnected with that for cheap wages, that once the franchise was secured the repeal of the Corn Laws—together with other things less agreeable to the capitalist—would follow as a matter of course. The people can seldom think about two things at once, and their interest was shifted from the Charter to Corn Law Repeal. The better times that followed the attainment of this latter object seemed to justify the existing regime, and the social discontent that had risen to a height in the thirties was driven below the surface in the fifties.

2

The Optimism of Respectability

Thus was the triumph of the middle class confirmed by the defeat of their former allies, the proletariat, who wished to share with them the fruits of victory. The failure of the Chartists was certainly no unmixed evil, for a mass of uneducated men, reared up, often amid the most brutalizing conditions, and conspicuously lacking alike in leadership and in ideas, was hardly as yet fitted for the responsibility of guiding England through a period of such critical transition. And despite the inevitable bias that every class possesses in favour of its own interests, the electorate of the first Reform Bill showed itself in many ways surprisingly broad-minded and even altruistic. How far they were from getting to the root of the problems created by the Industrial Revolution time would show, but at least they made a brave attempt, and one which seemed at the time to have been successful, to adjust the social organism to the conditions of its new, self-created environment.

Whatever defects may have lurked beneath the surface were not yet obvious, save to a comparatively small minority, especially after the Chartist agitation had died down. The fifties of the century marked a time of fairly general complacency even among the workers, a complacency hardly ruffled by the distant horrors of the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny. It went almost without saying to the man in the street that the world was every day and in every way getting better and better, and that of this beneficent progress England was in the van.

It is easy enough for us, in the light of subsequent events, to laugh at the optimism of our great-grandfathers, an optimism that did not deceive the wisest even of their own generation, and perhaps the easiest way of acquiring a quick reputation in modern letters is to be pleasantly cynical about the foibles of Victorians—for the Victorian age, if we are to attach any useful sense to the word, commences not with the Queen's accession but with the Reform Bill. But we are the last people who have any right to laugh at an epoch of such solid and substantial achievement, unless the waterfly is the best critic of the crow for his failure to fly like the eagle. But our business is neither to vindicate nor to condemn the early Victorians (placing the dividing line of the epoch at the year 1867), but to understand both their achievement and their failure, their achievement in producing an amount of permanent and enduring work equalled in

hardly any equally short period of our history, except perhaps that intervening between Drake's voyage round the world and the death of Bacon, their failure in ordering and settling all things, or anything, on the best and surest foundations. For it was just the weakness of the Victorians that they strengthened and improved every part of the building except the foundations—their peculiar sense of decency perhaps withheld them from probing for dry rot in the cellarage.

Let us first briefly summarize the course of events, in England, between the two Reform Bills. The triumph of the middle class had brought the Whigs, who had all along been the party of the moneyed and Nonconformist interests, into power. But the Tory party, though snowed under at the election of 1832, had found in Peel a leader who conceived the idea of outbidding the Whigs with the middle class itself. This was no doubt a masterpiece of political tactics, but it involved the abandonment of almost every principle for which the Tories had hitherto stood, in favour of an enlightened opportunism. "Tory men, Whig measures," was the cry that Disraeli put into the mouth of one of his typical wirepullers, and it is no unfair description of Peel's new Conservatism. Peel, however, was sincerely honest and patriotic in his attitude; he was, in fact, a true product of that age in his eagerness to cut the theory and get ahead with the business of governing.

Up to a certain point he succeeded admirably. The reforming government of Lord Grey had become the played-out and muddling administration of Lord Melbourne, and in 1841 Peel swept the country with a programme that is seldom unacceptable to an English electorate, that of a sound and peaceful government, committed to no sensational experiments at home or abroad. The promise was well kept. Peel was not far short of an administrative genius; as Premier he was master, to the minutest detail, of the business of every department, but far from crushing the individuality of his subordinates, he succeeded in forming and training a team of ministers of probably unprecedented ability in the annals of Cabinet government. But Peel's temperamental opportunism brought its inevitable Nemesis on his party. If there was one thing to which his government was more pledged than any other, it was to the maintenance of the duty on corn, which was the bulwark of the old Tory landed interest, and with which even the Whigs had not dared to dispense.

It was against these very Corn Laws that a popular agitation was gathering in the industrial districts comparable with that which had brought about the Reform Bill. It was in 1838 that the Anti-

Corn Law League was formed, and its leaders, Richard Cobden and John Bright, though sturdy representatives of the middle class, were yet, where the business interests of their fellow employers did not bias their judgment, men of sincerely democratic sympathies. In the demand for cheap bread they managed to unite the workers once again with the middle class, and to create a popular agitation which no government could afford to ignore. This agitation was all the more powerful from the fact that the advent of railways was shifting the centre of political gravity from London to the industrial North, and giving point to the epigram that what Lancashire thinks to-day England will think to-morrow. Cobden, Bright and their associates were significantly grouped under the name of the "Manchester School".

Peel himself was the last man to wield the mop of Mrs. Partington against this new, rising tide of popular agitation. No sooner was he in the saddle than he embarked on a course of Budgets, two of which he introduced himself, which made such havoc with the protective system that the Corn Laws became more and more of an anomaly. At the same time he converted the Whig deficits into surpluses by a rigorous pursuit of peace and economy, and the imposition of a sevenpenny income tax.

The final crisis came when Ireland was swept by the terrible Black Famine, and something very like a famine was threatened in England. Wellington, in his unfeeling way, said that rotten potatoes had put Peel into his damned fright, but it would be fairer to say that the humane [1] and painfully conscientious Premier was unwilling to allow any theory or party interest to separate one crust of bread from any starving man or woman. He was more than half convinced already by his ministerial experience that the Corn Laws must go. He came out, to the amazed indignation of the old and consistent Tories, and despite the magnificent invective of the more philosophic leader of the young Tories, Benjamin Disraeli, as the opponent of the very system he had taken office to maintain. He saved his personal honour by an offer of resignation, but there was none to take his place, and the Corn Laws, under his auspices and those of the unconvinced but patriotic Wellington, disappeared from the Statute Book.

The enraged die-hards of Peel's own party, subordinating every other consideration to that of revenge, formed an unnatural alliance with the Radicals to get rid of the leader who, they thought, had

[1] As regards men. His humanity stopped short when it was a question of befriending animals.

betrayed them. They succeeded so completely as to split their party from top to bottom and, despite their triumph of five years ago and the brilliant record of their administration, to condemn Toryism to be in a permanent Parliamentary minority so long as a middle class franchise should last. Henceforth a Tory ministry could only exist on sufferance or through the differences of the Whigs.

For twenty-one years, then, from 1846 to 1867, the country continued to be ruled on Whig-Liberal principles, supported by a middle-class electorate, and it is to this period most of all that our thoughts instinctively recur when we speak of Victorianism. Up to 1846, the new electorate had not so completely succeeded in realizing their power as in the subsequent two decades. Henceforth we see the gradual transformation of an aristocratic Whig government by the new leaven of the Manchester school. So long as Russell, the representative man of the great Whig houses, and the old Canningite, Palmerston, remained at the head of affairs, this process was masked, and indeed may be said to have culminated in Gladstone's ministry of 1868, which was formed when the franchise had already departed from the class whose ideals that ministry translated into law.

Looking back at this period of solid respectability, frock-coated and bewhiskered, it must be admitted that if our middle class failed, in the long run, to get at the root of the social evil born of the Industrial Revolution, they at least failed very honourably or, as they themselves would perhaps have preferred to put it, respectably. Very few of them had the least doubt that they had succeeded; and then, and for a long time afterwards, it was the fashion to luxuriate in ecstasies of statistics over the wonderful century, the wonderful reign into which they had been happy enough to be born.

Macaulay had led the fashion. Moving, as he did, in the cultured and brilliant Whig coterie that graced the amenities of Holland House, it was not difficult for him to read into the whole course of our history the triumph of those very principles and that very party which came to their own in 1832. Nor was he altogether wrong for, though he was no lawyer, the Whig principles to which he gave his allegiance were those born of the English Common Law, and despite of gross partiality in his application of them, it may fairly be claimed for him that he had grasped the root of the matter so far as our constitutional progress was concerned. But Macaulay's robust optimism was not limited to the Constitution. Like other men who have very little scientific knowledge, he had an almost boundless faith in the possibilities of science. The celebrated third chapter of

his History, in which he contrasts the England of Charles II with that of Victoria, is an implied panegyric of the almighty god Progress, who has mapped out the landscape into neatly enclosed fields, and dotted it with towns where the wheels of industry never stop. Terribly did he trounce sentimentalists like Southey, who pined after the pretty, rose-covered cottages, the graciousness and sleepy amenities of the old, unprogressive days. But Macaulay had no regrets nor the shadow of a doubt about flinging the reins on the neck of science and letting her gallop off with us to . . . but the Macaulays of this world cannot pause to speculate unpractically about the end of progress. Science heals the sick; science multiplies the fruits of the earth; science gives knowledge where philosophy gives a headache; science—more power to its elbow!—is fated to dispel the mists of poetry with its dry light and quench any frenzy, however fine; science can deliver us from the cobwebs spun by priestcraft of all denominations; therefore, pile up the fires of the good ship Progress, down with the helmsman into the stokehold, shovel on the chart with the coal, dismiss the pilot, and let all hands congratulate each other on the unprecedented number of knots an hour at which we are admittedly travelling somewhither!

Macaulay, however, was somewhat in advance of his time, for the full flood tide of optimism does not set in till nearly the middle of the century. The reason for this is not far to seek. Until the middle of the forties the country, still staggering under the burden of her struggle against France, had little enough cause for self-congratulation. The enormous debt involved crushing taxation, and little had been done to diminish it. Even so capitalist an economist as Ricardo had proposed to pay it off by a property tax, or what we should now call a capital levy.[1] Before the forties the dreadful prospect envisaged by Malthus, of population outrunning the means of subsistence, was to some extent realized. Our trade, hampered by the rising tariffs of our European rivals not to speak of our own import duties, showed a painful slowness in expanding. It was not until 1826 that the declared value of our exports topped that of the Waterloo year, 1815, only to drop below it again in '37, '38, '40, and '42. Wages, calculated in real values, had been rising—if we may trust Professor Bowley—during the period 1810–1852, but the rise had been exceedingly slow, and the adjective "hungry" that has clung, ever since, to the forties, shows how miserable the condition of the people must have been in the last days of the Corn Laws. The

[1] See *The Capital Levy Explained*, by H. Dalton, p. 24.

evil of insufficient wages was further aggravated by that of chronic unemployment, which to some extent it helped to cause. Goods would be manufactured for foreign markets with which those markets would be periodically glutted, and when this happened the poverty of the masses at home made it impossible for them to create an effective demand for goods of which they were in urgent need.

We should be entering on a region of bitter controversy if we were to speculate how far the improvement in material conditions that undoubtedly took place after the adoption of Free Trade was due to that policy, and how much to other causes that were operating at the same time. But if ever there was a time when England could afford to throw open her ports to foreign goods it was during the fifties and sixties. A boxer, pitted against an exhausted or inferior opponent, may sometimes abandon his guard and go in with both fists, tactics that might prove disastrous in other circumstances.

After 1848 our Continental rivals, who had been gradually creeping up on us, became involved in a cycle of wars, and in the early sixties the progress of the United States was arrested by the fratricidal struggle of North and South. England, during this period, was comparatively little affected by the folly of her Crimean adventure, the tragedy of the Indian Mutiny (for which India had to pay), and a crop of little wars. In the forties she had developed her railway system, despite the prodigal speculation and the complete lack of unified plan with which that development was accompanied. She was in the best position to use her giant strength to maintain the lead—out of all proportion to her natural resources—that she had already obtained in the race for wealth. Accordingly Free Trade became almost a gospel, and what Peel had begun, Gladstone, his profound admirer, pushed to as logical a conclusion as the English nature is capable of pushing anything.

Not only were the ports thrown open to foreign goods, but—what was of almost equal importance—the opportunity for profitable investment was thrown open to any member of the new governing class who had a few savings to embark in productive activity. In 1837 the first act was passed permitting the formation of Limited Liability Companies, and this system was consolidated by the Companies Act of 1862. In the previous year Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had made provision for the investment of the smallest sums saved by the workers, in his establishment of Post Office Savings Banks. Thus was the process completed, which had been begun when first those who had wealth above their

immediate needs had realized that it was better to invest than to hoard, and it now culminated in the practically complete mobilization of the whole surplus capital in the country. Even the children had the opportunity of putting their spare pocket money into the village penny bank.

The machinery for the handling and disposal of capital had all this time been growing in complexity and magnitude. The curious monopoly by which the Bank of England had been protected from the competition of any but private firms within a sixty-five miles' radius was finally abolished in 1833, and a number of great joint stock banks sprang up, centring in the Bank of England, and depositing their reserves therein. Thus the Bank became the support of a highly centralized system, the keystone of the arch of British finance, and its own position was secured on a permanent basis by Peel's Bank Charter Act of 1844, which separated the Issue from the Banking department, and provided that no notes should be issued, above a certain fixed amount, without a cash equivalent. It was characteristically English that the whole success of this law depended on the fact that at an urgent crisis ministers, who were no more above the law than bankers, might authorize the directors to break it in the faith that Parliament would indemnify them. It was a graver defect of our banking system that it actually helped to precipitate crises by the fact that the Bank of England naturally tended to lower its rate of interest during periods of speculative optimism, thereby promoting the very evil a wise policy should have sought to check, and then to raise the rate steeply on the first signs of a panic, thereby precipitating a smash. For in spite of its vast responsibilities the Bank continued to be, not a department of the State, but a money-making concern. The price of this individualism was paid in a woeful accentuation of unemployment and the miseries attendant on recurring shocks to our financial system, even though these tended to become somewhat less catastrophic during the second half of the century.

But, for good or evil, individualism was having its innings, though not nearly so completely as the more rigid economists would have desired. For it is seldom that any theory whatever is pushed to its logical conclusion in England. In the middle of the century the conditions for the free play of individual energy and competition, postulated in the textbooks, prevailed to a much larger extent than in our own days of trusts and huge limited liability companies. Many of the employers were still self-made men, and the hard conditions

that had obtained for the thirty years or so after the war had not provided them with the temptation to rest on their oars and take their prosperity for granted. They were possessed, for the most part, with the straightforward desire to dispose of their goods in any fair and open market, and to excel their competitors either by quality or cheapness. Such monopolistic forms of enterprise as the working of concessions, the exploiting of industrially backward peoples by usury, and the formation of vast business amalgamations, were as yet in their infancy.

The conditions were all in our favour. There was, during these years, a marked tendency on the Continent to adopt free trade principles, and the mid-century epidemic of wars in itself created a demand for British clothes to cover and arms to destroy the men thus drawn from productive labour. The colonies, which were just beginning to find their feet as self-governing communities, created another group of eager markets for the goods of the old country. By means not the most scrupulous, the peoples of India and the Far East were brought into or retained in the orbit of our business activities. England was now sending out her manufactured goods to every quarter of the globe, and receiving in exchange the food and raw products necessary to her activities. She was not altogether unjustified in her boast of being the workshop of the world, and could, in fact, force the world to employ her, for the time, on terms highly advantageous to herself. In no respect had she profited more by free trade and the final repeal of the Navigation Laws than in respect of her shipbuilding industry, and now that iron ships were replacing wooden ones, her available mineral resources and the skill of her engineers placed her in a position of uncontested supremacy, especially when her chief rival, the United States, chose to commit temporary hara-kiri.

This was not the end of England's advantages, for the enormous amount of surplus wealth she accumulated in these halcyon days of her industry made it natural for other peoples, trying to catch up with her development, to come to her for the necessary capital, machinery, and technical ability to start it. The result was that England became what is known as a creditor nation, and London a sort of universal clearing house. England was therefore attracting to herself a steadily increasing stream of wealth for services rendered, and much of this wealth was available for providing employment at home. All the statistics of this time tell the same tale of almost fabulous increase. Exports of British goods, which

were less in 1840 than they were in 1815, had considerably more than doubled by 1855, quadrupled by 1864, and increased nearly fivefold by 1870! Other figures are to match.

It was no wonder that the ordinary Englishman of this time should have felt much in the mood of Nebuchadnezzar when he surveyed great Babylon which he had built to his glory. He had, by every measurable standard, made a stupendous success of things generally. In a distracted world he had held up a standard of peaceful and ordered progress. Freedom, in the words of his favourite poet, had broadened down from precedent to precedent, until the work of 1867 crowned that of 1832. He could point to a long series of reforming legislation; to the early Factory Acts gradually expanded into a great code humanizing the conditions of labour; to the work of Romilly, consummated by the reform of the Penal Law; to that of Martin, crowned by the general protection afforded to domestic animals and the abolition of certain brutal sports, though not yet those of tormenting hares and carted stags; to the more merciful treatment of debtors; to the Public Health Act of 1848, which set up central and local organizations for combating insanitary conditions; to the reform of the Civil Service from 1850–1870, which went a certain way to purge the executive from the blight of "influence", and to prevent the development of anything like the American Spoils System; to the rapid and beneficent advance in municipal self-government that had followed on the Act of 1835.

What must have seemed one of the most pleasing features of all was the general abeyance of class hatred and conflict. Chartism was no longer a force to be reckoned with after the fiasco of 1848, and the more militant and revolutionary forms of working class activity died down in the general increase of prosperity. Prices were certainly rising as a result of the new discoveries of gold, but wages more than kept pace with them, and there is no doubt, despite the propagandist assertion of Karl Marx to the contrary, that the workman had his share—though whether an adequate or just one is another question—in the general increase in prosperity. As for the unemployment that continued to dog the progress of industry, it was certainly less acute than during the first half of the century, and the generally booming trade tended to keep it within manageable limits. There was certainly no such sense of acute grievance among the workers as there had been at the time of Peterloo or in the late thirties.

The workers had also made the discovery that by limiting their

aims they might obtain more beneficent results to themselves. The glowing, idealistic schemes of Robert Owen had gone out of fashion; the self-subsisting communities of co-operating workers had failed to pay their way, and the ideas of a universal Trades Union, and of the workers taking over the control of production, had proved, for the nonce, impracticable. The Trades Unions of the fifties and sixties were generally content to confine themselves to getting the best conditions possible in their own trades, and organizing themselves on business lines, with a permanent staff of officials. For all practical purposes, they dropped the idea of altering the framework of society, and accepted the capitalist system as a condition of the game. Meanwhile, the development of workmen's co-operative societies, which was thoroughly in accordance with the most orthodox political economy, was an impressive example of the power of the ordinary man to help himself without invoking the State. A few workers of Rochdale, undeterred by a previous failure in their native town, clubbed together to start a co-operative stores in Toad Lane. Either guided by their own Lancastrian shrewdness or warned by the fate of their predecessors, they decided to run the enterprise on severely business lines, making profits depend on purchases and not on ideals. The success of this venture made it the model for co-operative societies that sprang up all over England and Scotland, gradually widening and linking together their activities, until their membership came to be numbered by millions, to the great material benefit of the workers, and an increase, not to be reckoned by statistics, in their power of combination and self-help, when the time should come to revive the discarded ambitions of previous years.

It must be admitted that an advocate of the middle class, which the first Reform Bill had raised to power, could put up an exceedingly plausible defence. So distinguished an observer as Lecky pronounces that "the world has never seen a better Constitution than England enjoyed between the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Reform Bill of 1867. Very few parliamentary governments have included more talent, or represented more faithfully the various interests and opinions of a great nation, or maintained under many trying circumstances a higher level of political purity and patriotism".[1] This is high praise, yet he would be a bold man who should pronounce it extravagant. For the middle class was by no means uncompromisingly disposed to use its power in the only way in which, according to some of their own philosophers, any class could use it, that is to say in a spirit of more or less enlightened egotism.

[1] *Democracy and Liberty*, vol. i, p. 21.

There was indeed enough of this spirit about, both in statesmen and private citizens. It is a distinct shock when we find a man like John Bright opposing the intervention of the State to humanize conditions in factories, and when we remember that John Bright himself was an employer as well as a reformer, we are momentarily, at any rate, reminded of those earlier nonconformists who

> "Compound for sins they are inclined to
> By damning those they have no mind to,"

but then we must remember that Bright was doing his best, indirectly, to remedy the conditions of labour by constantly agitating for a transfer of electoral predominance from his own class to that of the workers. We cannot condone so readily the constant efforts of employers to prevent their workmen from combining, nor the prejudice which trades unionists had too good reason to complain of in the administration of the law in cases of trade disputes. And the hideous brick walls of the Poor Law Bastilles still marred the landscape with their insolent denial of Christ's Golden Rule in the relations of man to man.

There was enough and to spare of selfishness and tyranny, and the improvement was only relative—even in the good years there was a percentage, somewhere about four per cent, of unemployment, and there was an amount of squalor and misery beneath the surface from which the imagination shrinks. But the governing class of those days was, as ordinary human nature goes, surprisingly humane and broadminded. They believed in individualism, and on the whole subscribed to the doctrine of every man for himself and devil take the hindmost. But they were no doctrinaires—Englishmen seldom are. Their reign was marked by some measures of reform which, like the Factory Acts, were diametrically opposed to the extreme tenets of the classical economists. Nor were they selfish monopolists of power. They freely conceded the right of the aristocracy to bear a leading part in the work of government, and nearly all the most advanced of their intellectual leaders were keenly in sympathy with the claims of the workers to a share in the franchise. One of the most indignant denunciations of working-class patience came from the lips of Cobden, and when Gladstone talked of social forces moving onward, irresistibly, in their might and majesty, he was prophesying, in his grand manner, an extension of the franchise. And this middle class Liberalism kept on gathering force, until some further measure of Reform than that of 1832 became inevitable.

Even if, in the light of subsequent events, we have to decide that

the apparent prosperity of the mid-Victorian epoch was deceptive, that the day of reckoning for a civilization that valued the meat above the life and the raiment above the body had only been postponed, we can at least apply to our frock-coated predecessors the epitaph chosen for himself by one of their greatest: "Here lies a generation that tried to do its duty."

3

Romance Triumphant

The year 1830, which we fixed as opening the second act of the tragedy "From Vienna to Versailles", signalizes the oncoming of what we may call the second wave of the great Emotional Revival, a movement that might have seemed, to an observer of that time, as if it had already spent its force.

Both in England and on the Continent the great Romantics of the late eighteenth and dawning nineteenth centuries had ceased to create. Goethe, the greatest of them all, was, in his Olympian old age, in conscious reaction against the Romanticism of his youth. Heine and Victor Hugo and Delacroix had begun to display their genius, and Chopin, though only twenty, had made his mark as a composer, but these were stars hardly yet risen above the horizon mists. In Britain Scott and the Lake Poets survived, but they had little more to say; the spirit of the time had already ceased to blow where they listed. In religion, always a touchstone of the English mind, the Low Church and Methodist movements had lost the glow of their primitive enthusiasm. The Evangelicals had learnt tactics, they had become less anxious about saving souls than cornering benefices for their party, and, as Dean Church puts it, they were on very easy terms with the world. Respectability of a rather formal kind had come to be their watchword, a narrow and colourless virtue from which charity was too often eliminated. None the less they continued to exercise a great and in many ways a beneficent influence in the inculcation of such virtue and purity as they were capable of understanding.

What distinguishes much of the early Romanticism is the facility with which it lends itself to purposes of reaction. Scott, like De Quincey and "Christopher North", was so much of a Tory as to come, at times, perilously near to being a toady; the Lakers, as Byron reminded them, turned out Tory at last; the Evangelicals were more inclined to inculcate patience than revolution. In France

the connection between Romance and reaction had been one of peculiar intimacy. Not even the Revolution could curb the posthumous tyranny of Racine and Boileau in the realm of letters; the regicide painter, David, carried the classic tradition to the extreme limits of pedantry, and his mantle fell upon that most gifted of draughtsmen, his pupil Ingres; in philosophy the most fashionable school of Napoleonic times favoured a dry and unimaginative rationalism; only among the still faithful supporters of Divine Right and the Bourbon lilies was the Romantic impulse stirring.

But now, in 1820, the Gallic cock, in Heine's expressive phrase, crows twice, and Paris becomes "the New Jerusalem of Liberalism". The dykes and dams of the classical tradition are swept away, not without trouble, for so high does feeling run that Victor Hugo is in actual danger of his life from the adherents of the old tradition—the performance of his *Hernani* converts the theatre into a nightly battle-ground of Classic and Romantic. The triumph of the latter is, for the next few years, at any rate, overwhelming, a swaggering and flamboyant Romanticism, harking back to the Renaissance and rife with the clash of swords and the passions of splendid *amoureuses*. Characteristically French in its mode of expression, the Romanticism of 1830 is nevertheless greatly indebted to English influence. Byron was nowhere more potent than in France; it was the name of Shakespeare that became the rallying cry for those opposed to the dominance of Racine; the master painters who were to dominate the salons of the thirties had gone to school with Turner, with Constable, and with Bonington.

"In France," said Heine, "the sun of liberty flames ever more powerfully and illumines the whole world with its rays!" France was now, like Heine himself, predominantly bourgeois, and indeed the Romantic spirit seems to have had a peculiar affinity with the middle class. This is equally true of England, despite exceptions like Byron and Shelley, on the one hand, and Cobbett on the other, but then Byron at least was always straining back after the classic tradition, and Shelley's susceptible mind was early moulded by the influence of the thoroughly middle-class Godwins. But it was among the aristocracy that the old eighteenth century tradition lingered longest, and their favourite organs of opinion, the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*, were perpetually emptying buckets of cold and often dirty water on any rising flames of emotional genius. On the other hand the working class, as soon as it came to have ideas of its own, lost little time in breaking away from a spirit essentially bourgeois,

until in Karl Marx it found a prophet and a doctrine of unrelenting and deliberately justified materialism. This struck deeper roots than the Romantic idealism of the middle-class Owen.

It is therefore during the period of bourgeois Liberalism in Western Europe that the Romantic movement enters upon its second and most influential phase. Before the thirties it had been Romance militant, now, for a season, it is Romance triumphant. In France, as Mr. Haldane Macfall puts it, "men thought awhile as though castles were on every hill, and rapiers on every hip, and women became love-lorn damsels, sighing for dangerous adventure," while in England, to adopt a happy extravagance of Mr. Chesterton's, it was a time of "inspired office boys". It was a time when young ladies used to go into ecstasies over the memory of Lord Byron; when they used to fill their albums with the chaste but soulful compliments of adorers in side-whiskers; when every occasion had its decently stereotyped emotion that it was almost improper not to display in public; the time when virgins, below a certain age, were almost indecently virginal, and fathers inhumanly portentous. We can see in those faded daguerrotypes that were the firstfruits of photographic science how exactly everybody had to pose in conformity with the appropriate sentiment, how tenderly the shrew would look up into the face of her henpecked lord, and how lovingly some grandfather, the terror of his family, would—and we are thinking of an actual instance—exhibit a plundered bird's nest to the terrified little boy who had been captured and forced, under menace of dire punishment, into the Presence.

It was by his perfect harmony with this spirit that Alfred Tennyson—his first independent book of poems was published in the momentous year 1830—commanded such an extravagant admiration among his own contemporaries, and has been so strangely depreciated in our own day. It is, significantly enough, by some of his pieces that sound most impossible in our own unromantic ears that his work was once chiefly prized. One hesitates between nausea and a guffaw on reading the Lord of Burleigh's programme for an ideal honeymoon:

> "Let us see these handsome houses
> Where the wealthy nobles dwell."

The dream world of these English Romantics was at once less exciting and less disreputable than that conjured up on the other side of the Channel. It was a world of stately homes, standing beautiful, as Mrs. Hemans has it,

> " Amidst their tall ancestral trees
> Through all the pleasant land,"

a world of great and bountiful gentlefolk, of white, Lawrence-faced ladies, " cruelly meek," in costumes appropriate to the selected period, of simple yeomen, of apple-cheeked millers, of light-hearted shepherdesses, and of a well-fed and behaved peasantry who divided their time between dancing round maypoles and serving their betters with manly devotion. It was an England easy for a prosperous bourgeois, particularly if he lived in towns and came little into contact with peasants, to wax exceedingly patriotic about. And a robustious patriotism accordingly flourishes at this time, especially among those whom the real or fancied omnipotence of a British navy commanded by jolly sea-dogs and manned by equally jolly Jack Tars preserved from any peril of death by battle,

> " Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land and by sea,
> War with a thousand battles and shaking a hundred thrones! "

This, at any rate, was one English aspect of what we have ventured to call Romance Triumphant, and it is this sentimentality that most irritates us, of a very different age, about the early Victorians. But it would be as unwise as it would be ungenerous to judge them as if they were nothing but sentimentalists, to talk of Tennyson, for instance, as if he were a mere minstrel of country-house drawing-rooms, or an unconscious court-jester who could see between the whiskers of the Prince Consort the majestic lineaments of King Arthur. *The Idiot Boy* and Wilkinson's spade could no more prevent Wordsworth becoming one of the supreme poets of the English language, than his most luscious lyrical *bonnes-bouches* could prevent Tennyson; and our middle class was enabled, in spite of its eccentricities, to make the period of its dominance almost as fruitful in the realm of mind as in that of matter.

There is one respect in which English Romance is especially distinguished from that which centred in Paris. This might have been described by a friendly critic as its moral earnestness, though one less favourably disposed might have called it sententious respectability. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two, but how characteristic is this quality of England, at this time, is shown by the impossibility of imagining Tennyson, or any other English poet before Swinburne, being allowed to turn his sentimentality into such channels as the *Rolla* of that typical French Romantic, de Musset, who devotes the long poem of that name to describing how a young rake, having decided to commit suicide on

the expiration of his funds, devotes his last night and last coin to purchasing the seduction of an innocent girl, who comes to love him in the morning with a reciprocated but foredoomed tenderness.

This interesting young couple would have never done for an English audience. Over the whole of our literature at this time broods the invisible but latent domination of the young female, for whose eyes everything had got to be fit. Even the fires of passion must be lowered to the temperature of Christmas snapdragons; even Charlotte Brontë is not found pure in the sight of the critical inquisition. A startling reaction sets in against the gay way of life patronized by George, the Prince Regent. Pierce Egan, who wrote such a fascinating account, in his *Life in London*, of the three typical Regency bucks, Tom, Jerry and Logic, finds himself compelled, on writing a sequel, no later than 1828, to conciliate his public by bringing all the principal characters—save Jerry, who embraces the joys of virtuous matrimony and a reformed life—to the bad ends apportioned to the wicked of improving fiction.

It is therefore not wholly warrantable to ascribe the militant respectability of the early Victorians to the accession of a girl queen, though there is no doubt that Victoria, like her son after her, confirmed the dominance of what was already coming to be the spirit of the age. Despite her tuition by that genial cynic, Lord Melbourne, the determined little lady had the good fortune to represent, with extraordinary fidelity, the contemporary ideal of middle-class womanhood. So thoroughly did she set about purifying the Augean stable of her predecessors, that she allowed an innocent lady of her court to be driven into the grave by dint of insult and groundless scandal. Her stern sense of duty and the complete irreproachability of her private life were unenlivened by one sparkle of humour, and despite her proficiency in drawing-room accomplishments, she was at heart and in sensibility a true Queen of the Philistines. And she married a husband who, though a worthy and soulful man not lacking in wisdom of a sort, possessed that heaviness of touch which is almost inseparable from German culture.

Victoria and Albert, between them, no doubt exercised a powerful influence in enforcing external conformity to a young-ladylike standard of art and conduct. But the true cause of this change of spirit, or at any rate of form, is not to be sought in the personality of any sovereign, however masterful. The great Evangelical movement, which had played so prominent a part in the British phase of the Emotional Revival, was now beginning to reap its

harvest. Not only had it permeated the middle class but, in its Anglican form, had captured a large portion of the aristocracy. The head of the House of Nevill—to take one typical instance—was at this time a Low Church country parson, a god-fearing man whose outlook and way of life would have been unimaginable to a *grand seigneur* of the preceding century. We know of another instance of an important Tory squire who was in the habit of reading one of the Church homilies, every Sunday, to his long-suffering family. Over the middle class, Nonconformity, reinforced by Methodism, disputed with the Church for predominance, and the austere ugliness of family life under such auspices has been described in innumerable treatises.

The Evangelical Revival, at this time when it had attained the maximum of its power, had outlived its first enthusiasm. It could produce no leaders to compare with those of the newly-started Oxford Movement. Its lack of ideas, its complacent provincialism, were more pronounced than ever. The lost tribes were discovered in England; the poor Holy Father became more lurid and sulphurous than ever; the End of the World knocked at the door with deafening insistence. And it may be doubted whether the external conformity to the demands of the "unco' guid" was reflected by an equally extensive change of heart or even of habit, once the forbidden thing could be decently veiled from sight. Such queer sidelights on the Victorians as we get in Lady Cardigan's frank memoirs suggest that ringlets and a crinoline no more made the virtuous lady than the habit makes the monk. In the noonday of Victorianism, ladies of easy virtue, like the celebrated Anonyma, flaunted in the park attended by bevies of what Sir William Hardman described as "lewd guardsmen of the baser sort". And there are not many families, nowadays, but can point to a black sheep in the shade of some disreputable great-uncle or the like who flourished in the very heyday of propriety. Peers and statesmen were not above resorting to the Coal Hole to attend the court of "Chief Baron Nicholson", an entertainment whose chief attraction consisted in its indecency. Rabelaisian toasts and humour were rife in masculine intercourse. The illicit indulgence of carnal affection was, like smoking, a practice to be carried on out of sight and cognizance of the ladies under a genteel conspiracy of silence. For a Prince of Wales to flaunt his amours at Brighton, like the Regent George, would seriously have endangered the throne—there was a decency to be preserved in these matters if nothing else.

None the less it would be unjust to speak as if all this moral discipline were merely the whitewashing of a sepulchre of corruption. The strength of Puritanism has always lain in the strengthening and concentration of will, and though the nineteenth century phase of it was not to be compared for intensity with the Calvinism of the seventeenth, it certainly played no small part in making the early Victorian age what it was—pre-eminently one of copious and solid achievement. For the Victorians, whatever their defects of taste and form, were veritable gluttons for work. They poured forth volume after volume with inexhaustible fecundity; in Parliament they delivered and endured set speeches lasting for hours—Palmerston defended his policy from the dusk of one day to the dawn of another, and held the House in breathless attention; in tropic climes they performed prodigies of endurance in stuffy clothes and without sunproof headgear, dancing on merrily through the height of an Indian summer in stations where modern ladies, if they ever dared come down from the hills, would be too helplessly prostrated to walk. Those little, round-faced Floras and Carolines may have turned out worsted work, embroidery, poker-work, fancy wood-carving, nature sketches and suchlike pretty gewgaws in the time that their great-grandchildren would have devoted to cutting divots and drinking dust on the carriers of motor cycles, but they would, from the Queen downwards, have blushed to shrink from the annual task of contributing to those enormous broods, the mere thought of which would horrify any but a working class mother of to-day. And of such came the Brontës, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Florence Nightingale, and Victoria herself.

The importance of being earnest may have been harped on by the Victorians in a way peculiarly annoying to an age so suspicious of any sort of solemnity as our own. But earnest they were, with a capacity for sustained effort that is the quality most needful of all for work that is fitted to endure. Many a modern exquisite will indicate, with a dry tolerance, the foibles of these Victorians; he will rally them for their pretentiousness, their frequent lack of humour, their often execrable taste, their unrestrained prolixity, their blatant insularity, their superficial habits of thought, their trapless drains, their horsehair, their oleos, their Sundays, and then, having thanked God that he is not like great-grandpapa, he sits down in the light of knowledge to produce . . . but we shall have forgotten what it was this time next year, and Dickens and Tennyson and Trollope and the rest of them will continue to line our shelves with

their smug-looking, substantial volumes—and the shelves of our children to the last literate generation.

It may be a form of spiritual long-sightedness that makes men more appreciative of the past than the present, but is there one of us who seriously believes that what Emerson called "character" and the Roman "*gravitas*" is so conspicuous among ourselves as it was in the days of Peel, of Gladstone, of Florence Nightingale, of Darwin, of Thomas Arnold, of Outram, of the Lawrences, of Shaftesbury, of John Bright, of Newman; as it was when the Prince Consort opened that Great Exhibition of 1851 which was fondly believed to usher in a Millennium of peaceful industry, and when "the Duke"—he needed no other appellation—was still a familiar figure, stiffly acknowledging the homage of passers-by in Hyde Park?

4

Romance in Stone

To get out of the realities of a prosaic and industrialized present into a dream of ancient colour and emotion was an almost universal instinct of the Romantics. But at first they showed little discrimination in their choice of a past. Despite the traditional opposition between Romantic and Classic, many undoubted Romantics went back to Greece and Rome for their inspiration. Walter Savage Landor wrote with equal facility of Gebir and the Orient, and of Greek gods and Sicilian shepherdesses. The more earnestly he strove after the Classic form the more truly did he display the spirit of a Romantic, so unlike the heavy Classicism of the eighteenth century, and so exactly expressive of Landor's own proud and fastidious personality.

It is in architecture that this Romantic straining after an exact Classicism was most pronounced, especially after the British imagination had been fired by the spectacle of the newly acquired Elgin marbles from the Parthenon. We have only to take our stand at Hyde Park Corner to have the evidences of it all round us, including Westmacott's bronze Achilles, which is not Achilles at all, but a crib from one of the Horse Tamers on the Roman Quirinal. A Roman triumphal arch, straight out of the Forum and tidied up a little on the way, was dumped down by Nash at the entrance of Buckingham Palace, and subsequently shifted to the Oxford Street entrance of Hyde Park. In the same spirit Inwood contrived to erect a passably accurate Erechtheum, not to Erectheus but to Christ,

at St. Pancras, and then to complete the monstrosity by shoving a Tower of the Winds on top of it, and a smaller replica, presumably of the breezes, on top of that.

This taste attained its height during the Regency, as indeed we have standing witness in Carlton House Terrace, and the houses lining the South side of Regent's Park, with their statuary and Corinthian columns and tympana—the very word Corinthian is associated with the genteel modes of this time. But the Romantic spirit could not move freely in this inappropriate garb, the Classical architects of the time could only copy, and were totally unable to evolve, like those of the eighteenth century, a style of their own. A better way was shown by Sir Charles Barry, the designer of the new Houses of Parliament, who stands above the other English architects of his century as easily as Wren, Gibbs and Lutyens. Barry was too great a genius to copy anything to style, though his natural tendency was to favour the Renaissance. The highest tribute to his genius is that contained in *Social England*, though it is meant for something more like a sneer. "The whole thing," remarks its architectual expert, "is modern to the core," and this is all the more creditable to Barry from the fact that he would not have been allowed to design it at all unless he had done so in outward conformity with the style of Henry VII's chapel on the other side of the street. Like St. Paul's, the Houses of Parliament form a living record of their age and its spirit. It is a proud building, this temple of constitutional liberty, even to the point of being purseproud; it has neither the frank materialism of St. Paul's nor the virile aspiration of Westminster Hall; aspire it does, after a fashion, but not too passionately nor too high; it is imposing without calm, magnificent, but lacking in that strong simplicity which only comes from a philosophy of life thought out to the end. And the Victorians, for all their assurance, were like their laureate's King Arthur, in that they saw not to the close, nor, in their heart of hearts, did they desire so uncomfortable a vision.

Associated with Barry in this his master work—though to how great an extent is a matter of bitter dispute—was the younger Pugin, the son of a French designer-architect by an English mother. This man had divined, with an almost passionate conviction, in what form the Romantic spirit must find its appropriate expression. It had nothing in common with the calm intellectuality of the Greek, and not much with the Renaissance greed of life; it preferred feeling intensely to thinking keenly. This, to Pugin's mind, pointed straight

to Gothic, which appealed to him as being the natural style of Christianity—he himself became a convert to the Church of Rome. But the Christianity of the Middle Ages was at once coarser and stronger than the revived product of the nineteenth century. The new Gothic was itself an imitation, too often scamped and tawdry, of a magic whose secret was not to be recovered. As Mr. Statham, in his fine article on modern architecture in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, remarks of Pugin, "he seems to have entirely lost sight of the solidity and genuineness of material in the medieval architecture which he was trying to emulate or to outvie. So long as he could get his effect of height, his poetic interior, he was content to have thin walls and plaster vaults and ornaments; or, in other words, he spent upon height what should first have been spent on solid and monumental building." None the less was he right in preferring the style of an age to which his own was at least sentimentally akin, to that of one to which it was directly antipathetic.

A Christian architecture was, in fact, a need of the time, for the bleak and austere religion of the Evangelicals no longer sufficed for the Romantic longing after colour and emotional stimulus. The same impulse which had produced the more extreme forms of Evangelicalism, like the cult of Joanna Southcott, found more genteel expression in the Swedenborgian Church which was established in England about 1810, and was to some extent the forerunner of modern theosophy. In 1829 we have the foundation of the so-called Catholic and Apostolic Church, a community of wealthy people who met together, with great fervour, at Hatton Garden, and evolved an ornate and emotional ritual, deeply tinged with mysticism, under a picturesque hierarchy of apostles, angels, elders and so forth. It was appropriate that when they came to build a metropolitan temple for themselves at Gordon Square, it should, thanks to the operation of the tithe system on a community of prosperous enthusiasts, and the architectural genius of Brandon and Ritchie, have proved the one of all modern Gothic buildings that comes nearest to inspiration. Its heaven-aspiring lines, the dim, religious light that suffuses its gorge-like interior, its old-world cloisters, make it a place for dreaming endless dreams, though not perhaps for seeing visions and certainly not for calm or consecutive thought. It is the very quintessence of the Romantic spirit.

It is not to the churches and public monuments that we should look for the most characteristic, or the most successful specimens

of Victorian architecture. Man creates in the image of his own soul, and the Victorian was most in earnest when it was a question of increasing man's command over matter. The great Gothic manifesto of the New Law Courts leaves us cold, and the Albert Memorial is a journalist's cockshy,[1] but few unprejudiced people will dispute that the Clifton Suspension Bridge is a noble and satisfying piece of work, while even that far from beautiful structure, the Albert Bridge at Battersea, is as full of character as the suburban Gothic churches are insipid. The enormous glass house, that the Duke of Devonshire's head gardener designed to cover the Great Exhibition, and which he reconstructed as the Crystal Palace, represents, whether we like it or not, a new departure in construction that the Bolsheviks, when they hit upon something similar, seventy years later, acclaimed as the emancipation of building from rigidity, and the coming of an architecture free to expand in the dimension Time.

The Victorian was pre-eminently the railway age, and it is natural that the railway construction, which transformed the face of the landscape, should figure among its most characteristic products. Where the railway companies tried consciously to achieve beauty, they could only perpetrate horrors like the portico that casts its gloom over travellers arriving at Euston. But where they were frankly utilitarian, as in their viaducts and bridges, in the long sweeping parallel of the rails, with its attendant telegraph poles and signals, now cleaving its way through the shade of cuttings and into the dark of tunnels, now raised above the landscape on embankments and arcades, they achieved results as grand, in their kind, as the roads and aqueducts of the Caesars.

The New High Churchmanship

It was in Oxford that Romanticism, not in alliance with but in passionate opposition to the prevailing Liberalism, was to attain its most complete expression. Both the ancient universities were beginning to awaken from their long sleep of the eighteenth century. In Cambridge had arisen a group of brilliant young Liberals, nicknamed Apostles, of whom Tennyson and his friend Hallam were distinguished members. But to the Common Rooms of Oxford

[1] The most ponderous missile being that of Mr. Lytton Strachey, who must needs drag in the bronze Albert's irrelevant tonnage.

the spirit of progress could not penetrate ; she turned her eyes, as in quest of a truth that alters not with centuries, back to the past, to the years of faith and authority. She heard the surge and tumult of triumphant Liberalism as the courtiers in the Tuileries, on that August night of 1792, had heard the tocsin ringing from all the steeples in Paris. And it was in no craven fear that her defenders looked to the priming of their antique weapons.

They had an instinct, certain of these academic gentlemen in orders, that all was not well with the new age. But shut off, as they were, from the business of the world, their thoughts did not turn readily to Lancashire cotton mills, to enclosed commons, and Poor Law Bastilles. These thoughts ran more naturally in the old-established grooves, and while instinct warned them that something was rotten in the state of England, habit impelled them to look for it through ecclesiastical glasses. Talented as most of them were, they were a singularly narrow-minded group, bitterly intolerant on principle. The excellent Keble, author of *The Christian Year*, rather than cross the threshold of a suspected Liberal, preferred to spend a few Christian minutes on the doorstep.

Yet Keble was, in his way, a scholar of profound erudition, and set up for the new movement a standard unknown to the Evangelicals. It was scholarship of a kind strange enough in a progressive age. These Oxford dons might be blissfully ignorant of the universe around and the earth beneath them ; history meant little more to them than the vilifying of deceased opponents, particularly of the Protestant Reformers ; but they knew everything, except perhaps what was most worth knowing, about the Fathers of the Church, and ancient controversies and hair-splittings on points of dogma. They were capable of celebrating with pious lamentations the martyrdom of Charles I, and of rapturous thanksgiving for the Restoration of that martyr's far from edifying son. Their pious tears bedewed the memory of a feudalism that they innocently imagined to have reposed

> " on the cheerful homage of a land
> Unskilled in treason,"

and they might have taken for their motto, " Ring in the old, ring out the new."

This craving of the moth for old clothes and of the night for the day before, though it may adorn itself with scholarship, has its roots in the heart. These Oxonians hated the ugliness, the blatancy, and the unkindness of the age into which they had been born. They

had neither the knowledge nor the creative ability to get to the roots of the evil and make the required adjustment of civilization to its new conditions. The very atmosphere in which they lived and the training they had received made them fly to a past that seemed as restful and gracious, by comparison with the present, as the spires and quadrangles of their own university. The movement had all the fervour and some of the ineffectiveness characteristic of Romance.

But there was an aspect of it that was practical enough. The Oxford revivalists were, for the most part, in orders, and a clergyman's career was beginning, in the heyday of Liberalism, to offer fewer and fewer attractions to a man of culture and honourable ambition. The Whigs, whom the Reform Bill had placed in power, had little sympathy with anything savouring of priestcraft, and it appeared quite probable to men who had not yet come to know the arch-reformer as Finality Jack, and who saw the new age typified by the gargoyle-like physiognomy of Brougham, that the Church itself might go the way of the rotten boroughs. Never was a more cogent appeal made at once to temporal apprehensions and spiritual pride than that formulated by Newman in the first of the *Tracts for the Times*, published in 1833:—

"Should the Government and Country so far forget their God as to cast off the Church, to deprive it of its temporal honours and substance, *on what*," he asks his fellow clergymen, "will you rest the claim of respect and attention which you make on your flocks? Hitherto you have been upheld by your birth, your education, your wealth, your connections; should these secular advantages cease, on what must Christ's ministers depend? Is not this a serious practical question? We know how miserable is the state of religious bodies not supported by the State. Look at the Dissenters on all sides of you, and you will see at once that their ministers, depending simply on the people, become the *creatures* of the people."

The spirit of the age was thus at variance with the Church, and the alarm had now gone out to Churchmen against that new, conquering Liberalism. Newman, years afterwards, formulated in a series of lucid propositions exactly what it was that he and his friends held anathema. They denied, for instance, the right of Private Judgment; they denied that Christianity can ever be modified by the growth of civilization; they denied the validity of scientific conclusions as against revealed doctrines; they affirmed the duty of the State to persecute blasphemers and sabbath-breakers, but they denied its competence to dictate to the Church or to

sequestrate its property; they denied the right of resistance to established authority and of the people to choose their own rulers; they abominated the idea that education, decent conditions, and the arts of life, can make people moral or happy.

Thus equipped, they might have ended by creating no more than a storm in a few parsonage teacups, had it not been that they included, in John Henry Newman, one who happened to be equipped with an intellect second to none of his age in power and subtle discrimination. Newman is almost unique among Englishmen in his capacity for remorseless logic; nothing short of a complete and consistent philosophy would serve his purpose.[1] He flung himself into the Oxford movement and provided it with its intellectual spearpoint. While Keble was fussing, like an agitated hen over the disappearance of an egg, about the Whigs cutting down the episcopal staff of the Protestant Church with which we had burdened Catholic Ireland, Newman was providing the Church of England with a doctrine and discipline the like of which had not been dreamed of since Laud's splendid failure to make her what Rome had been in the past. For the crude Evangelical psychology of elect and damned he substituted one more scientific and of subtler gradations; he eschewed constant purgatives of religious excitement, and looked to what amounted to a discipline of mind-training under the supervision of a skilled and authoritative priesthood.

This was, indeed, the most important contribution that the High Church revivalists had to offer towards the solution of the grand problem of readjustment for which, as they instinctively felt, Victorian Liberalism was worse than inadequate. They at least realized that what was most needed was not to increase wealth but to improve men. But the conditions of the nineteenth century were not those of the Middle Ages, and Oxford had only an old, though a dignified and picturesque, answer to give to a new question.

It was impossible that Newman, with whom it was ever all or nothing, should cling for long to what he himself called the *via media* of the Anglican Church. If such a man is not to give way to complete scepticism he must find refuge in a complete and impregnable system of authority, a denial of reason that must first satisfy reason of its validity. And the road of No Compromise

[1] Of all Mr. Lytton Strachey's strangely conventional judgments on the Victorians, none succeeds in more exactly reversing the truth than that on Newman as "a creature of emotion and sentiment", one who, under happier circumstances, might have risen to following in the footsteps of—Gray!

certainly does not end at Canterbury. It was, then, a blow that might have been expected by Churchmen, when first W. G. Ward, an even more uncompromising logician than Newman, and finally Newman himself, were received into what to the Evangelicals was the bosom of the Scarlet Woman.

Newman no doubt owed his affection for the ancient beauty of holiness to the Romantic influence to which he, as a poet, was peculiarly sensitive, but it was the logician and not the Romantic in him that drove him to sever his connection with all that he held dear, and take refuge—if it could be found—at the feet of Peter. It was a starved and bereaved Romantic who was found, at the gate of his old church at Littlemore, weeping his heart out over days never to return, but this was not the side of Newman that determined his onwards course, and made the Pope and his politic satellites regard their great convert as less of an acquisition than a danger.

"He thinks too much, such men are dangerous."

For Rome herself was hardly strong or comprehensive enough to contain an intellect so vast and honest as Newman's. Intensely deductive as that intellect was, you felt that its whole beautifully interconnected system of faith and philosophy hung by a thread, and—if that thread were to break! It sagged ominously; did not Huxley discover a complete agnostic catechism buried in Newman's writings, and did not Newman, carried away on the wings of his own splendid eloquence, once permit himself to use language of passionate protest to the Deity on the subject of Hell? Nay, was it not a too significant fairness that allowed devils to assail the passing soul of Gerontius, in Newman's drama of death and eternity, with questions—unanswered—that seem the concentrated essence of Nietzsche's Antichrist?

It was not the thread that broke, but only Newman's heart. In tracing the Romantic movement of religious reaction we must leave the Cardinal of Saint George, as his superiors in the Catholic Church instinctively felt such a man ought to be left, in isolation. It is to his great rival, the Cardinal Archbishop Manning, that we must look for the true culmination of the Romantic spirit within the fold of Peter. Manning seceded from the Anglican Church some years after Newman, but not, like him, as the result of a gradual intellectual compulsion, but of an insignificant squabble in which the law intervened to prevent a certain High Church Bishop from arming himself with the powers of an inquisitor to purge his

see of his opponents on points of dogma. Manning was no doubt a cultured and scholarly ecclesiastic, but it was not by intellectual standards that his actions were determined. He never dreamed of justifying his Church or life by reasoned apology; his way, and the way he designed for a revived English Catholicism, was not to persuade the reason but to overwhelm the emotions with the majesty, the ritual, and the intimate appeal of which Rome was mistress. It is said that when the indignant father of a convert rushed into the Archbishop's vestry with a torrent of menace, Manning confronted him in full canonicals and, fixing him with an awful eye, predicted—correctly as it turned out—his own conversion within three months. Newman would rather have died than stoop to such theatricality. But Manning's way, which was that of Romanticism, was no doubt the best practical policy, since it is not only in Vanity Fair that the truth is a drug on the market. And if Rome did not, as some anxious Protestants feared, sweep the country, she at least made notable headway during Victoria's reign.

Meanwhile the genuine Romantics of the Oxford movement had, for the most part, stood firm by their *via media*. Like Manning, they had a practical task to perform, which was to instil a new life into the Church by giving her an independence and, if we may use the phrase, a personality such as she had lost since the days of Laud. The crude theology of the Low Church they sought to replace by a study of the Fathers, whose works they caused to be published in voluminous translations, to which their opponents replied by issuing a vast and dingy library of the English Protestant Reformers. They sought to introduce an elaborate and coloured ceremonial modelled, as nearly as accorded with decency, on that of Rome. At the same time they exalted the supernatural authority of the priesthood, and sought to tighten the bonds of discipline, alike among the priesthood and the laity. They were furiously opposed; the vast bulk of the middle class, as represented by *Punch*, were inclined to see in them a mere set of buffoons and Jesuits, in the worst sense. But their appeal to the Romantic instinct, then at its strongest, was not to be denied. That appeal was particularly strong to women and among the poor of the great towns, and little by little they gained ground, until the austere, clean-shaven High Churchman began to replace the solid, whiskered Evangelist, as the type of God's good man in the popular imagination.

6

Light on the Inner Man

Materialistic as the first half of Victoria's reign may have been in its strenuous pursuit of this world's goods, it was yet suffused and softened by the luminous haze of Romance. Not only was the middle class itself thoroughly romantic, but even the various movements of reaction against its ideals partook of the same spirit. And no doubt Romance stimulated the imagination and created an aspiration after beauty, though usually beauty of a rather obvious kind.

It had also the effect of deepening the observation of character in a way that became very marked in Victorian times. John Wesley had visualized man as a creature with a soul to be snatched from the burning, but the great novelists and poets of the nineteenth century found that he had a soul to be studied. This was entirely contrary to the spirit of the eighteenth century. Even so consummate a delineator of character as Jane Austen had, by deliberate choice, refrained from exposing the raw passions of her subjects. Had she lived long enough to read *Wuthering Heights* or *Jane Eyre*, we can imagine how irresistibly funny she would have been at the expense of either. Catherine Morland would certainly have provided herself with one or other of them on her visit to Northanger Abbey, and no doubt have discovered all the characteristics of Heathcliff, or perhaps of Rochester, in General Tilney.

Richardson and Sterne had broken from the tradition of the eighteenth century in treating man as a being of emotions rather than of action or even intellect, and the theme of spiritual development or malady had inspired those masterpieces of Romantic fiction, Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* and Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*. It was, however, only in the later stages of the Romantic movement that the close and intimate study of character came to be at all constantly pursued. Scott's characters, especially his women, are interesting more by their external than their spiritual adventures; Shelley could never draw the line between an angel and a devil—his lady acquaintances had a way of being cast successively for both parts—Byron could satirize anyone and could draw various melodramatic portraits of the kind of superman he liked to see in the looking glass, but his failure as a dramatist is due to the fact that he was constantly mistaking the looking glass, and a distorted one at that, for a window. None of our Romantic poets, before the

thirties, achieved any marked success in the close delineation of character, except Wordsworth, in that memorable blank-verse autobiography which he called *The Prelude*, and which stands unrivalled in the world's literature as revealing the development of a poet's soul. But even Wordsworth's power of delineating character did not extend very far beyond the limits of his own.

It is in the Victorian phase of the Romantic movement that character came to be treated with a depth of observation such as even the Elizabethans had scarcely aspired to. It was in the year of the first Reform Bill that a young author-politician, called Benjamin Disraeli, produced *Contarini Fleming*, a novel to which he gave the significant sub-title, *A Psychological Romance*. It was of this book, now unaccountably neglected, that Heine ventured to assert: "Modern English letters have given us no offspring equal to *Contarini Fleming*. Cast in our Teutonic mould, it is nevertheless one of the most original works ever written: profound, poignant, pathetic; its subject the most interesting, if not the noblest imaginable—the development of a poet." [1] With all its unevenness and occasional crudities, the book marks an epoch in the history of the English novel, and the two elements of psychology and romance are blended in cunning harmony. Its theme is love, its chief character is like Disraeli himself—the "cynic Disraeli" of vulgar criticism—a passionate and sensitive being whose two master cravings are for love and ceaseless action of unlimited scope.

The tradition set by Scott, no less than by Fielding and Smollett, had been that of the novel where exciting things are constantly happening to the hero or a number of people. The first effect of Romance on this kind of story was to make the incidents more coloured and passionate without getting any further beneath the surface of character. But when Dickens came into the field, the novel of external happenings began to pass, by the urgency of overflowing genius, into the novel of character, though it may be said that Dickens seldom got very far, in character drawing, beyond the creation of splendid types, that he painted with too large a brush for subtlety. It is hard to say of him whether he partakes most of the old or the new spirit, but he does, undoubtedly, bridge the transition with an architecture as quaint and opulent as that of London Bridge before the fire.

It is with the poet, Robert Browning, who made his life's work an interpretation, at once comprehensive and profound, of human

[1] Quoted by W. F. Monypenny in his *Life of Benjamin Disraeli*.

nature, that the Romantic movement attains its quintessence in the domain of character study. For a Romantic Browning was, in the truest and best sense; in his early poems, his Cavalier songs, his ride from Ghent to Aix, and that delightful extravaganza of desolation entitled *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came*, it is as if he had picked up all the stage properties of the thirties and combined them into scenes of a fascination undreamed of before. And he had, unlike Wordsworth, a mind capable of sympathizing with every sort of character. As Mr. Arthur Symons finely says, "every man is for him an epitome of the universe, a centre of creation." He too, like Wordsworth and Disraeli, assayed the task of following the growth of a poet, of Sordello, and the result is one of those few really obscure pieces of literature which repay the task of prolonged elucidation.

We have merely touched upon the most notable features in this new development of Romance as leading to the study of the soul, and we have laid particular emphasis thereon, since it is of the highest importance to realize that creative art was making some attempt to supply the crying need of the time, that of raising our knowledge of the inner man to the level of that of external things. "Glory to man in the highest," declaimed Swinburne, "for man is the master of things!" But nobody ought to have known better than a poet that such glory is barren and even deadly unless man is, to an equal degree, the master of man.

The Romantics were undoubtedly feeling towards such a consummation, but unfortunately their efforts were marred by the lack of depth and thoroughness that seemed inseparable from the movement. Such inspired seers as the sisters Brontë darted flashes as of lightning into the depths of the soul, but there was no sustained radiance. Psychology was fast in the old ruts, the one branch of human knowledge that in the general advance remained obstinately unprogressive, until Herbert Spencer conceived, but only partially realized, the idea of reconstructing it on a basis of evolution. And even this did not produce any very marked effect during the remainder of the century.

In an age of such abounding talent and energy, it could not but be that certain exceptional visionaries would set themselves deliberately against the tide, and try to get back from things to man. Such a one was Thomas Carlyle, especially in his earlier phase. His "clothes-philosophy", if pursued to its utmost implications, is an allegory of a civilization which, in adorning itself with every sort of

material accessory, has neglected that which alone matters. In Carlyle's eyes, Britain had been pretty steadily going down hill ever since Cromwell's magnificent failure to make of her a godfearing and heroic nation. From the pretentious littleness of modern life, Carlyle cast back regretful eyes to the monastic life of the Middle Ages, and it is greatly to his credit that he visualized the rough, workaday life under Abbot Samson stripped of the conventional sentimentality with which the Victorians were wont to invest anything medieval. The hero-worship for which Carlyle is famous was part of an attempt, in itself heroic, to exalt mind above matter, to concentrate human aspiration on the godlike man and the things that cannot be measured by statistics.

But Carlyle, though he may have been the Moses to glimpse the Promised Land, was not the Joshua to conquer it. Like so many selfmade men, he lacked that serenity and comprehensiveness of vision necessary for one who would be not only a prophet but a saviour. He regarded his own age, his own contemporaries, without patience or charity. He cut himself off from the possibility of leading his generation to a nobler deal, by obstinately refusing to realize and build upon such elements of nobility as lay to his hand. A bitter and scolding philosophy insinuated itself into his teaching. He would have liked to end the Whig Utopia of which Macaulay was so proud, by having the Duke of Wellington—of all people—clear the House of Commons at the point of the bayonet! He defended slavery; he would have made the lot of prisoners, cruelly hard as it was, more cruel still; the hero-worship became something more like Devil-worship, with Frederick the Great as its presiding demon. One of Carlyle's latest utterances was a song of thanksgiving over the triumph of Bismarckian Germany.

There was perhaps one man of whom, had he been born fifty years later and in a slightly different environment, it might have been written with a more unquestionable truth than it actually was

> "He took the suffering human race,
> He showed each wound, each weakness clear,
> He struck his finger on the place,
> And said, Thou ailest here—and here!"

But two years after the young Heine had heard the Gallic cock crow twice, he was passing through Weimar, where "They were weeping and wailing, 'Goethe is dead and Eckermann still alive.'" But Goethe, from his Olympus in sleepy Weimar, had never fairly set himself to face the situation created by the Industrial Revolution.

And perhaps, for a saviour of society, he was too majestically self-centred, too coldly aloof from the hearts and needs of everyday mankind.

7

Liberalism Limited

The second phase of the European tragedy, that between the two revolutionary years 1830 and 1848, was a time of bright and, in every sense, of Romantic hope. France and her little sister, Belgium, had decisively freed themselves from the orbit of the Metternich system, and Spain was, in a few years' time, to follow their example. A solid *bloc* of middle-class Liberalism had now been established in Western Europe. The three great despotisms had been tied by the necessity of crushing their victim, Poland, or at least, as far as Prussia and Austria were concerned, of standing by while Russia did so. Germany and Italy failed to shake off their chains, but they had felt the breath of liberty.

The spirit of the new age obviously demanded the closest possible friendship between two countries so similar to each other in ideals as England and France. For now the French had, for once, paid us the high compliment of imitation. The government of the bourgeois King, Louis Philippe, was an obvious attempt to set up a constitutional monarchy on English principles, on the principles already taken as the basis of the American constitution. The Grand Alliance that swept to victory in 1918 was already beginning to be foreshadowed, for there was no doubt that a Liberal France could not forever tolerate the spectacle of Teutonic despotism in Italy. It might even be that Catholic Germany would unite under her benevolent auspices in preference to those of a jack-booted and half-Slavonic Prussia.

There was, as Europe had had only too good reason to know, another side of the French character. France might be the champion of liberty, but it would never be quite the same sort of liberty as had grown along with the tradition of the English Common Law. For she was, in a sense, heir to that Rome whose province she had been. No paper constitution could rob her of her preference for uniformity, for centralization. And it was perhaps the Celtic strain in her, combining with the Roman pride, that had implanted in her soul a desire for military glory for its own sake, a delight in the pomp and trappings of war, a restless energy that impelled her to gain laurels beyond her frontiers, and that made her chafe acutely

under the blessings of humdrum prosperity. The French Revolution had shown how easily the love of liberty was capable of being transmuted into the love of glory, and it is this dual aspect of the French character that has made any dealings with France a matter of such peculiar difficulty for statesmen.

Even before Charles X had been turned off the throne, French diplomacy had been plotting for an extension of frontier to the North East, and in the mood of excited confidence that was born of the July Revolution, it was natural that France, being what she was, and having got rid of one incubus in the shape of a legitimate Bourbon, should have aspired to get rid of another in the shape of the settlement—moderate though it was—that had been imposed on her after the fall of Napoleon. The outbreak of a revolution in Belgium was calculated to strain the situation almost to breaking point. Here again France was divided between two impulses, the one of generous sympathy with a sister nation that had just entered upon the same path of freedom as herself, the other of ambition at least to get back the fortresses that had been taken away from her after Waterloo, and generally to fish in these troubled waters for such glory and territory as might be obtainable.

Here was a task of the acutest difficulty for the new Whig government. The Low Countries, and particularly Belgium, had for centuries been the vital point of our foreign policy. At all costs they must be kept out of the clutches of any great Continental power. Our diplomatists of the Vienna Congress had esteemed it a notable success to have formed a united and presumably strong Netherlands under one monarch. Now that scheme had come to nought, the Netherlands had fallen apart, and something even worse was threatened, for the Dutch King was minded to win back his lost province by force of arms, and when the Belgians had run away from his advancing troops, a French army marched into Belgium for liberty's sake, and seemed likely to remain there for their own. The three despotisms would have gladly supported the cause of a legitimate monarch of their own creation against the upstart parvenu whose usurpation, as they deemed it, of the French throne, they had only tolerated because their hands were too full elsewhere to prevent it. Europe was on the verge of a war in which England, threatened at her most vulnerable point, would have been forced on to the side of a Holy Alliance marching to crush Liberalism.

The new Whig government had now at the Foreign Office the remarkable Irishman whose personality was to dominate our external

policy throughout the whole period of middle-class rule. Lord Palmerston was one of those followers of Canning who had changed sides when Wellington attempted to close up the Tory ranks under his premiership. He was a brisk, rakish, exuberant person, with a lucid intelligence and great capacity for the business of office. His cult of beautiful handwriting is symptomatic of his personality. Whatever else may be said for or against Palmerston, it is certain that England has never had a Foreign Minister so versed in what may be called the technique of diplomacy. Whatever his objects were, he knew them, and pursued them with masterly finesse.

Unfortunately diplomacy is not, or at least ought not to be, a matter of mere technique, but of great principles steadfastly pursued. And it was Palmerston's weakness to regard it as a game in which success is to be measured by the number of points scored. Perhaps one of the secrets of his immense popularity with a sport-loving people was the way in which his mind and language were constantly recurring to this motive. He was always talking about his innings and so forth. Even his fall from office, in 1851, he merely regarded as an occasion for having his "tit for tat" with the Premier. It was this weakness of his that prevented him from maintaining the high standard set by his exemplar, Canning. Perhaps his Irish blood had something to do with it, but he was lacking in *gravitas*. His statesmanship was conspicuously lacking in the grand manner. He would call on the whole force of the nation to support the impudent claim of a Shylock against a helpless Greece, but when he found his bluff called by a Bismarck, to whom diplomacy was a matter of deadly earnest, he abandoned his own strong line with the most humiliating complaisance.

Not that Palmerston was a mere diplomatic technician, devoid of any principles whatever. On the contrary, though the most obstinate of reactionaries in home politics, he had a real and active sympathy for constitutional freedom abroad, and it was his greatest merit that under his auspices England was constantly ranged under the Liberal standard, and that her voice and influence were employed in defence of oppressed peoples and against despotism. This was at any rate a memorable advance upon eighteenth century diplomatic methods, and showed that Britain was to be regarded as a nation not only with an interest, but with a soul. It may not have been prudent of the Foreign Secretary to have testified, unmistakably, to his satisfaction when Marshal Haynau, who had flogged delicate ladies for the crime of patriotism, sustained a hearty

drubbing, with some diminution of whiskers, at the hands of the London brewers—not prudent, but delightful to the heart of every chivalrous John Bull. Old " Pam ", with all his faults, was the darling of middle-class England, and even his opponent Peel, when attacking his policy, could not refrain from the admission, " we are all proud of him."

" With all his faults," we say, but perhaps there would be some reason for saying " because of his faults." The difference between Palmerston and Canning is that between the electorates that supported them. The middle class loved a bouncing and advertising policy, but they were not prepared to run risks for the sake of a dignified consistency. If they were to fight, they were prepared to pay, in moderation, for other men to fight at a distance against a not too formidable enemy. If their bluff seemed likely to be called by too big an opponent to be tackled with safety, they preferred to cut their loss of dignity and back down. And Palmerston, who sunned himself in popularity, played up to them only too well. Instead of following Canning and Castlereagh in their wise policy of never committing themselves to a line of action that they had not the will and the means to follow to the end, he had his finger in every pie, he interfered all over Europe, and often had to be content with a galling snub for his pains. Moreover, his perpetual restlessness had the effect of irritating every Foreign Office in Europe, and particularly that of France, whose friendship it should have been the object of every Liberal statesman to secure. But Palmerston could never realize that the points he scored with such cheery good-humour in the diplomatic game, were remembered afterwards against him and his country.

It must at least be admitted that he began his career as Foreign Minister by a veritable masterpiece of diplomacy. He succeeded in the almost impossible task of preventing the forces of European reaction from extinguishing the spark of Belgian liberty, and in that of seeing the French armies safely off Belgian soil without one inch of territory annexed or one Barrier Fortress demolished. The way was now clear for an Entente between the two Liberal powers which, for the remainder of the thirties, continued to be the dominating factor of European politics. This was even expanded into a formal, though not very hearty, Quadruple Alliance of the four constitutional powers, England, France, Spain and Portugal. Meanwhile the three great reactionary despotisms had drawn closer together, under the influence of the Tsar, Nicholas I, a brutal illiterate, but a man of

iron determination, and capable of subordinating all minor considerations to that of maintaining the principle of the Holy Alliance intact over as wide an area as possible. If France and England, he wrote to his Brother of Prussia, "have the courage to profess loudly rebellion and the overturn of all stability, we ought to have the right and the courage to support Divine Right." [1]

It was unfortunate that there was no statesman in either England or France capable of following such steady and clear-sighted policy on behalf of Liberalism. The history of these years is one melancholy record of lost opportunity, of mutual suspicion, of petty ends pursued in preference to great ones. The entente was what old Wellington sarcastically characterized as a cardboard alliance. Palmerston continued to play his diplomatic game with undiminished acuteness, but he thoroughly distrusted the French and their constitutional monarch, and a cloud soon rose in the East which completely darkened the new friendship, such as it was. The French had already started a colonial expansion into Northern Africa, without much opposition from ourselves, but when it became a question of their securing a virtual protectorate over Egypt and Syria by supporting the rebellious Pasha, Mehemet Ali, against his Sultan, England once more found herself threatened at a vital point, this time on her communications with India. By another masterpiece of diplomatic finesse Palmerston managed, throwing himself on the side of the three despots, not only to checkmate France, but also to end in a friendly way a dangerous hegemony, amounting almost to a protectorate, that Russia had secured at the Porte. This was no doubt a double point in the game, but it had hopelessly divided the Liberal forces and was calculated to cause a more solid satisfaction to the Iron Tsar than the Whig ministry.

This ministry was now tottering to its fall, and the relations between England and France were greatly improved by the retirement of the man whom the French had come to regard as a dangerous firebrand. The Tory ministry of 1841 was little concerned with promoting Liberalism at home or abroad, but Peel and his Foreign Secretary, Aberdeen, were determined, by all honourable means, to seek peace and ensue it, and had no itch for the excitement of a dashing foreign policy. Aberdeen, who though he had no spark of imagination, was a kindly and devout gentleman, managed to establish so intimate a friendship with the French minister, Guizot, that the two worked together almost on the footing of colleagues.

[1] Quoted in the article "Europe" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

The entente was knit together more closely than ever, when Louis Philippe and Guizot stooped to one of those dirty dynastic intrigues that reduce statesmanship to the level of pimping. They revived the old policy of Louis XIV by endeavouring to secure the succession of the Spanish Throne for France, and in pursuit of this chimaera they were ready to sacrifice any reputation they might have possessed for good faith or ordinary decency.

Nevertheless Queen Victoria may have been right in her opinion that if dear Lord Aberdeen had only remained at the Foreign Office, the intrigue would never have materialized. But the Tory government fell, and Palmerston came back, bustling and officious as ever. He was not long in applying the little irritation that was needed for making Louis Philippe rush through his fatal Spanish Marriage scheme. Palmerston was not the man to leave the French to reap the consequences of their own folly; he was, by his own account, determined to humiliate them. As a result, the Liberal Entente was changed to mutual hostility, and the wretched Louis Philippe now threw off the veneer of Liberalism and swung round to the attitude of Charles X as a champion of Divine Right and a supporter of Russian and Teutonic autocracy. The first result of this was seen when the three despots combined, in cynical defiance of their own settlement of Vienna, to enslave the last patch of free Polish soil in the shape of the Republic of Cracow.

The situation was now dangerous to the last degree. Palmerston, by a stroke of extraordinary astuteness, did indeed succeed in preventing France and her new allies from making an end of a united Swiss Republic, but there is good reason to believe that our former friend Guizot, mad with hatred of *ce terrible Lord Palmerston*, was hatching a diabolical plot of uniting with the three despots to crush England. But the cup of Louis Philippe was full, and the curtain went up on a new act of the European drama, when the Paris mob, which had a way of its own with reactionaries, sent him and Guizot to seek the hospitality of the very people they had marked down for destruction. Central Europe and Italy now broke into revolution; thrones were toppling everywhere; only Liberal England in the West and despotic Russia under her Iron Tsar in the East stood unsubmerged amid the flood. But the time of deliverance was not yet; the Hapsburgs, whose army of Northern Italy hung on grimly to its famous Quadrilateral of fortresses, recovered marvellously. the old trick was tried of playing off one race of the Empire against another; and at last the Tsar, with his usual far-sighted championship of

despotism, marched with overwhelming force to the help of his afflicted Brother in stamping out the last fires of Hungarian liberty. Austria, now flushed with victory, next devoted herself to putting an end to the prating of a German Parliament that had assembled at Frankfurt, and restoring the framework of the Metternich system from Sicily to the Baltic.

So the bid for national liberty against Divine Right had signally failed, for a time that we now know was not to be very long. What had, however, failed for good and all, on the Continent, was the Romantic and essentially middle-class Liberalism that had triumphed in the July days of 1830, the high and hopeful idealism that was the inspiration of Victor Hugo, of Heine—despite his bitterness—and of Mazzini. The dream of a brotherhood of nations, beating their swords into ploughshares and exchanging freely one another's goods, was beginning to dissolve in the dry light of a new realism. By blood and iron, in the phrase of the most clear-sighted realist of them all, were nations to work out, if not their salvation, at least the right of a majority to rule the roost within its own frontiers.

8

The Manchester School and the Crimea

It must not be thought that the crushing of the Revolutions in 1849 marked any violent or even apparent break with the Romantic and bourgeois Liberalism of the thirties and forties. For a long time this Liberalism was to play an important part in the making of a new Europe of intensely militant and self-conscious nationalities, that was coming into being as the result of a series of violent conflicts. If it was the Machiavellian brain of Cavour that planned the union of Italy under monarchial auspices, it was Garibaldi, perhaps the most romantic figure of the century, who put a sword into the hands of his countrymen. And the man who filled the centre of the European stage, the Emperor-adventurer with the pointed beard and melancholy eyes—he too had more of the sentimentalist and dreamer in him than any quality appertaining to the first Napoleon.

The fifties and sixties are, in fact, a time of transition in Europe, and it is not until the white flag was hoisted over a bombarded and starving Paris that it was possible to say with any certainty that Romantic Liberalism had shot its bolt, and even then it would have been necessary to make an exception of England. During these

two decades, France was ostensibly the leading power of the West. After the Revolution that turned out Louis Philippe, the ship of state had rocked so violently between the sentimental republicanism of Lamartine, and the premature social democracy of Louis Blanc, that she seemed in danger of capsizing, and then the thing happened that the whole existing European system had been designed to prevent—a military empire came into being under a Napoleon. The lust for glory, which was rooted in the French nature, was now about to find satisfaction, and Europe was thrown into a state of nervous tension such as she had forgotten since Waterloo. But the terror of Europe was merely the rather seedy adventurer who had knocked about in Soho, and with no more formidable powers than an adventurer's low cunning. If he was an Emperor, he was also a Liberal, and he oscillated and wobbled between the Napoleonic and the bourgeois conceptions of statesmanship, until in a deeper sense than that intended by Tennyson, only the devil could tell what he meant.

The second Empire, founded in ruffianism and maintained by corruption, was in fact an ulcer whose poison was affecting all Europe. Everywhere there was an atmosphere of unrest, a readiness to scheme deeper and employ a more effective violence than one's neighbour. The old generous ideals were gradually being discarded and discredited; men with hard faces and no illusions were taking the lead, and there emerged grim figures in spiked helmets to inaugurate a new order of things, very different from that envisaged in the glad, confident heyday of Liberalism.

In England, however, shut out as she was to an unusual degree from Continental influences and entering upon a new period of prosperity, there was no sign of Liberalism being a spent force. The second and third acts of the European tragedy are, for her, merged into one; there is no new departure whatever in 1848. Romance and Liberalism were at their height in the fifties and sixties; Tennyson reigned supreme in poetry, Mill in thought; a Whig party, becoming every year more and more Liberal, was firmly entrenched in power. It was the age of drawing-room ballads of an incredible sentimentality, of an almost childish pride in material achievement, of a complacency which sent Englishmen swaggering over the Continent with the assured patronage of racial superiority. It was the heyday of modern Gothic; everywhere in the new suburbs of great towns sprang up the needle-like spires of churches correctly copied to style and bearing much the same relation to their medieval

prototypes as the waxworks of Madame Tussaud's to their originals. If it was an age of extraordinary achievement, it was also one of an equally extraordinary banality. In perhaps no other period of history could Martin Tupper have been taken seriously as a philosopher—rumour even cited his works as the Queen's favourite reading! The Crystal Palace arose, and black statues of men in massive frock coats, and ugly brick cottages all over the countryside, and mean though substantial streets where the towns kept on expanding. Never had there been such a complacent lack of taste, never such easy acceptance of the shallow and the commonplace. And yet scarcely ever had there been such copious and solid achievement.

It was in 1851 that English Liberalism made its greatest bid for the suffrages of the world with the great Exhibition in Hyde Park. It did really seem as if all peoples, nations and languages were about to realize the millennium of free and peaceful industry, an endless flood of oratory was poured forth to that effect, and while crowds from all over the world filled the vast, expanded greenhouse in which the triumphs of the Industrial Revolution were displayed, a peace conference was sitting at Exeter Hall. And yet, by a strange irony, these trumpets of peace did but usher in an era of war.

Though the old-fashioned and conservative Whigs still remained at the head of affairs, by far the most powerful intellectual force was supplied by what was known as the Manchester School, and to most people this rather vague term practically comprised the doctrine preached, with extraordinary eloquence, by the two triumphant leaders of the Free Trade agitation, Richard Cobden and John Bright, the representative men of the English middle class at its zenith of power and ability. They had not the smallest desire to pose as anything else but bourgeois; they neither desired to gain the graces nor to ape the manners of the aristocracy. The future of England, as they visualized it, lay with her industrial leaders, to whom they confidently looked to rival the glory of those bygone commercial princes, the Fuggers and the Welsers. Sturdy individualists themselves, they held to the gospel of free competition—every man for himself and God for us all. They were distrustful of any form of state interference. When Lord Shaftesbury was fighting to obtain more tolerable conditions for the factory hands, he encountered no more formidable opponent than John Bright, who was an employer—to do him justice, a conspicuously good one—and who raised the somewhat Jesuitical plea that His Lordship was a landowner, and that

agricultural labourers were worse off than those in the towns, as if that were any reason for Bright and his class not setting their own house in order.

It would however be as misleading as ungenerous to talk of Bright and Cobden as if they were mere unctuous egotists busily engaged in pulling motes out of their brother's eye and neglecting the beam in their own. It would be more to the point to say that they were Romantics, and shared in that lack of intellectual consistency and thoroughness that is common to all Romantics. But whatever their subconscious bias in favour of their own interests may have amounted to, they were the very opposite of those thoroughgoing class egotists of whom, according to the early utilitarians, the whole human race may for all practical purposes be said to consist.

Their class bias was, indeed, strong enough to attach them to the system of capitalist economics that was fashionable at this time, though their sincere Christianity and their Romantic leanings induced them to modify its harsher precepts very considerably. But such as the system was, they held to it as strongly when it worked against as when it worked for them. The working man had just as much right to the free expression of his personality as the employer, and it was with an almost quixotic disinterestedness that these champions of the middle class devoted their immense influence to breaking that class's power by a drastic extension of the franchise. No British working class leader of these middle years of the century did half as much for his fellows as the comfortably off and sometimes prejudiced John Bright.

Neither Cobden nor Bright was a man of extensive or liberal culture, and this was no doubt a source of weakness, even though both possessed something more essential in an uncompromising sincerity, which made of Bright the most splendid orator of his century, and endowed Cobden with a personal fascination against which not even sovereigns and statesmen were immune. Nevertheless the fact that Bright could sneer at culture and Cobden make Philistine jokes about the Ilissus, testifies to a certain narrowness of outlook that handicapped them in trying to arrive at a large and unbiassed appreciation of contemporary problems.

They had a gospel not lacking in nobility. They believed that the time had come for nations to lay aside their hatreds and armaments, and to unite in the common task of making the best of the world, not under any scheme of universal government or state

socialism, but as free men in free nations exchanging their goods with one another, having previously got rid of the barriers of protective tariffs. They were, in fact, equally ardent as merchants and as Christians, and they saw nothing inconsistent in a close and mutually beneficent alliance between God and Mammon. War they detested, because they were at once sincere Christians and practical business men. Quite consistently with their creed, they were against every form of imperialism. They believed that England would do better to trade freely with an independent Canada and Australia than incur dangerous and unprofitable responsibilities by keeping up the connection. The experiment of governing India they regarded with grave disapproval, and Bright, who held that so unnatural an attempt was bound to end in disaster, argued that despotic principles of government abroad might prove infectious at home.

It was this gospel of the Manchester School, emanating from middle-class England, that throughout these two decades was making a strong bid for universal acceptance. It happened to be a message whose acceptance would have been extremely profitable to England, whose industrial start on the rest of the world had enabled her to fling open her ports, and who had nothing better to desire than that other nations should do the same, and expose their rising industries to the full force of her competition. But, not unnaturally, other nations, less favourably situated, had other ideas. A German economist, List, whose influence was powerful on the Continent, had directly traversed the practical conclusions of the Free Traders. As an ultimate ideal, he admitted, it would be a good thing if all barriers ceased to exist, but as things were at present, nations who refused to protect themselves scientifically would be committing suicide for the sake of England. He was therefore in favour of an intense and uncompromising nationalism. It was List's hard doctrine that the world was too bad to make the quest of international peace and brotherhood practical politics, and nations must do what they could to feather their own nests at the expense of their neighbours. What other end than eventual suicide there could be to such an anarchy of national egotisms was a question that List and his school did not envisage. But, leaving such long views out of account, they had a strong case, and one that was eventually to be accepted by every nation but England.

For a time, however, the issue was in doubt, and our two most important Continental rivals, France and the German Zollverein, or Customs Union, inclined towards a Liberal policy in the matter

of tariffs. It was the greatest triumph of the Manchester School when in 1860 Cobden crossed to France, and employed his wonderful persuasiveness in inducing Napoleon III, who, for all his faults, desired nothing more sincerely than to be friends with England, to conclude a commercial treaty with us on Free Trade principles. Never had the Manchester Utopia of universal Free Trade appeared so well on the way to realization, and for the next decade nothing occurred in the way of a serious set-back. But the high-water-mark had been reached, though it was some time before the turn of the tide became perceptible.

Even in England, however, Cobden and Bright were very far from ruling the roost. They represented the most advanced form of contemporary Liberalism, but they were too uncompromising to fall in easily with the ways of practical politicians. Cobden never got into a Cabinet, and Bright did not remain in one very long. So long as Palmerston and Lord John Russell remained in political life, the old aristocratic Whiggism counted for more in national policy than Manchester Liberalism. During the time of European revolutions and their suppression, the activity of Palmerston waxed greater than ever. In his part of manly Englishman he was lavishly generous in forcing his advice on foreigners everywhere, and he drove the Queen and Prince Albert, who disliked his Liberalism even more than his arbitrariness, to the verge of distraction. At length, however, he made the curious slip of too openly expressing his satisfaction with Napoleon III's *coup d'état*, and he had to leave the Foreign Office, dragging the government down shortly afterwards.

He was, however, soon back in office, this time as Home Secretary to a coalition of Whigs and Peelites, but his spirit dominated our foreign policy to such an extent as to allow us to be forced into the Crimean War against Russia, about the most stupid and unnecessary contest in the whole course of our history. It is a facile task to tabulate, after the manner of an examination paper, the various ostensible causes that precipitated what John Bright, in a bitterly serious anagram, characterized as "A Crime". Russia was pushing forward her Eastern expansion into Asia in a way that had for some time caused considerable nervousness to our statesmen; Lord John Russell had hazarded the opinion that if we did not fight Russia on the Danube we should have to fight her on the Indus, though in what conceivable way our fighting on the Danube would retard her progress Indiawards he did not explain. The Russian bogey had,

in fact, been intermittently on English nerves since Pitt had nearly gone to war about the obscure fortress with the unpronounceable name, only Pitt, luckily for himself and England, was not troubled by a press-fed public opinion capable of backing him so vigorously as to render it impossible for him to draw back if he wanted to.

But the middle class had waxed fat and wanted to kick, provided that this could be done by proxy and without too ruinous expense. Russia was an ideal enemy. Her Iron Tsar, who on this occasion was heartily anxious to keep the peace, had come to be a sort of symbolic Ahriman to the Ormuz of Liberalism. It would be pleasant to give him just such a good British drubbing as the brewers had given to old Haynau. And Nicholas would have as little chance of hitting back at the respectable instigators of this drubbing as the " Wolf of Brescia " had had of avenging the loss of his whiskers. In fact the scheme of attacking him had a double advantage, since the new Emperor Napoleon, whose preposterously presumed desire to avenge Waterloo might have threatened the persons as well as the pockets of Mr. Podsnap and Mr. Bottles, was safely roped in as an ally. The butchering and suffering could be done at a safe distance by mercenaries, mostly of the lowest class, whose exploits would, in a suitably Bowdlerized form, make excellent reading and afford a fine theme for patriotic sentiment.

So it was willed, and so therefore it was done. A ridiculous quarrel between two sects who believed themselves to represent the Prince of Peace at Jerusalem, developed into a Russian attempt to bluff or bully the Porte, which was countered by our ambassador at Constantinople, Lord Stratford de Redclyffe, and set the four other chief European powers in more or less pronounced opposition to the Tsar. However, terms were presented at Vienna which Nicholas had actually accepted, when Lord Stratford, who had the Sultan in his pocket, encouraged him to raise them, which not unnaturally proved too large a pill for a proud autocrat to swallow. But England, instead of allowing Turkey to accept the offer or the consequences of her refusal, went on backing her, and Napoleon, who saw the chance of reaping in the most reputable company the glory he needed to justify his name and throne, was determined that we should not get out of it. The Premier, the peaceful Aberdeen, did everything short of resigning to keep the peace, but the sons of Zeruaiah, in the shape of Palmerston and Stratford, were too hard for him. The middle class press howled and blustered for war; *Punch*, always ready to pander to their crudest instincts, represented

poor Aberdeen as a miserable wretch blacking the Tsar's boots or trying to hold back the British Lion. War broke out between Russia and Turkey and the war fever in England rose to the point of delirium. A Russian Admiral, who did his obvious duty in sinking some transports that were conveying Turkish troops to fight against the Russians, was represented as a monster of the most fiendish stamp. War was declared amid a tempest of enthusiasm, and the valiant Palmerston speeded a fleet, which was destined for the Baltic, with an after-dinner speech of such robustious levity and bad-taste as to induce some—probably quite unjust—doubts in a present day reader's mind as to the good man's sobriety. But there is, as the Hebrew prophet knew, a more dangerous drunkenness than that which comes of wine.

Prussia and Austria stood aside, France came in. An expeditionary force, excellently drilled but villainously commanded and even worse organized, was sent to the Near East, and for some time remained dumped down at the port of Varna, with nothing particular to do except to catch cholera. Finally, for want of a better object, the allies agreed to strike at the Russian naval base of Sevastopool in the Crimea. This, after having driven a Russian covering army in best Peninsula style from the heights of the Alma, they could easily have accomplished, if they had not chosen to make a loitering and circuitous march which gave an exceptionally able Russian engineer commander time to make the place almost impregnable. As it turned out, the incompetence of the corrupt and dying wretch who commanded the French army produced the effect of the most far-seeing strategy. So long as the Russians were committed to defending Sevastopol, the allies were better outside than in. Through a terrible winter they hung on to their lines, trusting to their sea communications, which were interrupted by the Black Sea gales, so that the unfortunate men were reduced to the utmost depth of human misery. But the case of their enemy was even worse. There were no railways to bring the constant relays of new troops that were necessary to keep the Imperial standard flying over Sevastopol. They were marched over mud tracks from all parts of the vast empire, and every march was a reproduction in miniature of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. The poor Russian peasants and English labourers were committed to a competition of agony, and the matter was made worse on our side by the fact that the hospitals to which the wounded and diseased men were taken were at first such Hells of filth and mismanagement that it

would, in most instances, have been more merciful to have knocked the sufferers on the head where they fell. This state of things was revolutionized by perhaps the only person, except the defender of Sevastopol, who emerges from the war with any lasting glory, the heroic volunteer nurse, Florence Nightingale.[1]

It is to the everlasting credit of the Manchester leaders (though neither Cobden nor Bright were Manchester men), that in face of the most bitter opprobrium they never ceased to denounce this criminal lunacy of the Crimean war. Bright, his whole Quaker soul revolted by such a crucifixion of his Master, depicted the horror of the situation in words of such impassioned solemnity that they seem as fresh now as when they were spoken. But this attitude met with almost universal execration; the good folks at home, who could not feel the cold of the trenches nor smell the stench of the hospitals, were staunch to put the thing through in spite of all such traitorous and sordid palterings of men whose ears were " stuffed with cotton ". And so the war went on; the lines were held against every attack; one of the greatest blackguards unhung was lauded to the skies for charging in the wrong direction and thereby sacrificing a brigade of cavalry and one of our most vital lines of communication; the dreadful winter passed into spring and at last, after an infinity of butchery and blundering, the French surprised one of the key forts of Sevastopol and the siege ended.

By this time Napoleon was thoroughly anxious to be out of it, and as Austria had now almost made up her mind to come in against the power that had so recently saved her in Hungary, a feeble and inconclusive peace was patched up, the most important article of which, forbidding Russia to maintain a fleet in the Black Sea, was torn up at the first opportunity. Our late ally, France, was almost at once hand in glove with our late enemy, Russia, and threatening the invasion of our shores; the advance towards the Indus was not stopped, and our loss of prestige had no small part in causing the mutiny of the Bengal army in 1857. Nevertheless, everyone was tolerably satisfied; the horrors of war were buried with the war's victims; memories of the thin red line and the Light Brigade were kept sedulously alive; the middle class's booming prosperity enabled it to shoulder the burden of the war as easily as it could have shouldered that of such almost undreamed of social reforms as the

[1] The consuming zeal of her pity for the poor soldiers, which drove her even to keep a cabinet minister up to the mark, has caused her to be branded as a tigress. So strange a creature is the Georgian lion!

humanizing of the poor law or the provision of pensions for the old. So all ended amid the firing of guns and the lighting of bonfires, with Lord Palmerston as Premier and the most popular man in the country.

The New Liberalism

It was, in fact, the jovial personality of Palmerston that kept alive the old aristocratic Whiggism long after it had ceased to answer to the changing spirit of the time. The country, or rather the class that held the franchise, was certainly not prepared to go the whole way with Bright and Cobden, but nobody but "old Pam" could have slowed down its progress in Liberalism to the snail's gait that was actually adopted. So long as he lived, Palmerston was undoubtedly the man whom the electorate wanted at the head of affairs, though he had a strange and sensational fall from office in 1858, curiously enough owing to the fact that he, of all people in the world, had tamely yielded to the bluster of some French officers who threatened awful things unless we would restrict the hospitality we had hitherto granted to political exiles—a plot to assassinate Napoleon III having been hatched in England. But next year Palmerston was back in office, in company with "Finality Jack", and with Gladstone as his Chancellor of the Exchequer. There he remained till his death in 1865.

But he was now the brake on the coach, and the man who was transforming the spirit of the party was the austere financier who, like Palmerston before him, had come over from the ranks of the Tories. The character and career of Gladstone present such extraordinary complexities that they will probably form the subject of acute controversy as long as history continues to be written. Just now, like Tennyson and most of the other great Victorians, he is under a cloud of somewhat unjust depreciation—our age has so completely reacted against their ideals. And even now party bias is apt to affect our judgment, one way or the other, in appreciating so mighty a champion of Liberalism.

If any one generalization be sufficient to comprehend the whole of his character it is this: Gladstone was in the political sphere—what Tennyson was in poetry—the supreme representative Englishman of his time; supreme, because in energy, in capacity for work, and sheer force of personality, there was no one, except perhaps

his rival Disraeli, to touch him; representative because he was essentially middle class—"Oxford on the surface, Liverpool below", was an early estimate of him—endowed with a concentrated moral earnestness that eschewed humour, a typical Romantic in his sensibility to emotional impulses and a certain inconsistency and even shallowness of thought that becomes more apparent as his figure shrinks into perspective.

This last characteristic of Gladstone will be evident to anyone who considers the singular impermanency of his voluminous literary output, and, to a somewhat less degree, of his eloquence. He wielded a facile and skilful pen, but he has left nothing behind him that the most enterprising publisher is likely to reprint. Even in pre-war days, the first volumes of a projected collection of his speeches dropped still-born from the press. It would be better for his reputation if his futile scriptural apologetics had not been kept alive by Huxley, as Robert Montgomery's poems are kept alive by Macaulay. And their absurdity is eclipsed by the unrelieved prosiness of his eight volumes of miscellaneous *Gleanings*, of the correspondence that he conscientiously ground out on religious subjects, and of his excursions into Homeric criticism. And yet Disraeli lives still in his Young England novels and *Lothair*, and his phrases stick in the memory now that Gladstone's sonorous periods have died into oblivion.

There is no dividing men's lives into closed compartments, and it is certain that Gladstone's mediocrity of output must have been the result of some corresponding lack of mental profundity or philosophic grasp. A great deal of what at first seems complexity in his character must thus have its explanation in sheer inconsistency. Sincere as he was, there was never a man whose actions were less easily deducible from his principles. His name will live as that of a champion of freedom, of oppressed nationalities, and yet he went out of his way to back the slave-holding Confederacy that seceded from the United States, he had scant sympathy to spare for Hungary and Poland, and he used language implying that he had no objection, on point of principle, to Austrian rule in Italy. After his triumphant Midlothian campaign had landed him in office on a programme of peace and non-interference, he precipitated the Transvaal rebellion by refusing the Boers the self-government which they not unnaturally expected as the firstfruits of his triumph, and he launched us on a course of Imperialist adventure in Egypt by smashing the patriot Arabi in the cause of the bond-holders.

In Ireland he was at first for the stern coercion of men whom he described as marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the empire and then, suddenly, for leading them to their goal.

These incalculable variations become intelligible on the supposition that Gladstone was, to a pre-eminent degree, of the volitional temperament; it was the driving force of his will and not dispassionate judgment that dictated his actions. If ever countenance was an index to character it is surely Gladstone's; the intense, glowing eyes, with their beetling brows, the massive nose, the tight-set lips, the advancing chin, speak of one whom we should describe less as a thinker than an embodied force, sweeping everything before it, sometimes even—which is wonderful in a man whose life was religion—delicacy of scruple. For it was said of Gladstone, with some plausibility, that though he followed his conscience in all things, he did so as the driver follows the horse. His conduct in countenancing Parnell's liaison as long as it remained secret and then rising against him in righteous indignation when the thing became public has often been defended, on Jesuitical or Machiavellian principles, but will never be justified on those obtaining among gentlemen. Nor is his record in the matter of Gordon one very easy even for the most loyal partisan to explain away to his credit.

So much, we believe, must be conceded in any candid appreciation of Gladstone. In no way was he more representative of his age, that age of abounding activity and shallow-rooted thought, than in his unexpressed desire to get things done without delving too deeply into their principles. His will and not his philosophy was his guide; the latter was, in fact, mostly a matter of high-sounding generalizations about social forces moving onwards in their might and majesty, the freedom of nations and so forth, generalizations that he was invariably capable of qualifying to admit of any concrete application, or none, as the spirit moved him.

"What matter which way the head be so long as the heart be right," was, as nearly as it can be formulated in a sentence, the unexpressed creed of Romantic Victorianism. And the glory of Gladstone consists in the fact that his heart, at least, was emphatically in the right place, and again and again warmed him to take the generous part and to stand forth as the champion of freedom and righteousness at home and abroad. It is for this reason that despite his somewhat equivocal record as an advocate of national self-determination, his name is now cherished with an affection lavished on no other of his countrymen, in Italy, in Greece, in the Balkans,

that his memory has, in fact, been an asset of the greatest value in our dealings with these peoples. And among the English working class, despite the fact that he was, according to modern standards, an individualist-reactionary, his name is still one to conjure with. His policy may be long out of date, but his spirit is always marching on.

Like all men of action rather than of intellect, Gladstone's opinions were usually borrowed from his contemporaries. His mind was a sensitive plate that took impressions very easily, and he was justly proud of the fact that he was always a learner. Though he first came into prominence as the young hope of extreme Toryism, it was at a time when Peel was imparting that middle-class complexion to the party which it retained until the revolt of its aristocratic element in 1846. He was, in fact, the true child of the Industrial North whose burr so pleasantly tinged his eloquence, and though like Peel, he had taken a double first at Oxford, the culture which he assimilated was only a secondary, though a most powerful, determinant of his character. Lancastrian though he was, Oxford had given him a scope and versatility that were lacking in John Bright. Perhaps, too, the interaction of Oxford and Liverpool had taken from him some of that superb simplicity that was at once Bright's strength as a reforming influence and his weakness as a practical politician. For Gladstone was a man of the world and in every sense of the word a great Parliamentarian. He was capable of formulating the most impressive proposition, and always leaving himself a loophole for escape. And, with his overmastering desire to get things done, he knew the expediency of compromise; like a wise yachtsman he deemed it preferable to tack this way and that, rather than to steer a straight course, marked on the chart of abstract principle, into the teeth of the wind.

The great formative personal influence in Gladstone's life was undoubtedly Peel. Under him the rising statesman received an education in the craft of administration and in finance that he never forgot. Peel and Cobden had been coming very close together at the time of the Corn Law repeal, and it did not need the Premier's generous tribute in Parliament to one who had been his doughtiest adversary to signalize the fact that Peel's middle-class bias and practical experience had made him, to all intents and purposes, a convert to the Manchester School. Gladstone had only to follow the path marked out for him by his master. In a series of great budgets, first as a Peelite Chancellor of the Exchequer and afterwards

as an avowed Liberal, he pushed to a conclusion the Manchester policy of taxing only for revenue, and of keeping down expenditure by the sternest economy.

It was here that the driving force of Gladstone's personality showed itself to the greatest advantage. With a Titanic capacity for work and an aptitude for business natural in the son of a Liverpool merchant, he pursued his object of purging our financial system with an energy and mastery of detail that brooked no denial. It was not unnatural that this ruthless determination to cut down expenditure should have brought him into conflict with such old-fashioned colleagues as Palmerston and Lord John Russell.

For Gladstone, like every careful steward of the national treasure, had a natural aversion from pouring it out in unproductive military adventure, or even in that form of insurance that consists in the piling up of armaments. But by the time that Palmerston came to form his last ministry, the changed spirit that was abroad on the Continent, the reaction against the bourgeois and peaceful ideals that had found symbolic expression in the Great Exhibition was beginning to be felt even in England. The bubble Empire of Napoleon III had not yet been pricked, and the danger of a descent on our shores was heightened by the low margin of naval superiority that we possessed at a time when the transition from wooden ships to ironclads was compelling us to make an entirely fresh start. The danger was probably exaggerated, if only for the reason that friendship with England was a cornerstone of the Emperor's policy, but it was acutely felt at the time, and produced a reaction in the form of an active volunteer movement, in which such purists as Herbert Spencer scented the beginnings of militarism.

But Napoleon had other adventures in view than an enterprise that had baffled even his mighty namesake. His thirst for glory would find an easier and more time-honoured satisfaction in fighting the Austrian on the plains of Lombardy, and to do him justice, the Liberalism which was a real though fitful element in his strange nature prompted him, no less than the subtle persuasion of Cavour, to essay the enterprise of driving the Hapsburg out of Italy. In a hopelessly muddled campaign he and his ally, Victor Emmanuel of Savoy, managed to push back the Austrians as far as they seemed likely to go, and then Napoleon, whose nerves had been upset by the sight of a battlefield and who dreaded a counter-stroke by the Prussians on his Eastern frontier, backed out, to the furious indignation of Cavour. But a landslide had been set in motion, and with the

Austrians out of Lombardy nothing could stop the long pent up desire of Italy for freedom. Garibaldi, landing with his Thousand at Palermo, applied the spark to a powder magazine. The petty tyrants of North and South Italy collapsed without a struggle, and Cavour, playing the Machiavellian game for Victor Emmanuel, made no mistake. In an incredibly short time the only obstacles to the complete and now inevitable union of Italy under the House of Savoy were the Austrian troops holding down Venetia and a French force that propped up the tottering throne of His Holiness Pius IX.

If a man of genius or vision had occupied the place of Napoleon, he would have rejoiced, as at a crowning mercy, at the spectacle of a new Latin power shaking off the fetters of Teutonic despotism and coming, young and ardent, to join the ranks of Western Liberalism. But the man—Victor Hugo has branded it on his pale forehead for ever—was little, infinitely little in all his thoughts and deeds. He could only scheme for the pettiest gains, and he dreamed of keeping Italy weak and dependent on himself. No sooner, therefore, was his abandoned ally's face turned southwards towards the people who cried for a deliverer, than he seized the opportunity to annex the Departments of Savoy and Nice as a reward for his own honesty in not stabbing him in the back. He furthermore, by way of conciliating the French Catholics, deliberately held up the union of Italy, and played the part of volunteer bully for the Pope, an error that he had reason to repent of when left without an ally against a united Germany.

England, however, played a more creditable part, and one that is remembered with gratitude in Italy to this day. Palmerston may not have been a very consistent champion of liberty, but he showed at least the trend of English sympathies in a strange, roving commission that he issued to Lord Minto during the year of revolutions, to go about generally encouraging the spirit of Italian liberty. Gladstone, who was still, in 1851, ostensibly a Tory who had quarrelled with his party, visited in that year the prisons in which the Bourbon King of Naples confined the best of his subjects, and stricken to his great heart by the spectacle of inhuman tyranny, exposed the horror of it with an eloquence that stirred Europe. Heart spea to heart, and the sympathy of Liberal England for an Italy still ir chains was something more potent than the calculations of politic egotism.

It was lucky that when in 1859 the supreme crisis arrived, a

Whig ministry had just come into power. Palmerston, Russell, and Gladstone were each, in his way, inclined to side with the patriots and against the despots, but none of them, it must be confessed, was capable of subordinating every smaller consideration to the grand imperative—

"Italia, Italia, shall be free!"

They were politicians and trained to consult the immediate interests of the State they served, though it may be doubted whether it would not have been better for England herself, in the long run, to have identified herself greatly with the cause of liberty for which, sooner or later, she was bound to stand or perish. The complicated history of her diplomatic dealings in respect of Italy at this time is that of men who, consciously pursuing the lesser ends, find themselves drawn by what is best in them towards the greater. Fortunately Sir James Hudson, who represented us at the court of Turin, was not only a friend of Italy and of Cavour, but was capable of thoroughly understanding and playing up to the Machiavellian policy by which that statesman was steering to his goal between the Scylla of France and the Charybdis of Austria. It was a critical moment when Garibaldi and his patriots were preparing to cross from Sicily to deliver Southern Italy, in ostensible defiance of Victor Emmanuel himself. The French fleet was ready to co-operate with ours in stopping Garibaldi, but our Government, to their honour, refused the bait, and Britannia stood aside to let the hero pass. And when Victor Emmanuel was marching Southwards, at imminent peril of European intervention, to hold back the impetuous "Lion" from Rome and reap the harvest of his victory, Lord John, like the good Whig he was, addressed a famous dispatch to Hudson in which he justified the royal liberator on the precedent of William of Orange. Seldom, if ever, has a diplomatic document produced a more decisive effect. The despots of Central and Eastern Europe—the three chief of them were in conclave at Warsaw and boded mischief to Italy—were furious, but they did not move. The Crimean War had at least this advantage, it created an impression that when England had pronounced an opinion she might be prepared to back it by arms.

The spirit of Europe had already ominously changed since the forties. The system of Vienna, which had at least been a guarantee of peace, was now fairly shattered, and Europe was again in the melting pot. The sabre-rattling of our neighbours warned nervous patriots at home that we must look to our own defences. Lord

Palmerston, always bellicose, came forward not, as might have been expected, with a proposal to increase our first line of defence, but a scheme of putting up forts along the coast. Here the issue was fairly joined between him and Gladstone, who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, was pursuing his policy of rigid economy, and was averse to spoiling his budgets by providing large sums for works that could only do harm to an enemy who voluntarily chose to come within range. It was a ding-dong struggle between the two colleagues, Gladstone fighting point by point against both army and navy estimates, and the matter usually ending in a compromise. It was, curiously enough, the older man who voiced the spirit that was destined to prevail against the peaceful ideal that Peel and Aberdeen, from their point of view, and Cobden and Bright, from theirs, had represented.

But as far as men could see, it was evident that the new Liberalism of Gladstone was in the ascendant, and that its hour was only being delayed by the aged hand of Palmerston putting back the clock.

10

From Empire to Commonwealth

In Europe, then, the forces of Western Liberalism were notably strengthened by the emergence of Italy as a European power, though it was not till the fall of Rome in 1870 that she was completely mistress in her own house. But this was not the only, nor perhaps, in the long run, the most important acquisition to the forces that sooner or later would come together to dispute the mastery of the world with the hosts of leagued despotism. Italy, though she had the tradition of the free cities, had yet, also, something of Imperial Rome in her soul, but far across the seas, in lands of which the Roman had never dreamed, were arising communities that might be composed of rough and uncultured men, but whose very spirit was liberty of that stubborn, intractable kind which it has needed centuries of English law and constitutional practice to engender.

The history of the colonies during this period is one of extreme simplicity. In Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa communities of white men are, with the assent of the Mother Country, taking upon themselves all the essential functions of domestic self-government. Four independent nations, members of a League of Nations centring in Britain, have, by the end of the sixties, taken firm root, and though only two of them are as yet united, their

subsequent development from the Colony to the Dominion stage is only a matter of time.

While grasping firmly this essential feature of colonial development, we must be on our guard against the error of visualizing these pioneers of a new order as wholly or even mainly absorbed in politics. It is probable that in the thoughts of men in constant battle with nature, or inflamed with the desire to get rich quick, politics played no more than an infinitesimal part, and in fact it was an almost universal trouble that suitable men, with the time and inclination for assuming representative functions, were almost impossible to get. We must picture the Canadian settler as hewing valiantly at the timber—or, as he would have put it, lumber—of his virgin forests; the Australian as battling with the drought, or following the forlorn hope of nuggets into the waterless inhospitality of the "never-never"; vast distances, a struggle for bare existence that left no time for thought, perils often and amenities few; towns springing up in a few years, perhaps from a row of huts with galvanized iron roofs. . . .

These overseas possessions, whose growth appears to us of such overshadowing interest, did not bulk so largely in contemporary imaginations. To such a statesman as Lord Palmerston, with the whole of European diplomacy at his finger tips, colonies were more or less of an irrelevancy. His patriotism was that of an islander, and if he gloried, it was in the little England that had, within his memory, stood alone against a Continent in arms. It was hard to be very enthusiastic on behalf of communities whose long continuance within the Empire was, even to those who desired it, by no means a certainty. The romantic sentiment of the time was strangely slow in taking fire from the conception of a Greater Britain, and to the utilitarian mind colonies were generally a source of unnecessary expense. The idea of trade following the flag was little accounted of in the early days of Free Trade, when Englishmen were confidently expecting that all the world would sooner or later follow them in the levelling of tariff walls and free exchange of goods. It was difficult for the early Victorians to realize that the ties of love may prove firmer than those of discipline, that each successive grant of freedom might tighten a bond as thin as gossamer yet strong as links of iron.

It was in Canada, the eldest and strongest of the greater Colonies, that the decisive battle was fought between the ideal of an old-fashioned empire and that of a free commonwealth. In the English

province of Upper Canada and in the French province of Lower Canada the machinery of government had attained the maximum of inefficiency. No money could be obtained even for the most essential services; the development of each Colony was held up for the lack of communications, education, posts, police and criminal justice. The emigrants, who suffered untold horrors from lack of any provision for their reception, filtered through, in large numbers, to the United States, which seemed, by comparison, a very paradise of prosperous progress. The separation of powers between the governing and money-providing bodies was proving, as it had proved in England, the curse of the country. In the first year of the Queen's reign the inevitable revolt broke out in both provinces.

At this darkest hour in Canada's fortunes Lord Melbourne had recourse to the man who, there is good reason to believe, had already had the chief hand in framing the Reform Bill. Lord Durham was made Governor and practically dictator of Canada. He took out with him, as secretaries, the two most enlightened Radical imperialists, Buller and Wakefield, and the three of them set to work not only to tide over the immediate crisis, but to find a way of adjusting on a permanent basis the relations between mother and daughter nations. Durham had not been more than a few months in Canada before his work was cut short by the low malice of his enemy Brougham, who induced the House of Lords to pass a vote of censure on him, whereupon Melbourne, to his everlasting shame, took his customary line of least resistance by throwing over the man whom he had so recently induced, by the promise of ungrudging support, to take up a thankless task. The blow killed Durham, and came within measurable distance of losing us Canada. But before he closed his eyes for ever, the stricken statesman concluded—with the assistance of his secretaries—that famous report which may, with some pardonable hyperbole, be described as the Bible of the British Commonwealth.

Durham—if we may assume him to have been the author—was about the one prominent Englishman of his time with the vision of self-governing communities, whose loyalty would be in direct proportion to their freedom. He did not, it is true, go quite the whole way; he wanted the central government to retain the control of defence and foreign affairs, and of the Crown lands—for he believed in one imperial policy for the control of emigration. He also believed in something like an all-British Zollverein or Customs Union, likewise controlled from London. But with regard to the

Colony's own internal affairs, these, he held, must be managed by ministers responsible to the elected assembly, the Governor's functions being those of an umpire but not a participant in colonial politics. For the immediate crisis, he proposed to unite Upper and Lower Canada under one Parliament, with equal electoral representation for each province. And this was, in fact, what the government decided to do.

The history of the next few years is of absorbing interest. English statesmen, even of the Whig persuasion, could not make up their minds at first to so revolutionary a departure as that of allowing the Canadians a free hand to shape their own destinies. Lord John Russell, in drafting instructions for the first governor of a united Upper and Lower Canada, was strong against the theory that the Governor should allow his functions to be reduced to those of a *roi fainéant*, but at the same time he shrewdly counselled both parties to use a wise moderation, which, in fact, might be interpreted to mean, " Keep all the authority you like provided you don't assert it." And this is more or less the policy that the first two governors pursued. But then came a Tory ministry, a strong man at the Colonial Office, in the shape of Lord Stanley, and a Governor, Sir Charles Metcalfe, one of the ablest and noblest men of his time, but unfortunately trained in the Anglo-Indian tradition. His attempt to exert a benevolent authority over the not too scrupulous politicians of Canada only succeeded in raising a hornet's nest about him, and again bringing the Colony to the verge of rebellion. This was the last serious attempt to assert the authority of the Crown against the wishes of Canadians.

The Tories went out, and the Colonial Secretary of Russell's new government was Earl Grey, who was an almost fanatical free-trader, and who, though far from being a tactful or sympathetic administrator, was generally content to let the colonials work out their own salvation, and to cut down the responsibilities and expenses of Empire to a minimum. It was this government which, at the beginning of 1847, sent out as Governor Lord Elgin, one of that brilliant group of statesmen trained by Peel. Elgin was wise enough to abandon finally any attempt to keep the executive in independence of the legislature; he frankly accepted the position of a Constitutional ruler and abandoned all attempts to take a side in the struggle of parties. Even when the Parliament House at Montreal was burnt down, and he himself pelted by a mob of enraged loyalists who regarded as treason his consent to French ex-rebels receiving com-

pensation for their losses, he deliberately refused to swerve a hair's breadth from his chosen policy. After his time the representative of the Crown recedes to a position of comparative unimportance. The principle of Canada for the Canadians is established once and for all.

Nevertheless, the system of government adopted from the Durham report was obviously no more than a temporary makeshift. The idea of giving the two provinces equal representation had been conceived of as a means of giving the English a preponderance over the French, but the population of the Upper Province, from being smaller than that of the Lower, became greater, and it was now the turn of the French to be over-represented. Any attempt to upset the arrangement would probably have resulted in a rebellion, and, ultimately, in annexation to the United States.

For this was an ever present possibility. There was, as yet, no railway to bind Canada on a thread, and trade routes naturally tended to run from North to South. The Americans had, indeed, made an attempt to block the natural expansion of Canada by annexing the whole of her Western seaboard, but this had been too much even for the peace-loving Peel, who had been ready to go to war rather than yield. So serious had affairs become that in the year between Metcalfe's resignation and Elgin's arrival, the post of Governor had to be filled by a military commander. The threat of American power all along a vast, indefensible frontier was, indeed, an ever present menace. There were, besides, many who thought that Canada's best interests would be consulted by amalgamation with a republic whose progress seemed so much more rapid than her own, and this feeling gained a good deal in strength when the adoption of Free Trade by England seemed to cut off Canada from the chief commercial advantage she had hitherto derived from her allegiance.

However there was little serious disposition among any section of the Canadian people to exchange King Log at London for King Stork at Washington. Such a change would not have appealed to the steady-going and somewhat backward French, who wanted most of all to be left in peace, while the crime of the Americans in persecuting the loyalists of the War of Independence had created a feeling among the latter's descendants of undying loyalty to the British connection. Sentiment, in despite of utilitarian calculations, counted for more than economics. Elgin, in 1854, negotiated a treaty with Washington of reciprocity in the admission of raw materials,

and Canada took advantage of a freedom, greater than Durham would have conceded her, to frame her own tariff.

Nevertheless it was becoming plain enough that Canada could not hope successfully to compete with or stand against her mighty neighbour under her existing system of government. The dual union was growing more impossible every year, and it only comprised the territory drained by the waterway of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. The Sea Provinces stood outside; the Hudson Bay Territory in the North was owned by a company; the great Western Hinterland was ripe for development. Fortunately there were men of vision and patriotism on both sides of the party game, and they saw that the old Canada, linked by the Eastern waterway, must be merged in a mighty Dominion stretching from ocean to ocean, and linked together by a line of railway. The two original provinces could then, without any loss of dignity, separate from each other and come in as members of a wider Federation. The home government had by this time quite given up the idea of dictating to the Canadians, and were not likely to raise difficulties in sanctioning any scheme on which they would agree among themselves.

Federation, when it did come in 1867, was hastened on by the danger there had been for some time of an attack from the States. There had been intense irritation against England during the Civil War, on account of the pro-Southern bias of our upper class, and some of this was unjustly, though not unnaturally, directed against Canada. War had been a distinct possibility, and there were grave outstanding questions even after the collapse of the South. In many a homestead the prospect of the attentions of Sherman's bummers or Sheridan's devastators of the Shenandoah valley must have caused some searchings of heart. As it was, nothing more serious took place than annoying but ineffective raids by a few Irish Fenians. Nevertheless the United States displayed the rawness of their feelings by terminating, with scant courtesy, the existing arrangements of commercial reciprocity.

The form of the federal constitution, which was outlined in a series of resolutions in 1864 and became law in 1867, was therefore largely determined by the fact that Canada felt herself to be menaced by a powerful and not altogether friendly neighbour. As nearly as we can frame any generalization in politics, we may say that every pressure from the outside produces an increased centralization at home. For a federation, Canada is remarkably centralized, much more so than the United States, where each separate state retains

its independence in all functions not expressly assigned by the Constitution to the central government. Canada exactly reverses this procedure, her states are merely provinces, and the central government is presumed to have all powers not especially reserved to the provinces. It was not without difficulty that the various provinces were got to make such a large sacrifice of their rights. The island of Newfoundland, which was protected by British sea-power, never came in at all, and Nova Scotia tried, unsuccessfully, to get out again. It was only after the lapse of a few years that the process of union was finally completed, that the Hudson Bay Company was bought out and the West brought into the Union. It was a vital part of the understanding that the great railway, on which all Canada should hang, should be taken in hand, and accordingly the Canadian Pacific began to creep, year by year, Westward, every rail of it binding Canada closer together, and removing the threatened annexation by the United States from the realm of practical politics.

Having thus followed the development of Canadian unity, we need not do more than glance at the development in constitutional freedom of the other Colonies. By the middle of the century the principle of leaving the colonials to manage their own affairs, even to erect their own tariffs and frame their own constitutions, was pretty generally conceded, though not always without grudging and delay. Lord Grey, with a strange perversity, did indeed attempt to revive the practice of using the colonies as dumping grounds for convicts, but both the Cape and New South Wales gave him pretty decisively to understand that, whatever the Home Government might choose to do, convicts would not be received. The remote and backward colony of West Australia did indeed continue to receive convicts of free choice, until her neighbours gave her plainly to understand that she could not create this nuisance at their doors without provoking reprisals. And so transportation died an unlamented death.

The Australian colonies had no inducement to follow the example of Canada. Their tendency was rather to fall apart than unite together. New South Wales found the whole East and South East coast too long a line for her to hold, and the colonies of Victoria and Queensland split off from her to South and North. There was even some question of subdividing Queensland. The natural lines of communication did not run laterally between the Colonies, which were settlements along the coast, each of whose activities were focussed in the principal seaport, which was also the capital. Behind

them all stretched the vast and waterless desert. There was no apprehension whatever of danger from abroad, least of all from the quaint and remote Japanese. Therefore there was but the slightest incentive to unity, and the various colonies preferred to work out their constitutions on the principle of each for herself and the Mother Country for all. But the daughters had come of age and wanted no maternal interference in their own houses. And as often happens when that salutary principle is recognized in family life, the bonds of affection were strengthened. The discovery of gold in the forties brought a veritable rush of immigrants—not always of the most desirable kind—and the demands of the diggers stimulated every form of industrial and pastoral activity. In the flourishing and pushful communities whose population went on doubling and redoubling through the forties and fifties, the memory and taint of the bad old convict days were gradually erased.

New Zealand had a more placid development, except for the wars with the heroic and chivalrous Maoris that for a long time held up the development of the North Island. Isolated as she was in the remotest corner of the world, the only external danger that had ever threatened her was lest the French should have grabbed her while the English were making up their minds whether they wanted her or not. But the physical conformation of her two principal islands and their nearness to each other gave them a stronger tendency to unite than the settlements along the fringe of the Australian Continent. Accordingly we find New Zealand, for her first twenty years or so of responsible government, adopting a somewhat loose federation of six provinces, and it was only after twenty years of struggle between provincialists and centralists that the latter won the day and the provincial councils were abolished in 1876.

In South Africa, as in Canada, the situation was complicated by the presence of a large, non-British, white population. The great trek of Boer farmers to the North had by no means put an end to our difficulties—in some ways it rather increased them. Nobody, as yet, dreamed of a great South African Empire; Lord Grey would have liked us to have fulfilled our original purpose of keeping Cape Town as a naval base and cutting all our other responsibilities. But this was more easily said than done; already large numbers of Britons had emigrated to South Africa and the Great Trek had led to our annexing another colony in the shape of Natal. Hopeless vacillation marked our policy: we did not want to go on and yet we found it impossible to stop. The missionary, Dr. Philip, persuaded

the authorities to undertake the plausible experiment of throwing a barrier of native or half-caste states between us and the Boers, but these states were failures from the first, and another Kaffir invasion roused us into undertaking a forward policy in the course of which we not only reduced this formidable enemy to order, but annexed, after one sharp little fight, the Boer territory between the Orange and the Vaal rivers.

This might have proved a success, as the Boers of what was afterwards the Orange Free State were, for the most part, well pleased to accept the protection of the British, who were now less inclined than in the days of the great trek to be at the beck and call of the missionaries. But the reaction had already set in against a policy that might prove troublesome and expensive, and the British not only formally recognized the independence of the Transvaal or Northern Boers, but insisted, despite the protests of the Southern Boers, in clearing out of that very Orange Free State they had so recently fought to annex. This bare summary gives, however, but a faint idea of the indecision and inconsistency that characterized our policy throughout.

Cape Colony itself received, in 1854, a representative government, in which even Africans with a sufficient property qualification were not excluded from the electorate. In Natal, where the handful of white settlers were enormously outnumbered, Crown Colony rule was retained till the nineties. There was one statesman, however, who had imagination enough to conceive of a scheme that, if adopted, would probably have saved untold expense and bloodshed in future years. This was Sir George Grey, who came to the governorship of the Cape after having had a main hand in framing the New Zealand constitution. He at once saw that a federation of the British on the coast with the Boers in the Hinterland would serve the best interests of both, and he conceived of this federation as based on the same large measure of provincial autonomy as obtained in New Zealand. The Free State Boers, when sounded, expressed their willingness to come in, and there is little doubt that the Transvaalers would in a short time have followed their example. But the Colonial Office took fright at the idea of any sort of union with the Boers. Grey was branded by the Tory under-secretary, Lord Carnarvon, as " a dangerous man " ; he was, in 1859, with appropriate compliments to his character and abilities, dismissed, and though a Liberal government promptly reinstated him, it was on the understanding that federation should be dropped. Thus the golden opportunity slipped away.

The period of bourgeois rule in England thus witnessed a development of the Commonwealth overseas that, though little regarded, was of supreme importance. At the beginning of the Queen's reign it was an open question whether Canada should be British, American, or independent; the Cape was hardly regarded as more than a calling station; it had not been decided whether New Zealand should be a British or a French possession; Australia was looked upon as little better than a social cesspit—Charles Lamb's jokes to an Australian friend about the thieving propensities of his fellow-colonists make odd reading nowadays. By 1867 matters had changed out of recognition; flourishing and self-governing daughter communities were firmly established, and, though there were still plenty of Little Englanders at home, there was no serious idea, in responsible quarters, of cutting the connection. The love of Britons beyond the seas for their motherland, though ignorant and unsympathetic politicians at home did their best to damp it, could not but grow under the fostering influence of liberty. England no longer appeared in the light of a partisan in colonial politics nor as an authoress of irritating restrictions. Distance now lent enchantment to the old country; imagination could play freely round her charms; loyalty could centre chivalrously round the person of the Queen.

"Instead of looking on us as a merely dependent colony," said Sir John Macdonald in his great speech on introducing the scheme of federation to the Canadian Parliament, "England will have in us a friendly nation—a subordinate but still a powerful people—to stand by her in North America in peace or in war. The people of Australia will be such another subordinate nation. And England will have this advantage, if her Colonies progress under the new colonial system, as I believe they will, though at war with all the rest of the world, she will be able to look to the subordinate nations in alliance with her and owning allegiance to the same Sovereign, who will assist in enabling her again to meet the whole world in arms, as she has done before."

11

Bureaucracy and Mutiny in India

In India there was, as yet, no question of self-government. The last decades of John Company's rule were devoted to the extension and consolidation of the British Raj. A curious complication of fictions, becoming ever more and more transparent, masked the

realities of the situation. The Company, which had now ceased altogether to be a trading association and was really one aspect of the British Government, was still, for certain purposes, a mere feudatory of its own pensioner, the Great Mogul, and there was even some ancient question as to whether the Mogul himself might not own some shadowy allegiance to Persia. Such shadows might be not unfraught with danger in a land where dreams are little less accounted of than realities.

There was no question but that England, if she was to hold India at all, must go forward until her frontiers were secure. The expansion, to its South East, of the Russian Empire was already felt as a menace, and Palmerston, if he failed to appreciate the importance of the Colonies, was at least alive to that of India. The Tsar's agents were busy in Persia and Afghanistan; a Persian army actually besieged Herat, which was supposed to be the gate of Afghanistan, which again was the gate to India. Accordingly the Governor General, Lord Auckland, committed us to one of the most insane and crooked adventures in the whole of our history. He forced a worthless pretender upon the Afghan people and tried to prop him up by an army, mainly of sepoys, at Kabul. Of that army, only one man got away, and though we had the poor satisfaction of retaking Kabul and burning the bazaar, we had to make a virtue of necessity and give back to Afghanistan the ruler of whom we had deprived her.

Our next experiment in a forward policy was more successful if no less iniquitous. To round off our territory it was necessary for us to acquire that of Scinde on the Lower Indus. This Naboth's vineyard was ruled by three somewhat inept but—so far as we were concerned—quite inoffensive Amirs. However it was easy to fasten a quarrel on them, and almost as easy to fall upon them and seize the whole of their territory. Perhaps our General, Sir Charles Napier, had a twinge of conscience when announcing his conquest in the famous pun—"*peccavi*"—I have Scinde.

Our next struggle was against the Sikhs of the Punjab, that North Western province which had for long been known as the sword arm of India. This time at least, we had the quarrel forced upon us, for the Sikh army, whom dynastic anarchy had rendered entirely out of hand, suddenly took it into their heads to make a dash for Delhi. It took four desperate battles, in one of which our forces came measurably near disaster, before the Sikhs were turned back and driven into the Sutlej at Sabraon. Even this overthrow and the

severe peace which we imposed upon them did not tame their spirits; it needed a second war, little less desperate than the first, before they were finally overthrown and their province annexed. Our frontier on the North West was now brought to the natural rampart of India, the Himalaya mountains. To the North East, two wars against the Buddhist Kingdom of Burma gave us, in Mr. Vincent Smith's words, "control, direct or indirect, of the entire eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal, from Chittagong to Singapore." The final absorption of the Kingdom itself, thus cut off from the sea, was only a question of time.

England had now acquired an empire of India, of which the proudest of that country's former rulers had not dared to dream. It extended from the Himalayas to Ceylon, from Singapore to the borders of Baluchistan. All this time, under a series of energetic Governors General, the work of internal organization was proceeding apace. Sati and Thuggee had gone; slavery was abolished; human sacrifice was put an end to. One of the greatest of the many great English rulers of India was Lord Dalhousie, another of that splendid team of administrators who had been coached by Peel. Under his auspices, from 1848 to 1856, the process of Westernization was pushed on with bewildering energy. The public services were thoroughly reorganized; a halfpenny post was established throughout the length and breadth of India; vast irrigation works were undertaken; the most important centres were linked together by the electric telegraph; railways, the beginnings of a network designed to cover the whole land, were begun; a comprehensive system of education, starting at the village schools and culminating in three principal Universities, was thought out, and subsequently carried through in despite of the Mutiny.

No doubt India owed and still owes a debt of gratitude to this able and selfless man. But India did not recognize this; in fact the pace of Dalhousie's reforms had caused her the gravest disquiet. No doubt this was partly due to the resentment and suspicion always excited in a naturally conservative people who find themselves hustled out of a groove. But there are Indian writers—we would instance particularly one so judicial as Mr. Pramatha N. Bose [1]—who have drawn attention to another side of the case not so immediately obvious. For if India was opened up by the new means of communication, it was largely for exploitation by British capital. Much the same thing happened to her as had happened to Ireland

[1] In his *Hindu Civilization during British Rule.*

under the Union. If the railways allowed her raw products to get out, they also allowed our manufactured products to get in, and we had carefully deprived India of doing what every other country, not to speak of our own Colonies, had found it necessary to do in face of the overwhelming strength of our industrial resources—to protect her more backward industries by a tariff. Indian handicrafts were therefore knocked out as Irish industries had been, and the country sank into that state of economic subservience which is implied in the exchange of her own raw goods against her rival's manufactures, with the result of driving still more of her poeple to the already congested land, and thereby making poverty chronic.

Besides, it must be remembered that the railways, being financed by British capital and manned in all their skilled branches by Britons, constituted a permanent drain on the resources of the country. And these railways would, as Dalhousie's enthusiastic biographer, Sir W. W. Hunter, indicates, act as a bait to bring British capital to India on a hitherto unprecedented scale. All this, however, was not immediately apparent, and what did alarm India much more was the way in which Dalhousie, slipping for that purpose alone into the role of Mogul's vassal, applied the feudal doctrine of lapse to absorb Indian States, in which the direct line of succession failed, into the British Dominions. He was no doubt perfectly sincere and, what is more, probably right in saying, as he did when he annexed the important state of Oudh, that "the British Government would be guilty in the sight of God and man, if it were any longer to sanction by its countenance an administration fraught with suffering to millions." But it remains true, as the aforesaid biographer has pointed out, that he increased our dominions in India by between a third and a half, and it is no wonder if the supporters of the old order felt that now or never was the time to shake off this alien incubus.

There was still one chance, and it was a good one. English power was, after all, largely maintained by Indian bayonets. The sepoy army enormously outnumbered the British troops among them, and the bulk of it, the Bengal army, had for some time been in a state of chronic unrest, manifesting itself in more than one incipient and abortive mutiny. Things had been working up some time for a general explosion. The men's caste prejudices had been paid an exaggerated deference in some instances, and in others mortally insulted. There was talk of a general plot to force India to become Christian, talk rendered only too plausible by the officious

activities of missionaries and even of Low Church officers. At last the ghastliest of all possible outrages, both from a Hindu and Mahommedan point of view, was perpetrated, when it was rumoured that the cartridges of the new rifle, that the men were expected to bite, were greased with the fat of the sacred cow and the unclean pig. The government publicly denied this charge, and perhaps with honest ignorance, but the low caste employees in the munition works knew better, and the word went round that the sahibs were lying. The simple sepoy, with fury and despair in his heart, found himself confronted with the choice of mutiny or damnation. To unimaginative Englishmen such a state of mind was, and probably still is, inconceivable.

The ineptitude of the authorities passes belief. Though on the edge of a volcano, and even after a regiment had had to be disarmed and men were everywhere refusing the cartridges, they took no precautions. The vast arsenal of Delhi, hard by the palace-fort of the great Mogul, was at the mercy of a sepoy garrison. Forty miles away to the North East, lay the military centre of Meerut, which at least ought to have been safe, as it contained as many British as sepoys. Here the divisional commander, who was in his dotage, took a very strong line with 85 Indian cavalrymen, who preferred the utmost punishment to defiling their souls with the accursed cartridges. After their sentence of ten years' hard labour had been promulgated and their irons struck on on parade, the poor fellows were actually put under the care of a sepoy guard. Next evening the British garrison went on church parade, without ammunition. The comrades of the imprisoned men rose and rescued them, and then, in panic as to the vengeance the sahibs would take, most of them crowded off down the line of least resistance, which happened to be the Delhi road. For two hours the British troops waited for orders, and then the retreat was sounded. Neither the Brigadier nor the Divisional Commander, though with ample resources, would take the responsibility of scattering the fugitives and saving Delhi. The Delhi sepoys were, in fact, for some time afraid to rise, and did so only when the lapse of an hour or two had driven them to the not unplausible conclusion that the sahibs at Meerut were indeed, as some of the new arrivals assured them, wiped out. Then, while they were making an end of all the English they could catch, two devoted men somewhat mitigated the disaster, one, an Eurasian telegraphist, by wiring the news to the Commander-in-chief at Umballa and dying at his post, one, an English subaltern, by blowing up at least part of the magazine.

The storm, thus conjured up by almost unbelievable incompetence, burst with awful suddenness on the handful of British scattered through Northern India. With Delhi as its centre and the Mogul for its figurehead, nothing could now stop the mutiny of the Bengal army. It was a revolt of the military caste, and the only province where there was anything like a popular rebellion was Oudh, where the reins of authority had been entrusted to the hands of a peculiarly overbearing official. In the country round Delhi the peasants vaguely believed that the Toorkh, the Mahommedan plunderer of dire tradition, had again come out of the North West. Many of them showed kindness to white fugitives. The rebels themselves, however, made it their deliberate policy to exterminate every British man, woman and child, and on our side there was no quarter for ex-sepoys. A remarkable feature of so ferocious a struggle was the almost entire absence of rape.

It seemed to many level-headed folk at home as if the handful of British could never hold their own against such disparity of numbers. It was, in truth, a nearer thing than we are apt to realize in the light of events. The Nizam of the Deccan had been turned into an enemy by our having deprived him of Berar, and if he had come in against us, Southern India would almost certainly have taken fire. Providentially this Nizam had just died, and a pro-British chief minister kept his son straight. An equally dangerous region was the newly-conquered Punjab, to which Dalhousie had sent all the ablest administrators he could collect, and which, under the sympathetic rule of John Lawrence, had, from a standing menace, become the sword arm of British India. The Sikhs had no desire to exchange their new rulers for their old tyrant, the Delhi Mogul. So from the Punjab in the North West and our Eastern base at Allahabad, British and loyal Indian troops closed in upon the chief seats of rebellion. The mutineers, though enormously superior in force, were, in fact, without unity among themselves, without leadership and without a plan. An Anglo-Sikh army performed the almost incredible feat of besieging and storming the fortified city of Delhi, the focus of the rebellion, against six times their numbers. Lucknow, the capital of Oudh, where the British population held out with desperate valour in the Residency, was relieved twice, and the city finally stormed by the newly-appointed commander-in-chief, Sir Colin Campbell, now at the head of a sufficient army. The back of the rebellion was thus broken, though it needed many weary months to complete the process of reconquest.

One dreadful episode cannot be passed over, because its memory has exercised ever since a profound and tragic influence on our relations with Indians. The station of Cawnpore, on the Ganges, happened to be commanded by a certain Sir Hugh Wheeler, who, like the commander at Meerut, was aged and incompetent. When a mutiny of the sepoy garrison was practically certain, he could not make up his mind to seize the magazine, which he could almost certainly have defended until relief came. Instead, he chose to defend a miserable mud wall, behind which the white population contrived to hold out for nineteen days. Then he yielded to the overtures of the rebel leader or figurehead, the deposed Mahratta Peishwa's adopted son, entitled the Nana Sahib. This man had a grievance, in that Dalhousie had, quite rightly, refused to extend to him the life-pension granted to his father. A surrender was arranged on the Nana's undertaking to dispatch the whole white community by boat to Allahabad. With what, in a responsible commander, fell not far short of lunacy, Wheeler appears to have allowed troops and civilians to straggle down to the river without any sort of military precaution. Of course they walked into a trap and were helplessly massacred. The surviving women and children were confined in a small building and, on the approaching of a relief column, hacked to death by five ruffians who were procured for the purpose after the sepoys, at no small risk to themselves, had refused to disgrace their uniforms by so foul a deed.

The sight of the well into which the bodies—not all dead—had been thrown, not unnaturally maddened our troops. Dreadful reprisals were thought out, elaborately designed to compass not only the death but—in his own opinion at anyrate—the damnation of anyone thought to have had a hand in the crime. The accumulated horror of the tragedy made an indelible impression on the British imagination, long after similar massacres at Delhi and Jhansi had been forgotten. Nana Sahib, who seems to have been a mere tool in the hands of others, became as symbolic a figure as Guy Fawkes, and there was a subconscious tendency, especially after the lapse of years, to regard all Indians as being somehow more or less implicated. The little islands of Britishers in the cantonments could never quite get it out of the back of their minds that what had happened once might, in certain not inconceivable circumstances, happen again to their womenfolk, and in this sense it may be said that Amritsar was an answer, though after sixty-two years, to Cawnpore. A subtle poison had been introduced into our relations with Indians—

after the mutiny there was never quite the same sympathy as before.

Nevertheless, after the last mutineers had been killed or driven to perish in the Northern wilds, India settled down to a period of peaceful development. The old fictions were swept away; the Mogul dynasty was finally dethroned, John Company ended its long and splendid existence, and the British Raj was formally vested in the Crown. There was no human possibility, for a long time to come, of upsetting British rule from within. The authorities were not going to be caught napping twice, and the most elaborate precautions were taken to prevent any recurrence of a mutiny. The sepoys were carefully mixed, deprived of artillery, and associated with an adequate proportion of British. The civilian population was kept rigorously disarmed. Meanwhile the machinery of bureaucracy was brought as near perfection as such machinery can be. Competitive examination had been introduced in 1853, and a type of civil servant was evolved of almost invariable competence, devotion to duty and—what East of Suez is the rarest of virtues—incorruptibility. Railways, education, justice, irrigation, the beginnings of famine relief, all these things were cared for with a practical efficiency that India had not known since Asoka had graved his royal edicts upon the rocks, more than two thousand years ago.

And yet there was another side to the picture not quite so pleasant to contemplate. The more elaborate any bureaucracy becomes, the more nearly does it approach to being a machine, a soulless thing working by a complication of rules, crushing out imagination and individuality. This tendency is immeasurably strengthened when the bureaucracy is alien in race and sympathy to the people among whom it functions. And though the theory was maintained of a free and open career for talent, whether British or Indian, how little a share the Indian was really conceded in the administration of his own country is shown by the figures for 1892, quoted by Mr. Pramatha N. Bose, which show that the Imperial Civil service included only 21 Indians out of 939 members. The British civilians, in fact, came to form a close and jealously race-conscious caste, isolated from the life of the country in station clubs from which Indians were often excluded,[1] and tending to resent anything implying an equal comradeship between themselves and the people whom, according to their

[1] I know of one instance in which an Indian member of the I.C.S., now occupying a distinguished position, received what was practically an order from his chief to stand for membership of a famous club. He was blackballed!

lights, they ruled with such inflexible conscientiousness. This was very different from what had obtained under the best Mahommedan rulers of India, and especially under Akbar, who had employed Hindus in the highest posts of state, and who had numbered among his most trusted counsellors such men as the wise and witty Rajah Birbal.

It was even different from what had obtained before the Mutiny, for then not only was there no shadow of Cawnpore to darken sympathy, but Englishmen had lived their lives in India and come to look upon it as a second home. Now, however, after the coming of the steamship and the cutting of the Suez Canal had so immensely shortened both the time and cost of a journey to England, leave became a matter of every few years, and affection had no time to strike roots in the country. With the development of the Hill Stations, India became an agreeable place of habitation for English womenfolk, and there was now little temptation to form irregular connections and even marriages with Indians. Not the least serious feature of the system, from an Indian point of view, was the fact that, according to a Parliamentary return in 1892, again quoted by Mr. Bose, nearly one fifth of the whole revenue of India went into the pockets of Europeans, all of whose savings and no small part of whose current expenses went to England and were a continual drain of the resources of a desperately poor community. An unfriendly critic might have said that if England had insisted on bringing her civilization to India, she had made an uncommonly good thing out of the transaction.

One notable effect of the new system of education in India was to create the beginnings of an Indian intelligentsia. The mere fact that the whole bias was towards Anglicization had at last the effect of turning young Indians from their own aristocratic and caste-dominated traditions to half-comprehended ideals of Western democracy. It was impossible to introduce the most quick-witted people in the world to such doctrines as "Taxation without consent is tyranny", "Redress of grievances must precede supply", and so forth, without the certainty of having them applied in a sense that the teacher might not have bargained for, and when such sentiments were broadcasted as,

> "This England never did, nor never shall
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror."

it was difficult to explain that what was sauce for the English goose might be rank poison for the Indian gander. Another factor was

also making for the rise of an Indian patriotism. The opening up of the country by railways, telegraphs, post and newspapers had knit India together as never before in the course of her history. And not least important was the fact that England had supplied her with a common language for political purposes. The new knowledge, it is true, had only spread to a small minority, the new spirit to one still smaller, but the vast inert lump of the Indian population might ultimately be leavened by this new leaven of Westernization.

Meanwhile a struggle was going on none the less critical because few marked it. It was a question whether an emancipated India, if such a dream could ever come to pass, would not find that the civilization handed down to her from remote ages had been lost beyond recovery. Many of the new type of educated Indians desired nothing better than to model themselves on the pattern of the West. When the whole of the immense influence wielded by the government was exerted on behalf of Westernization, the danger was great indeed. In architecture, for example, the noble traditions of Hindustan, modified to a greater or less extent by Saracenic influence, were ignorantly set aside, the barbarous practice of copying to style became officially *de rigueur*, gifted young men had to learn how to put up sham Classic and tinsel Gothic, or go without the patronage of the sahibs. To obtain skilled government employment of any sort, it was in fact, necessary to have a prescribed smattering of English education which, being an imported product, was apt to be regarded as a mere means of passing examinations, and was "mugged up" by the mnemonic "stunts" of obscure coaches in the bazaars.

There was then, on the one hand, this unnatural and unsatisfied desire to make Indians into Englishmen, and on the other the vast, stagnant sea of Brahman conservatism. And yet the true Renaissance of India, of which Ram Mohun Rai had laid the foundations, was gathering strength in spite of difficulties that threatened to obscure its original aim. The career of his own Brahma Somaj was, as far as numbers and unity were concerned, somewhat disheartening. The ideal of advancing from Hinduism to a universal religion, in which Christian and Moslem, Buddhist and Confucian, would join without the sacrifice of anything essential, was too splendid a dream to meet the demands of Indians to whom their Vedic tradition was something superior in kind to all other faiths and scriptures. They could not quite sacrifice the faith of a people to find it reborn in the faith of mankind.

The man who represented the most advanced wing of the Somaj

was Keshab Chandra Sen, who had received a Westernized education and was thoroughly versed in English literature. With an extraordinary broad-mindedness he desired to assimilate all that was best in Western civilization and Christianity, while remaining, as he himself expressed it, a confirmed Indian and a confirmed theist. Not the least important result of this contact with the West was a passion for social reform on the most drastic lines, sweeping away caste, raising the status of women, and generally doing away with the letter of Brahmanic tradition in order to enter into the pure freedom of the sons of God. But so Radical a policy was too extreme for the more old-fashioned and patriotic Indians of the Somaj. These found a leader in the saintly mystic, Devendranath Tagore, who though an equally pure theist, grounded himself solidly on the rock of the Vedas and refused to admit to any equality the Hebrew Scriptures or the doctrine of Christ. On this fundamental difference the Somaj split in 1865, the Hindu Conservatives remaining on in the original Somaj, the Radical universalist party forming, under Chandra Sen, a new body which itself was destined to split in half on its leader's fall from his own principles by marrying his child daughter, with full Brahmanical rites, to the son of a Mahrajah.

It may seem waste of time thus to dwell on the fortunes of a society which never numbered more than a few thousands, all told, among the hundreds of millions of Indians. But the issue at stake was one that may conceivably be held, by future generations, to have been vital not only to India but to mankind at large. Might it not be possible that the new spiritual impulse of which Western civilization stood in so sore a need would proceed from the ancient cradle of religion in the East? And would the leaders of Indian thought be capable of the almost superhuman detachment and abnegation that will sacrifice even the pride of race and prejudice of tradition? Above all, would they be able to make this sacrifice when Indian civilization no less than Indian nationality was struggling for life in the clutches of an alien but no doubt benevolent despotism? In any other country but that of Asoka and the Buddha, a negative answer would have gone without saying, but there might be just a chance, though faint, that India would rise to the occasion.

12

The West in the Far East

One great Eastern civilization had now become, apparently in permanence, a field to be exploited by Western capital. But this was by no means enough to satisfy the insatiable hunger for markets. China and Japan had asked nothing better than to remain harmlessly within their own borders and live the life that seemed to them in every way more desirable than the fevered industrialism of which they knew only by vague rumour. They produced all they wanted for their own needs, and they feared, not altogether without reason, that the advantages of traffic with the West would be dearly bought. When George III had approached the Chinese Emperor with a view to the opening of diplomatic relations he had received a magnificent snub. Such trade as there was with China had to be carried on by Western merchants on the footing of barbarians, in humble contact with a superior civilization. Japan, which two centuries previously had found contact with Christianity on the make extremely distasteful, had purged herself of the nuisance and kept herself to herself ever since.

The natural remedy for the humiliating conditions insisted on by the Chinese would have been to withdraw our custom. But this would by no means suit our book, especially when we happened to be strong enough to blow open any gate that might be closed against us. The Chinese had the first taste of our methods at Canton, to which we were bringing the blessings of our civilization in the shape, principally, of opium. It is only fair to state that this trade was by no means frowned upon by the local mandarins, who contrived to make an exceedingly good thing out of it. The Chinese were no doubt arrogant and discourteous to the last degree, and when, on the lapse of John Company's monopoly in 1833, trade became open to all British subjects, they insisted on treating our representative, Lord Napier, with the most humiliating assumption of superiority. The unsentimental Duke of Wellington, who served a brief term at the Foreign Office under Peel's short ministry in 1834, and had, when commanding in the Peninsula, made no difficulties about going down on his knees to a Spanish grandee who had insisted on this mode of address, was stolidly unmoved at the idea of his lordship having been called a barbarian dog. Palmerston, however, had different ideas, and in 1839 the seizure of some opium by the Chinese followed by

outrages on British traders resulted in our attacking the Chinese, who were quite helpless against us, and ultimately in our appropriating the fine port and naval base of Hong Kong, besides forcing the Chinese to open five ports to our trade.

Our next war, which started in 1856, was almost wholly indefensible from any point of view except that of might being right and business the highest morality. The original excuse was that the Chinese governor of Canton had arrested some of his fellow countrymen on a charge of piracy, these men being at the time under the protection of the British flag. The Chinese governor seems to have acted with dignity and moderation, but Lord Palmerston was Prime Minister, and the Chinese were quite weak enough to warrant the full assertion of the "Civis Romanus" doctrine. Accordingly Governor Leh's arguments were simply ignored, or rather met with the counter argument of shot and shell. By this time other powers had come to feel that the business of exploiting China ought not to be a British monopoly, and that the wretched Celestials must now be forced to open their doors in good earnest. Accordingly the French joined in with us, and ultimately the Americans and the Russians, and after a good many Chinese had been made an end of, the path was cleared for civilization by the burning and looting of the Emperor's Summer Palace, "a building whose artistic value," as Mr. Bertrand Russell drily remarks "... must have been about equal to that of Saint Mark's in Venice and much greater than that of Rheims Cathedral."[1] It is only fair, however, to add that this palace had witnessed the torture of some prisoners who had been captured under circumstances of gross treachery. It was on this question of bullying China that Lord Palmerston's government was defeated in the Commons in 1857, after a memorable debate in which Lord John Russell ventured to say that we had heard too much of late of the prestige of England. "We used," he added, "to hear of the character, of the reputation, of the honour of England." But the old Premier knew enough of the middle class to be confident that, provided prestige could be attained at the expense of a thoroughly weak opponent, character, reputation and honour might go by the board. He therefore appealed, not in vain, to the constituencies.

It must be remarked that one of the results of this policy of forcing open the door to European trade was to take away from the Chinese the right enjoyed by every sovereign state of regulating its own tariff. The goods that came in at the treaty ports did so at a fixed and low

[1] *The Problem of China*, by Bertrand Russell, p. 52.

tariff, which the Chinese government had no power to raise. When internal taxes were imposed, European goods were allowed to pay a fixed rate that gave them an advantage over Chinese goods. No matter how desperately the government was pressed for revenue, they had to find some other resource—sometimes in the form of hampering export duties—or go without. Thus the system of compulsory exploitation which Britain applied to India was imposed by Europe upon China in a modified form called "The Open Door". In this connection we may perhaps quote a remark of Mr. Bertrand Russell's, "If you lived in a town where the burglars had obtained possession of the Town Council, they would very likely insist upon the policy of the Open Door, but you might not consider it wholly satisfactory. Such is China's situation among the Great Powers." [1]

The business of forcing the door open in artistic and feudal Japan was first undertaken—ironically enough in the light of subsequent developments—by America, though the other white powers were quick to join in the forcing of their economic attentions on a victim who might be presumed to be more quaint and helpless even than her neighbour China. But there is a difference between the Chinese and Japanese spirit which is best expressed by the contrast of treatment of the same subject by two of their respective artists. The Chinese painting is of a sage crossing a river on a reed and impelling the reed—as you cannot but feel—by sheer, quiet intensity of contemplation. But in the Japanese picture, a sage is crossing not a river, but a storm-swept sea, crossing it not on a reed but on a sword, in a tempest of determination beside which the storm that whistles through his long hair and whiskers seems feeble indeed. Will-power and not contemplation is the basis of the Japanese character, and this was evoked as never before by the insolent intrusion of the foreigners.

But the Japanese, a race of fighters and patriots, had no mind to be the mere passive victims of barbarian violence. They had already adopted one civilization from China, and now another had come into the field against which the first seemed helpless. A philosophic standard of values was alien to the nature of a people who have produced many artists but few philosophers. The West might not have found ultimate truth or inward calm, but it had undoubtedly attained power, and that was enough justification. The Japanese did not hesitate. With an adaptability almost miraculous they set themselves to scrap the grotesque and charming

[1] Op. cit., p. 56.

feudal order which Gilbert caricatured with such humorous tolerance in *The Mikado*. They determined to take from the West everything she had to teach, constitutional, industrial and—above all—military. Nay more, they would beat the foreigner at his own game. They positively welcomed intercourse. In a few brief years they had scrapped the old order and were feverishly setting themselves to acquire the power over material things that had already worked such strange transformation in the West. It was as if Poo Bah had disappeared from the stage, effected a lightning transformation, and suddenly re-appeared in European uniform, armed with a machine gun, which he pointed at the audience, who were at first unable to grasp that this was not another of the fellow's jokes. But we are anticipating a process that had barely begun in the sixties of the nineteenth century.

18

Ireland—The Darkest Hour.

While we were thus enlarging our power and responsibilities abroad, trouble was accumulating at the heart of the Empire. What Poland was to Europe, Ireland was to England, and when all was said that could be for the sternness of our necessity and the benevolence of our intentions, two facts emerged with more distinctness than ever during the course of the nineteenth century. The first was that, except in the North East corner of Ireland, we were holding down by force a people whose national self-consciousness was inflamed by an intense sense of wrong; the second, that under our rule Ireland did in fact become the most miserable land in Europe, a misery plainly reflected in the appalling statistics of her population, which was little short of halved in the years between the Black Famine of 1845 and the end of the century.

During the period of middle class ascendancy in England, the Irish question had been more or less in abeyance in so far as the predominant Power was concerned. And yet the cup of Ireland's miseries had been steadily filling, and it was only a question of time, when England could be invited to partake of it. For we must continue to bear in mind that Pitt's Act of Union had created a situation that must inevitably prove intolerable for England herself. With a Parliament in which power alternates between two jealously competing parties, it is obvious that a compact body of four-score or more members, that knows its own mind, can sooner or later

hold the balance of power, and dictate its own terms as the price of its support. And with the continuous democratizing of our institutions, the time would sooner or later come when the national sentiment of a practically unanimous people would succeed in returning an Irish patriot for every Irish constituency.

There is another aspect of England's relations with Ireland to be considered. The conquest was not only political but—what hit the average Irishman a great deal harder—economic. The compulsory opening, under the Union, of her ports to English competition, had almost wiped out Ireland's manufactures, except in the North East, and the Celtic Irish had become more than ever an agricultural population, living in a state of frightful destitution on a few pence a day, sometimes subsisting on milk and potatoes, sometimes on potatoes without milk, and reduced, in large part, to the trade of begging during the slack seasons. This miserable peasantry competed desperately among themselves for land, a fact of which the landlords, a class largely and increasingly alien to them in race and religion, took advantage to force up rents to the most extortionate rates. These landlords could not plead the justification of the English common enclosers of the preceding century, that they had sunk capital in the land and improved cultivation. They were mostly simple parasites, who rack-rented the people and took the proceeds across the Channel, steadily draining the country of its wealth. The lot of a poor man was hopeless beyond belief. Let him improve his holding, and on the expiry of his lease the rent would be put up more than in proportion, and he would probably be turned out to starve or, not improbably, to take the life of his successor. What was most fatal of all, the Irish, like nearly all people living on the verge of destitution, indulged without stint in the only pleasure life afforded them, and bred children in reckless profusion. When one considers that the population was increasing by millions, and that it was dependent for bare life on the potato, a root notoriously liable to epidemic disease, it ought to have been obvious towards what sort of a catastrophe Ireland was rushing.

One lesson England seemed determined on teaching. If there was to be any remedy for so terrible a state of things, Ireland must win it by her own strong arm. It was by the threat of rebellion that she had secured the Catholic Emancipation that no considerations of honour could wring from England at the time of the Union. It is true that by a piece of clever finesse the most awkward consequences of this measure had been at least postponed. With the ostensible

object of bringing Irish into line with English practice, the property qualification for a vote was increased tenfold, and in spite of the fact that government posts were now legally open to Catholics, sufficiently good care was taken that only a very few of them should be appointed. But at least the Liberator O'Connell was in Parliament with a fair "Tail" of followers, trying his best, in the years following the Reform Bill, to strike up a working alliance with the all-powerful Whigs.

Meanwhile England was trying to deal with the troubles of her sister island after her usual fashion of prescribing pills of somewhat dubious composition for the cure of an earthquake. Under Tory auspices a system of education, universal but not compulsory, was set up, but one carefully calculated to stamp out, if that were possible, any spark of national feeling in Irish bosoms. In some schools we even went so far as to adopt a method subsequently tried with less success by the Prussians on Poland, and flog the already fast disappearing native language from the lips of school children. We also set up a poor-law, but scrapped a constructive scheme for finding useful employment for the multitudes of destitute who drifted about the country, because some official person, who found time to spend a fortnight in the country, came to the conclusion that it would be better to dot it with workhouse Bastilles on the good old English model. The municipal corporations were, after much chopping and changing, given a form of self-government on a £10 franchise, and reduced in the process to ten.

Meanwhile the Irish people had shown that they had not forgotten the sort of argument to which England was most amenable. Of all Irish grievances the most humiliating, though not the most severe, was the tribute that was wrung from them, in the form of tithe, for the support of a Church which was, in their eyes, not only foreign but heretical. In 1830 began what was known as the Tithe War; payment was refused all over the country, and dangerous riots took place. It soon became evident that the cost of collecting the tithes would greatly exceed the proceeds of the collection. After various attempts by force and half-measures to end what had become an impossible situation, the government gave in to the extent of having the tithes commuted. It must have been obvious, even thus early, that the methods that had proved successful against a tribute to Protestantism might some day be applied to defeat the tribute to the landlords, which was called rent.

O'Connell's next task, after having secured Catholic Emancipation, was to press on to the goal to which all Celtic Ireland was now looking,

the repeal of the hated Union. If he had had any hopes of obtaining support in the English Parliament, he was soon undeceived, for it transpired that the Whigs were as solid against Repeal as the Tories. For some time the " Liberator " pursued a Fabian policy of supporting the Whigs for the little he could get, but with the opening of the forties he fell back upon the methods of popular agitation that had proved so successful in 1829. A tremendous enthusiasm was aroused from end to end of the island, enormous mass meetings were swayed by O'Connell's eloquence, a " repeal rent " provided funds for the campaign, and it might not have seemed unduly sanguine to forecast that Peel and Wellington, who, in 1841, came into power, would yield, as they had yielded before, rather than face a rebellion in which the loyalty of the Crown forces, of whom a large proportion were Irish, might be dangerously undermined. But on this issue the government, one of the strongest of the century, was determined to fight rather than yield, and the old Duke was quite prepared to buckle on his sword and have it out with the Irish, who had furnished the flower of his Peninsular armies. O'Connell had used the most violent language, and plainly threatened to meet force with force, but he was really bluffing, and this time it was evident that the bluff would be called. Ireland was in no state to withstand the wealth and manpower of Britain, and O'Connell was never more of a patriot than when he decided to draw back and save his countrymen from a repetition of '98.

But the leader who works up his men to attacking pitch and then sounds the retreat, is not apt to be sympathetically judged, and the power of the big, lovable, devout, and yet coarse-grained O'Connell was fatally weakened. A new generation of Irishmen was growing up to whom the " Liberator's " shrinking from the use of force was nothing less than treason, and a party of high-souled, visionary, and brilliantly gifted men was now forming under the title of Young Ireland. It was the Romantic impulse, which, working up for the revolutions of 1848, was beginning to be felt in Ireland, as it was in France and Italy and Central Europe.

Romance was no new thing in the Ireland of the forties Ever since the '98 rebellion a patriotism had been astir of a wistful tenderness that had fastened on to thoughts of Ireland as of a poor old woman, the " Shan Van Vocht ". The song bearing this name dates from Hoche's abortive effort to land a French army in Ireland in 1796, and the " Shan Van Vocht's " call to her sons to make themselves free from the centre to the sea. Even more poignant is that song

of the '98, called the " Wearin' of the Green ", of which the original version contains the lines:

" And if the colour we must wear is England's cruel Red,
Let it remind us of the blood that Ireland has shed;
Then pull the shamrock from your hat, and throw it on the sod,
And never fear, 'twill take root there, tho' under foot 'tis trod!"

These songs, which, under a number of versions, were sung throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, voice the spirit of a people that cannot forget and will not forever submit to be governed against its will.

It was impossible that in the revival of medieval and primitive cultures that took place early in the century, the rich heritage of Celtic literature and tradition should be forgotten. Just when his language was dying out, the Irishman was reminded that he had a glorious past, that Ireland was a mother nation with a right to the loyalty of her sons. Thomas Moore may not have been a poet in the same class as his friend Byron, his view of Ireland may have been coloured by the crudest sentimentality, but his ideal was to awaken the harp that once had sounded through Tara's halls, and he spoke in a language that was all the more appealing because it was that best understood by his contemporaries.

The group of romantic Liberals who started the Young Ireland movement of the forties were one and all imbued with the strongest sense of Ireland's nationality. She was to them the land of saints and heroes, of Bridget and Columcille, of Cuchulain and the Fianna. They looked to the magic of freedom to restore to her the glories and beauty of the past. Their organ, *The Nation*, edited by Gavan Duffy, with the avowed object of directing " the popular mind . . . to the great end of nationality ", was rich with patriotic poetry. The horrors of '98 were still in the memory of many an old man, who could tell how Irish men had been flogged and slaughtered, how chaste Irish girls had been raped by mercenaries, and of the pathetic heroism with which the sons of the " Shan Van Vocht " had given their lives in a hopeless cause.

" They rose in dark and evil days
To right their native land;
They kindled here a living blaze
That nothing shall withstand.
Alas! that Might can vanquish Right—
They fell and passed away;
But true men, like you, men,
Are plenty here to-day."

To understand " Young Ireland ", the passion and romance of its patriotic self-devotion, it is necessary to be carried along the tide

of its song. Ireland is now the poor old mother, now the beautiful young Queen:

> "I could scale the blue air,
> I could plough the high hills,
> O, I could kneel all night in prayer,
> To heal your many ills!
> And one beamy smile from you
> Would float like light between
> My toils and me, my own, my true,
> My dark Rosaleen!"

Men of this spirit were not likely to count the odds, nor to let any considerations of prudence curb their ardour. They soon broke away from the old "Liberator", with his lawyer's caution and his genuine horror of bloodshed. The Church, whose power had organized the national movement in favour of emancipation, shrank from anything that smacked of revolution. Young Ireland was in a minority even in Ireland, and not wholly at one in its own ranks. There were some, including Mitchel, a writer of beautiful prose, and Meagher "of the sword", an intransigent rebel, for whom even *The Nation* was too mild and Laodicean. The Romantic spirit working on the Celtic temperament was not likely to produce solid political results. It was perhaps unwise for them to immolate themselves for their Dark Rosaleen, instead of setting to work to provide her with a comfortable home—but it is the unwisdom that sacrifices its mortal all for one immortal hour, and counts its all well lost.

A disaster was now approaching Ireland of such awful completeness as to put every other consideration, even patriotism, into the shade. Across Europe passed a plague that attracted comparatively little attention till it got to Ireland, where it proved a scourge comparable to the Black Death in the fourteenth century. This disease smote not man but the potato. For years these roots were blighted and blackened—the crop, which was all that stood between the teeming and destitute Irish peasantry and actual starvation, failed. And so they dropped down and died, many of them from starvation pure and simple, more from the diseases that famine brings in its train. Some of them were dropped uncoffined into common graves, some lay unburied in the fields and by the wayside, to be crunched by dogs, or the poor, famished pigs whose ravenous hunger could not distinguish between the dying and the dead. "A calm, still horror," wrote Mitchel, "was over the land . . . You stood in the presence of a dread, silent, vast dissolution. An unseen ruin was creeping round you. . . . It seemed as if the *anima mundi*, the soul of the

land, was faint and dying, and that the faintness and the death had crept into all things of heaven and earth."

And yet all this time, Ireland, if denuded of potatoes, was bursting with corn. That harvest had been unusually good, and there was enough of a better food than the potato to keep alive and healthy the whole of her population. But the corn was carried past the dead and the dying in great waggons to the coast, there to be shipped for the benefit of English and other foreigners who could afford to pay for it. Even the unfree Irish Parliaments of the eighteenth century had stopped corn going out of the country in famine time, but the Parliament of Westminster would hear of no such thing. They had their own people to consider; it was the leanest time of the hungry forties, and to have stopped Irish corn coming into England might have relieved distress there at the price of intensifying it at home. It would have been almost too much to expect of any national assembly not to have put number one first.

There was no deliberate cruelty or callousness among the English people, nor even among the politicians. O'Connell himself testified to the good feeling both in and out of Parliament. "I am afraid," he said, "of not finding words sufficient to express my strong and lively sense of English humanity." Englishmen, of all classes, were genuinely shocked and anxious to help. Purse-strings were freely loosened; Peel himself sacrificed his government and party to free imports because, as Wellington put it, rotten potatoes had put Peel in his damned fright. But stupidity can be more cruel than cruelty itself, and the Whig government of Lord John Russell, that succeeded Peel, was pedantically wedded to the dogma of the "classic" political economy. They refused to allow the ships of the navy to take corn to Ireland, because it was better to let men starve than interfere with "the legitimate interests of shipowners." They set up relief works, but instead of scientifically developing the resources of the country, they made them of carefully calculated uselessness—roads that led nowwhere—because competition must not be interfered with. Worst of all, they refused to give relief to anyone who had so much as a quarter of an acre of land. This ingenious provision offered most of the peasantry the choice between eviction and starvation. No wonder a frequent verdict of coroners' juries was one of wilful murder against Lord John Russell.

The landlords, themselves desperately hard pressed by the almost complete failure of rents, had their own way of dealing with the situation. A few of them, it is true, lived with their people and saw

them through the trouble, but the more usual way was to deny them the luxury of starving in their own cabins. Evictions of families ran into tens of thousands; the wretched creatures were flung out to die in the open.

Words cannot paint and imagination cannot conceive the full tragedy of this time. O'Connell himself, in despair of helping his people, set forth on a last pilgrimage to Rome, but when he reached Genoa his great heart broke, and as the ship bearing home his body sailed into port, it was greeted by the wails of emigrants who were fleeing from the charnel house that had been their motherland. The great exodus from Ireland had begun that was to continue for the remainder of the century. Packed in fetid and fever-stricken spaces, amid horrors comparable to those of the middle passage, they were shipped across the Atlantic, dying all the way and continuing to die of want and disease before they could be absorbed into the populations of their new homes. Some Englishmen had the heart actually to exult over this process, which would, it was fondly predicted, render a Celt on the banks of the Shannon as rare a sight as a Red Indian on those of the Hudson. *The Times* quite frankly announced that at last England had Ireland at her mercy and could do with her as she pleased. But Irish nationality was not so easily to be disposed of. The majority of the emigrants had gone to the United States, to be away from the detested Union Jack, but they kept their love for Ireland, and a burning, never dormant hatred of England. The natural basis of our foreign policy was undermined by the estrangement between the two Anglo-Saxon powers; an element of active disloyalty was introduced into the colonies; in England itself there was added to the electorate an incalculable proportion that sought not the good but the harm of the community.

When a people is dying for lack of food, it has no strength for revolutionary activities. The Irish leaders were now, as always, at variance among themselves. The O'Connellites deprecated violence, the Church regarded the visitation as the act of God, even Young Ireland had no clear programme. An insurrection was attempted—it fizzled out bloodlessly, amid ridicule, in Smith O'Brien's potato patch. The militant chiefs were soon laid by the heels, and sent off, as common convicts, to serve long terms of imprisonment, which, after a period of years, were, with contemptuous good-nature, remitted. Helpless and hopeless, Ireland sank down to the apathy of utter wretchedness.

The most important development of the Young Ireland

movement had been the doctrine propounded by the hunchback revolutionary, James Fintan Lalor, who, despairing of an open appeal to arms, counselled Irishmen to direct all their energies towards making the position of the landlords impossible. The Irish people, he maintained, had an indefeasible right to their land. "They or we," he said of the landlords, "must quit this island." These men had grown fat on the export of the corn which might have fed the people, "hating and hated . . . an outcast and ruffianly horde . . . tyrants and traitors have they ever been to us and ours." Such were the bitter feelings engendered by this bitter time. Lalor was arrested in 1849, and soon let out to die, but in 1848 a Tenants' League had been formed, the precursor of the Land League of thirty years later.

14

The Crumbling of Orthodoxy

The year 1848 marks, on the Continent of Europe, the decline of the Romantic and essentially bourgeois Liberalism that had been dominant, at least as an ideal, ever since the July days of 1830. But in England, so firmly rooted was the middle-class ascendency, and so prosperous became the country under its auspices, that the great wave of revolutions, followed by the trough of reaction, scarcely produced more than a slight ruffling of the surface in the safe harbour of the British Constitution. Never, to all outward appearance, had a more stable and self-confident civilization ever existed than that of Victorian England, one that so perfectly combined the elements of permanence and progress, one that more obviously justified the self-complacency that was among the most conspicuous qualities of the Englishman of the fifties.

Yet even now it was not unmarked that the intellectual and spiritual foundations of this imposing structure were insufficient to bear it. There was no time when the complacency of the age with itself could be said to have mastered its leading spirits. Carlyle was in frantic revolt against the "pig-philosophy" he saw everywhere triumphant; to Newman and the Tractarians the ascendency of Liberal ideas signified the Abomination of Desolation; Disraeli saw the country fatally divided into two nations of haves and have-nots; even Tennyson's respectable optimism is marred by some strangely jarring notes—in *Locksley Hall*, for instance, his vision of progress fades for an uneasy moment into another of a slowly starving population outrunning its means of subsistence, and later,

the opening canto of *Maud* contains an attack on capitalist civilization, with its swindling, its overcrowding, its "Timour-Mammon grinning on a pile of children's bones", which might have passed muster with Karl Marx himself.

These, however, may fairly be classed as rebels, and Tennyson and Disraeli as fitful and not wholly convinced rebels, against the prevailing optimism of their time. And yet the almost boundless complacency that attained its zenith in the fifties was based upon a system of compromises, born of a distaste for driving any line of inquiry too far below the surface. An acceptance of appearances, even in the realms of thought, formed part of the strange decency of those days.

Nowhere was this characteristic avoidance of fundamentals more apparent than in the sphere of formal religion. To all outward appearance, England was a conspicuously Christian country. The scepticism that had honeycombed her intelligentsia of the eighteenth century was, to all seeming, completely superseded. Infidelity had ceased to be fashionable or even very respectable among the upper class. So firmly entrenched was orthodox dogma that it was difficult so much as to publish a book that in any way conflicted with it.

Samuel Butler, in his posthumous novel, *The Way of All Flesh*, says of this period, "It must be remembered that the year 1858 was the last of a term during which the peace of the Church of England was singularly unbroken. Between 1844 when *Vestiges of Creation* appeared, and 1859, when *Essays and Reviews* marked the commencement of that storm which raged until many years afterwards, there was not a single book published in England that caused serious commotion within the bosom of the Church. Perhaps Buckle's *History of Civilization* and Mill's *Liberty* were the most alarming, but neither of them reached the substratum of the reading public. . . . The Evangelical movement had become almost a matter of ancient history. Tractarianism had subsided into a tenth day's wonder; it was at work, but it was not noisy. The 'Vestiges' were forgotten . . . the Catholic aggression scare had lost its terrors . . . the Crimean war was the one engrossing subject, to be followed by the Indian Mutiny and the Franco-Austrian war. These great events turned men's minds from speculative subjects, and there was no enemy to the faith which could arouse even a languid interest. At no time probably since the beginning of the century could an ordinary observer have detected less sign of coming disturbance."

And yet this *soi-disant* Christianity of the Victorians bore about

the same relation to that which had given birth to the Franciscan movement or the Gothic cathedrals, as the romantic heroes of Sir Walter Scott bore to the real knights and barons of the Middle Ages. The Victorians were less rowdy, more dignified, more—we cannot help repeating the word—respectable, than the contemporaries of Hugh of Lincoln and Thomas à Becket. Archbishop Sumner or Longley would not have been in the least likely to settle a point of precedence by sitting down in the lap of his colleague of York. Anything like the scriptural horseplay of the old mysteries would have invited the attentions of the police. The Christianity of the Victorian bourgeois was, in fact, a cautious and Bowdlerized imitation of what had obtained in the age of real faith. As for its having any part or lot with the teaching of Christ, the idea is too blasphemously absurd for present-day discussion.

By their fruits ye shall know them, and the fruits of early Victorian Christianity are manifest. There was certainly a notable revival of religious art in all its branches from church-building to the carving of lecterns and the embroidery of altar cloths. A perfect epidemic of Gothic swept over the land, especially after the writings of John Ruskin had inspired a passion for that style. Ruskin himself was a typical Victorian in his immense energy and his uncertain intellectual grasp, which caused him to see the quintessence of Gothic not in its native North, but in Italy, where it was always an alien and artificial product.

It was in the rapidly expanding suburbs of London and other great towns that Victorian Gothic found its most conspicuous expression. Everywhere arose tall tapering spires, surmounting churches with lancet or decorated windows, and whatever of the medieval it was possible to reproduce. The attempt was about as hopeful as that of a chemist who should try to create a man by chemical synthesis. Of what use was it to copy the style when the life that had formed the style was no more? And yet this bastard and devitalized Gothic was as true an expression of Victorian Christianity as Bishop Jocelin's West Front of Wells had been of medieval.

The very manifoldness of religious activity is enough to show that some spirit was at work. The Victorian young lady, for all her ringlets and swoonings, put as much energy into her religion, and a good deal more concentration, than her great-granddaughters devote to the ritual of dancing-club and golf-links. The daughters of country houses were not infrequently sedulous ecclesiastical craftswomen—

we know one instance of a church window having been stained, not discreditably, by three such sisters. The Victorian Jehovah was sufficiently real to the Victorian paterfamilias to warrant His day being made into one of pain in order to appease Him. Religion, of a sort, was a very serious affair with the average Victorian.

But the uncompromising purpose, the ruthlessness of aspiration that informed the old Gothic were alien, if not shocking to the average Victorian. He wanted something safe and comfortably emotional, something with the romance but without the rawness of medievalism. Gothic, with its emphasis on the emotional and its avoidance of the intellectuual factor, exactly suited his needs—up to a point. But the exuberance, the tamelessness, the downright and unromantic sincerity of the old builders and craftsmen were not to be recaptured. So far, in fact, were the Victorians from desiring any true return to the genuine Gothic spirit, that they fell upon the relics of the Middle Ages with an obscene fury of restoration that proved even more destructive than the sincere indifference of the eighteenth century. It was during the thirties that the beautiful Norman tower at the North Western end of Canterbury Cathedral was destroyed, in order to make way for one copied correctly from its companion. In the forties the mania was at its height. This was the time when Dean Jenkins, of Wells, did his considerable best to effect the ruin of the interior, wherein, by an act of poetic justice, he reposes beneath a tomb of unexampled hideousness.[1] Scarcely an ancient building of any note, but was subjected to the horrors of what the guidebooks know as " a judicious restoration " by the inevitable Sir Gilbert Scott.

If these things were wantonly done against the spirit of medieval Christianity in its existing relics, what could we expect when these frock-coated Vandals tried their hands at creating buildings in the likeness of those they delighted to mar? In a very different sense from that which they intended, their works bear witness to the thing Victorian religion really was. Those smug saints and young lady angels that advertise themselves in nightmare clamancy of yellow and vermilion (as in one unbelievable window in the South Aisle at Gloucester), those details repeated *ad infinitum* by the employees of enterprising contractors, the general combination of the cheap with the unexceptionable, testify—if indeed stones and glass are capable of crying out—to the plight of a civilization which, in striving after the material world, is so perilously neglecting its own soul.

Such a faith which, whatever name it chose to adopt, was really

[1] And, until very recently, a window to match.

directed to nothing nobler than a compromise between a sentimental God and a practical Mammon, could not stand for very long, despite of appearances. If Christianity was little more than a romantic veneer, science was at least desperately in earnest, science as the Victorians understood it, directed almost entirely to the knowledge and control of external nature. All along the line, not only in England, but throughout Western civilization, science was going on from strength to strength. The time was now passing when practical mechanics, like Watt and Stephenson, were capable of revolutionary invention. New energies were coming into play that could not be harnessed to the wheels of commerce without the abstruse calculations of trained mathematicians and physicists.

The utilization of water vapour by means of the steam engine, which had accomplished such miracles during the Industrial Revolution, was now coming to be recognized as a comparatively crude, primitive and wasteful method of commanding energy. New forces were coming into play, and in particular electricity, which demanded the utmost delicacy of calculation. When the Atlantic Cable was first laid, it required the mathematical genius of William Thomson, afterwards Lord Kelvin, to make it a working concern by solving the problem of retained electricity. In the forties, thanks largely to the researches of Joule, the whole science of energy and its transformations was revolutionized and established on a permanent basis.

Chemistry was meanwhile steadily building on the foundations laid by Dalton, though the simplicity of his atomic law was giving way to an ordered complexity of relations, that appeared as first one and then another generalization was established by experiment. The elucidation of organic chemistry, largely through the work of Liebig, brought chemistry to the aid of agriculture as well as of manufacture. The chemist and physicist played constantly into each others hands. All along the line earnest and self-sacrificing men were thus cooperating in the quest for truth; and with the improvement of means of communication, this cooperation became more and more international.

Science, in despite of its fatally material bias during the nineteenth century, partook more of religious earnestness than any of the Churches or sects of that time, and the informal brotherhood of its devotees—a true communion of the elect—gave promise of a world order fraught with more hope than the existing anarchy of nations and orthodoxies. It was inevitable that the new demand for truth

should, before long, break through the partial monopoly of it claimed on behalf of revealed religion by its devotees.

For whatever may be said about the ultimate tendencies or omissions of Victorian science, there is no doubt that Victorian Christianity was honeycombed with the crudest and most obvious materialism. Its God was no longer a spirit, but a magician, and a clumsy one at that—an author of Semitic legends on the tottering strength of which his godhead was supposed to stand or fall. The bulwark of Anglican orthodoxy at this time was supplied by the apologetics of a certain deceased Mr. Paley, who, having found a watch on a heath, and a certain complex harmony in both, deduced a sort of glorified watchmaker or heath maker *in excelsis* and thought it no blasphemy. One of this good man's works, a long, dry exposition of Christ's title to omnipotence on the ground of His having taken greater liberties with His own laws of nature than Simon Magus or Jannes and Jambres, was supposed to be of so fortifying a nature to youthful faith that it received a kind of canonization by the dons of Cambridge University, who prescribed it as a subject for the Little Go.

In no other country in Europe was such zeal displayed in defence of a literal interpretation of scripture, in no other country was there so steady a flow of apologetic literature as in England. This was no doubt mainly due to the Low Church revival, with its rigid insistence upon the sanctity of the Hebrew Scriptures. As that revival lost its first fervour of salvation, it tended to concentrate more and more on the form and to maintain its position not by spiritual enthusiasm, but the maintenance of taboos. Having staked their faith upon a series of doubtfully religious propositions, the apologists endeavoured, for some time with success, to prohibit discussion of them. Science was told to keep her hands off the Bible. She might pursue her quest for truth provided she could make truth square with the Authorized Version and Archbishop Ussher's chronology.

The purely physical and mathematical sciences might have gone on their way with comparatively little hindrance, though astronomy had always attracted a certain amount of covert suspicion, even in Protestant circles. But Moses had not felt himself inspired with any decided opinion concerning the conservation of energy or the nature of the atom, and the obvious business value of such researches was a strong argument for tolerance. Piety might frown on the quest for truth, but to interfere with profits would have tended as little to

edification as if the vicar of some country church had taken for his text not Jonah's whale nor the Tower of Babel, but "Woe unto you rich", or one of those uneconomic outbursts about whose literal inspiration, by a tacit decency, the less said the better.

Science, though she had concentrated on the physical out of all proportion to the vital, was now gradually making up the leeway. She was beginning to take more interest in life, to find out more about it, though she approached it from the physical side, and her tendency was to concentrate on its lower and physical aspect, to see in man rather the son of mud than the father of God. Looking back, we may visualize the eighteenth century as an age of mathematical thought, dominated by the genius of Newton, and the nineteenth century as one whose dominant note is biology, and whose supreme genius Darwin. Is it too bold a speculation that the twentieth century will see an equal development in the field of mental and spiritual knowledge?

So long as the sciences that were to coalesce into biology could be kept to a static and unhistorical standpoint, no harm was to be apprehended by the defenders of Holy Writ. Paley's glorified watchmaker was assumed to be incapable of creating a self-acting universe; it was felt that he could not justify, or at anyrate prove his existence, without constantly winding up the machinery or taking it to pieces. Zoology and botany were so conceived of, at the beginning of the century, as to fit in with this scheme. Species stood apart in absolute isolation. The Rationalists, who certainly did not believe in the intervention of a Semitic God, could find no very plausible bridge between species, though the old soldier, Lamarck, had a theory of his own which did not find such general acceptance as the system of zoological statics formulated by his countryman Cuvier. There was a comfortable feeling that the burden of proof of an evolutionary doctrine lay on the misguided men who propounded it, and that this burden even Lamarck had failed to shoulder.

It was on the side of geology that the first breach was made in the orthodox stronghold. The beginning of the century had seen a theory highly approved of in pious circles, that postulated a series of complete catastrophes in the history of the globe, God having made several clean sweeps of life in order to make a fresh start. Geologists were—with good reason, if they wanted either publication or a fair hearing—usually careful to preface their treatises by an assurance of their conformity with Semitic tradition.

This was too artificial a state of things to survive the insistency

of genius. Already, towards the end of the eighteenth century, an English geologist, Hutton, had found the facts, which he so diligently accumulated, to point to the hypothesis of a continuous development. His views, however, were expressed with too much obscurity to carry the weight they deserved. But the year of his death saw the birth of another geologist, Lyell, who added to scientific genius the graces of literary style, and in the early thirties fairly knocked the bottom out of the theory of catastrophism. It was easy to see that evolution, if once it could be established in regard to the earth itself, would in all probability equally apply to life upon the earth, and then the horrible conclusion would follow of a blood relationship between men and animals. Such a shock to the pillars of Victorian respectability might be attended with who knows what untoward consequences to that imposing structure!

For a whole generation after the publication of Lyell's book the catastrophe hung fire, but the idea was being mooted. Coleridge, immersed in rather cloudy metaphysics, took alarm at the idea of an orang-outang theology, as he called it, the theory of a brute ancestry being to him, as it was to Carlyle, merely the assertion of a degraded philosophy of human nature, and not to be decided on grounds of fact. In 1844 appeared *Vestiges of Creation*, by a certain Robert Chambers, who, with a just fear of outraged bigotry, took elaborate precautions to conceal his name. This book, though the scientific qualifications of its author were hardly equal to the task he had undertaken, created a great fluttering in orthodox dovecotes, with its downright assertion of an evolutionary origin for plants and animals. Even in the drawing rooms of society the topic was being mooted.

"Ah!" says a charming young lady in Disraeli's *Tancred*, "that's it: we were fishes and I believe we shall be crows."

Meanwhile the defenders of the faith, clinging obstinately to their long and indefensible position, found it not only attacked but undermined. Largely through the medium of Coleridge and Carlyle, German thought had come to exercise a considerable influence upon that of England, such of it, that is, as the English mind was capable of assimilating, for such abstruse cobwebs of thought as those spun by Hegel certainly never did, nor never shall, find appreciation South of the Tweed. What Germany had to impart was a depth of thought, an earnestness, almost ruthless, in the quest for the truth, the innermost truth, and the ultimate truth. It was in this spirit that a certain school of German critics had ventured to lay sacrilegious hands on

Holy Writ. To Baur, the profundity of whose critical erudition could hardly be denied, not even the Gospels were sacred, or indeed authentic. Such blasphemy of foreigners might be met with a conspiracy of silence, but it would not forever be possible to conceal the fact that there was in the field an evolutionary theory to account, without any supernatural aid, not only for life but also for revelation.

Nevertheless, as we have seen from Butler's account, there was never so great an appearance of outward security for established belief as in the fifties. After all, it was possible to keep such heresies as those of the higher critics from tolerance in Church or universities, and on what orthodoxy had chosen to make the crucial question of the Mosaic account of creation, the evolutionary case had not yet been completely made out, and Lamarck's theory of minute adaptations transmitted by heredity was not felt, even by unprejudiced critics, adequate by itself to account for the facts. Moses was still in possession, and until somebody else could prove a better title, was likely to remain so. Philosophers like Herbert Spencer, who were already working out a complete revolutionary cosmogony, were letting their intuition outrun proof, and were in fact jumping the claim.

The decisive importance of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 was that it showed how, by natural selection, it was possible to conceive of life evolving without the interference of Paley's super-watchmaker. Darwin had first had this idea suggested to him by reading Malthus. It struck him that the upward progress of life might be accounted for by the fact of the world's living population continually outrunning its means of subsistence, a process that would only permit of the best adapted types surviving and transmitting their qualities. The operation of this process over an indefinite number of million years—and Darwin's friend Lyell had already put the case for such an antiquity of the earth—was, Darwin plausibly maintained, sufficient to account for all the facts.

It is not of course pretended, at this distance of time, that Darwin's explanation was any more final than Lamarck's, and Bergson's taunt that Darwin had taught how to build houses by throwing stones is something more than a mere epigram. No doubt the idea of Natural Selection might have occurred, and in fact had occurred, to others, without making any particular stir. It was not Darwin's having read Malthus any more than the apple falling on Newton's head that effected a revolution in the world's thought. It was the fact that Darwin had read in the book of Nature, which, if anything,

is justly entitled to be called that of divine revelation, with greater devotion and patience and insight than any of his contemporaries. He was as indisputably the leading naturalist of his generation as Sir Launcelot had been the head of all Christian Knights. Whatever faults time may have disclosed in *The Origin of Species*, none of Darwin's contemporaries was capable of meeting him on his own ground. Quite apart from the philosophical and religious repercussions of his doctrine, Darwin had opened a new epoch in the science and classification of biology.

Victorian orthodoxy had received a fatal blow; materialist superstition, masking as religion, was now powerless to hold back the tide. Only the year after *The Origin of Species*, appeared a book compiled by several more or less liberal-minded Churchmen and entitled *Essays and Reviews*. Herein the doctrine of literal inspiration was treated in the most cavalier fashion, and the floodgates were opened for the Higher Criticism. Great was the wrath and consternation of the pious—the offenders were violently assailed, and to pass a favourable review on the book was an act requiring considerable courage. Argument being found an inadequate mode of defence, recourse was had to persecution; two of the offenders were suspended from their benefices by an ecclesiastical court and put back by a secular one. So great was the alarm that 11,000 of the clergy—High and Low suspending their bitter hatred of each other in presence of a common danger—were induced by Dr. Pusey to sign a manifesto in favour of Hell at its hottest and Holy Writ at its holiest. It was another case of Mrs. Partington's broom. A few years later no less a dignitary than a Bishop, though a colonial one, who had been shamed by a Zulu convert out of claiming divine authority for the story of Noah's Ark, published a searching criticism on the Pentateuch, was promptly excommunicated and deprived of his benefice by his Archbishop, and reinstated on appeal to the courts.

Middle-class orthodoxy was, in fact, breaking down all along the line in the sixties. Darwin had started an intellectual avalanche, of a kind that he had never anticipated nor desired. Humble seeker as he was, wholly absorbed in his own science of biology, his grief was that so much bitterness should have been aroused in the peaceful realms of science. But other men of science and liberal thought were more combative, and a long reign of triumphant bigotry had aroused an answering spirit of bitterness. Perhaps the foremost British biologist, next to Darwin, was Thomas Huxley, a thorough

John Bull, who took upon himself the role, as he expressed it, of Darwin's bulldog. At a meeting of the British Association at Oxford he administered an annihilating rebuke to the Bishop of Oxford, the famous "Soapy Sam" Wilberforce, who, with a complete ignorance of biology and a strange disregard of good manners, had presumed to make merry at the expense of Darwin, and had twitted Huxley with the latter's presumably Simian ancestry.

The offensive had now passed into the hands of the Rationalists, and in fact there was no small danger of evolution itself becoming a sort of intellectual panacea for solving all sorts of problems to which Darwin, who was from first to last a biologist, had never dreamed of applying it. Darwin himself was in danger of becoming the figure-head for an orthodoxy as unreasoning as that against which he had striven. That uncompromising iconoclast, Samuel Butler, found that new rationalism was old pietism writ large and in slightly different terms, and it was even more difficult for an anti-Darwinian than an anti-cleric to obtain a hearing. "The clerical and scientific people" he said, "rule the roost."

The philosophy of evolution was, however, indebted to Darwin for nothing but its biological credentials. Years before *The Origin of Species* saw the light, the plan of a complete system of the universe, on evolutionary lines, had been forming in the brain of a young Derbyshire ex-engineer called Herbert Spencer. This remarkable man was the scion of a long line of militant Nonconformists, men whose dissent had frequently driven them forth from the fold of their fellow Nonconformists. Herbert Spencer merely continued the family tradition with the aid of an abnormally developed intellect. He saw, what the Ranters of Cromwell's day had seen before him, that for the consistent Protestant there is no more halting at Biblical than Papal infallibility, and that Christianity itself must sooner or later cease to bind.

Spencer was thus in the direct line of spiritual succession from the great Protestant Reformers, and he was also endowed with the characteristics, exaggerated to the point of caricature, of the middle class Victorian of the forties and fifties. He was aggressively self-confident, an individualist wholly lacking in humour or humility, contemptuous of anything that he could not instantly square with his preconceived opinions, which were those of his time and class stripped ruthlessly of every qualification. Kant and Plato, Dante and Michelangelo, he could dismiss with a few contemptuous strictures. Early in the fifties he had pinned his faith to the individualism of the Manchester

School and the classical economists, carried to its logical extreme. He would have scrapped poor laws, state currency, the post office, sanitary regulation, and public works generally, though, like the true Radical he was, he would not have stuck at nationalizing land. From these principles he never substantially receded to the day of his death. It was not his way to change his mind, and Huxley once shrewdly remarked that if Spencer ever wrote a tragedy, its plot would have been the slaying of a beautiful deduction by an ugly fact.

It was such a man who undertook the task of making the principle of evolution that of a universal philosophy. In striking contrast with the diffident caution of Darwin was Spencer's way of fixing his generalizations and making the facts accommodate themselves. In 1858 he had traced the rough outlines of his *Synthetic Philosophy*, of which one volume, that on Psychology, was already published. The rest of his long life was devoted, with a perseverence truly heroic, to filling in the details. For a man of so little scholarship and such scanty reading, not to speak of his being a chronic invalid, the performance was an astounding one. Its very extent and solidity made it impressive; its display of scientific erudition qualified it to serve as the gospel of progress in an age of science triumphant. For once England appeared to have produced the leading philosopher of his time. Spencer's reputation became European, his influence was comparable with that of Hegel earlier in the century. And yet the Synthetic Philosophy was hardly completed before it was out of date. Even before his death professors at the Universities were talking of "the time when Herbert Spencer was taken seriously as a philosopher." In no branch of science had his achievement stood the test of time, and as a philosopher, his capacity may be judged by his having formulated propositions about the Unknowable, and even, in his preliminary scheme, having entitled one section "The Laws of the Unknowable", which reminds one of Sir Boyle Roche's intention to nip a rat in the bud.

It was ironical that so typical a Victorian as Spencer should have played so leading a part in the intellectual revolution that was ultimately to wreck the edifice of Victorian complacency. The ineffable confidence of middle class England in itself and its ideals, the habit of shirking ultimate issues, could not survive the repeated shocks of this intellectual Jacobinism. Spencer, like Henry VIII, thought he could preserve the fabric of an arch of which he had knocked out the keystone. He had substituted the Unknowable for the Incredible, but he preserved an invincible—it would hardly

be too much to say a mystical-faith in the perfection of a capitalist, individualist and commercial order of Society. It was with horror and consternation that Spencer, in his declining days, forboded the triumph of everything that had been anathema to his inbred Manchester orthodoxy. For if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do ?

And the foundations of Victorianism were crumbling, in spite of the fact that the destroyers were men sincerely desirous of preserving the structure substantially intact. There were, perhaps, never such worthy representatives of frock-coated respectability as those terrible scientists who set all the vicarages and rectories of England in a fluster. The same type of face is repeated in all their portraits with little variation ; the massive forehead, the determined chin, the tight-set lips and rather pinched features usually flanked by formidable side whiskers. Their private lives are unexceptionable to the point of dullness. With true middle class independence they reacted against what was, in their eyes, the tyranny of a superstitious priesthood. But so far from desiring to overthrow the accepted system of Christian morality, most of them aspired to make their righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Few people can doubt that between Darwin and his revilers the balance of Christianity lay with the scientist, and Spencer came nearer to applying Christ's principles to foreign policy than any of his contemporaries, not even excepting the Quaker, John Bright. As for Huxley, his well-known *penchant* for lay sermonizing gave point to a sly transposition in which " Archbishop Huxley and Professor Manning " were described as having been present at some meeting.

It is one thing to start an avalanche, and another thing to set bounds thereto. The snows of orthodoxy had begun to move, slowly perhaps, but with ever-gathering weight, and with a menace as yet unrealized to many a trim dwelling in the vale. Other things were loosening besides what Gladstone had called the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture. Karl Marx was at work ; Nietzsche was growing to manhood ; Bismarck had already begun to develop his policy. A new epoch was foreshadowed in which it would no longer be possible to postpone settlement with realities that ever more insistently were knocking at the door.

15

Realpolitik

It is doubtful whether any human observer, during the fifties and sixties, could have appreciated what forces were at work during those troubled and explosive decades. Even to-day we are only beginning to understand why the artificial state system consecrated by the Vienna diplomatists was breaking down, not without bloodshed. The geographical expression that was Italy, the anarchy of petty states that was Germany, were now at last beginning to assert their nationhood and their freedom from outside dictation. But nationality had been the very thing that the Holy Alliance had been born to suppress. Surely the principles of Liberalism, spreading from the West, had spread their empire over these two new-born Powers of Europe!

Unfortunately this was not quite so simple as it appeared. Had the Second Empire of France been based upon principle instead of the expediency of the moment, and had that principle been the Liberalism towards which the shallow mind of Napoleon really inclined, things might conceivably have worked out differently, but the corruption in Paris was calculated to bring out the worst elements in the French nature, selfishness and vanity and the lust of glory, and to make France forgetful of her natural championship of liberty based on reason. Never was there a time when her attitude was of such vital importance to the cause of European civilization, only nobody, not even the Emperor himself, knew from one moment to another what that attitude was going to be.

So far as Italy was concerned, partly thanks to France and partly in her despite, freedom and a constitution on the English model were attained, and though the democratic idealism of Mazzini and Garibaldi was far from being realized under the House of Savoy, the new Latin Power was not on the side of the despots. But the achievement of German unity, under the auspices of Prussia, so far from being a vindication of the democracy that had inspired men like Heine and the Young Germans, turned out to be not a loss but a gain to the forces of Divine Right which dominated Central and Eastern Europe. The Metternich system, which had proved so formidable up to 1848, was not to be compared with that which came into being after a helmeted and jack-booted Prussia strode to the front. thrusting rudely aside the antiquated, inefficient Hapsburg

dynasty, and, at the head of a united and scientific Germany, assumed the headship of the old Holy Alliance, reconstituted after 1870 as the League of the Three Emperors.

There had been a moment when a free and Liberal Germany had been a possibility. The 1848 Revolution had thrown up a united German Parliament, which, when the Hapsburgs were paralysed by rebellion in their own dominions, had offered the imperial crown of a free people to the King of Prussia. But that Hohenzollern did not swerve from the principles of his dynasty; he would not, he said, pick up a crown out of the gutter. That was the end of the Frankfurt Parliament and the chance of a Liberal Germany. By 1850 Austria was back in the saddle, Prussia impotent and humiliated, and the old anarchy of states restored. The lesson had not been thrown away upon a devout and royalist squire, Otto von Bismarck, who twelve years later was summoned to the head of the Prussian ministry and boldly announced, to a House of enraged Liberals, that Germany could not be saved by Parliaments and speeches, but by blood and iron. Few people at the time took him seriously, or imagined for a moment that so outrageous a reactionary could continue in power any longer than Polignac in Paris on the eve of the July Revolution or the Duke of Wellington when he tried to hold back the flood tide of Reform in 1832 But Prussia is a hard soil for the growth of liberty; middle-class Liberalism was an ebbing tide, and Bismarck was a supreme master of statecraft as Machiavelli had understood and Frederick the Great had practised it. In a position of unexampled difficulty he clearly realized the end of a Germany united, upon monarchical principles, under her ablest dynasty. In the pursuit of this end he swerved not for fear of God or man, and he made no mistake.

Now, as always since her partition, Poland was the Achilles heel of the some time Holy Alliance, or triple concert of despotisms. And in 1863 Russian Poland made a wild, heroic and futile effort to throw off her chains. This, had they known the hour of their visitation, would have been the chance for the two great Liberal powers of the West to have joined hands and kept Poland, a far more worthy protegé than Turkey, from utter slavery. But petty aims and shortsighted views determined the policy of both, and Napoleon III had committed the almost unbelievable blunder of wasting his best troops in a mad adventure in Mexico, where they only stopped until such time as the United States had freed her own hands of civil war, and could warn them off American soil with an authority

not to be denied. Napoleon not only was in no condition to back his European policy by arms, but he had hankerings after an alliance with the comparatively Liberal successor of the Iron Tsar.

The Protestant Whigs of Palmerston's Government had, for their part, no desire to see a Catholic and independent Poland in alliance with France. Their sentiments were unexceptionable, their demands upon Russia explicit and stern, but when it became a question of backing them by force, Russell appeared in the characteristic role of the boy who had chalked " no tyranny " on the Tsar's door, and then ran away. So, amid mistrust and verbiage, the two might-have-been champions of national rights passed by on the other side, while her gigantic opponent bludgeoned Poland into a quiescence that looked like death.

Bismarck, unlike either Napoleon or the Whigs, knew exactly what he wanted. More than anything else he dreaded an alliance between Russia and France, and he felt instinctively that the principles of the Holy Alliance were doomed if Poland should ever rise from her ashes. So, short of actually attacking the Poles, he rendered the Tsar all the aid he could in stamping out the rebellion. For a time, he could now feel, his Eastern flank was secure.

While Napoleon III was wantonly paralysing the sword arm of France, Bismarck was staking everything on raising Prussia to the condition of organized efficiency envisaged by her military philosopher, Clausewitz. This officer, inspired by the example of Napoleon, had aimed at forging the whole nation into one terrific engine of the will to power. War was an instrument of policy, to be used as expediency dictated. It was also an act of violence, whose application, and consequently ruthlessness, were unlimited. Life was war, the nation an armed camp, the only right that of the strongest. To put this doctrine into practice, Bismarck had to brush aside Parliament and defy public opinion, but the object was worth the risk. In a surprisingly short time, thanks to the efforts of Moltke, the Commander-in-Chief, and Roon, the War Minister, he was ready to carry into effect his long cherished plan of uniting Germany, a plan that demanded not only dauntless courage, but the most delicate finesse. His first move was to secure the future waterway from the Baltic to the North Sea, by getting Austria to co-operate with him in turning the Danes out of their half-German dependency of Schleswig and their wholly German one of Holstein.

The unscrupulous but unerring finesse with which he succeeded first in removing his neighbour's landmark, and then in ousting

both the puppet claimant to the disputed provinces and his own ally and dupe in their conquest, need not be told here. The cause of the Danes was as popular in England as that of the little fellow pitted against the big bully usually is, and pro-Danish sentiment had been intensified by the recent marriage of the Prince of Wales with a beautiful and winning Danish Princess. Public opinion was ludicrously misinformed both as to the strength of Prussia and the utter impotence of a few thousand redcoats to call a halt to the New Model of Moltke and Roon. *Punch*, which faithfully reflected the opinion of the all-powerful middle class, was not ashamed to depict the sovereigns of Prussia and Austria as a couple of disreputable roughs in the dock being "told off" by that sternly righteous magistrate, Mr. John Bull.

Palmerston and Russell reflected fairly accurately both this sentiment and this ignorance. They started on a firm line, and Palmerston, with his breezy downrightness, made it clear to the world that England was not prepared to stand by and see Denmark despoiled. Unfortunately he had not the force to make good his brave words, and France was still weakened by her Mexican adventure and, after our shilly-shallying about Poland, felt it her turn to beware of

> "such a faithful ally
> That only the devil can tell what he means."

Bismarck, with whom the calculation of political forces was the first essential of statesmanship, decided that it would be safe to call the English Premier's bluff. Denmark was attacked by the overwhelming forces of Prussia and Austria, and she fought alone while the two Western Powers stood by in hopeless indecision. A war policy had not even the backing of a united Cabinet, and the widowed Queen was thoroughly out of sympathy with the provocative tactics of those two dreadful old men, as she called Palmerston and Russell. So old Pam, confronted with a phenomenon whose nature he did not understand, was fain to treat Bismarck on the precedent of Dogberry:

"Take no note of him, but let him go; and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave."

For Pam's time, perhaps, and even Bismarck's, but assuredly not for ever!

The next move was to get Austria out of Germany with as little permanent offence as possible. Bismarck was careful to secure the alliance of Italy, which was straining after Venice, and having picked a quarrel with as much appearance of right as he could, let loose

Moltke's New Model, armed with breech loaders, on a force inferior in numbers, arms and leadership, that barred its path in Bohemia. Having crushed this main army at Sadowa, and mopped up the forces of the other German states in a few weeks, the Prussians would have marched on to Vienna, had not Bismarck, who had no desire to make a permanent enmity between two of the " Holy Three ", been ready to commit suicide unless his master and the General Staff should hold their hands. This passionate moderation and not his occasional brutality confers upon Bismarck his title to rank among the world's supreme statesmen.

Austria, beaten but neither humiliated nor estranged, now stood aside, and the path was clear for Prussia to that leadership of Germany to which blood and iron had entitled her. But the task of consummating that unity demanded the delicacy and finesse that only a Bismarck could command. The Southern states must be shepherded into the fold with the skill of a champion sheep-dog. But now a diplomatist of a very different calibre was minded to take a part in the game. Napoleon III, still paralysed by his Mexican madness, had made another of his miscalculations in imagining that he could let the two German powers fight themselves to a standstill, and then, after the precedent of Richelieu, make capital for France out of Germany's agony. The whirlwind invasion of Bohemia had thrown out all his calculations, and when he did begin to hint at armed intervention, he found that Bismarck was prepared to fight rather than have French interference in a German quarrel. And the French army, as both were well aware, was in no condition to face the needle guns of Moltke.

Poor Napoleon was now rapidly approaching his fall. He was in the clutches of a fatal disease and the reins of government were slipping from his hands. The prestige of his Empire was buried with his puppet Emperor of Mexico, whom he had perforce abandoned to be shot in cold blood. France was visibly tiring of him, driving him, as his uncle had been driven, to compromise with encroaching Liberalism. His only chance now was to keep up the Napoleonic legend by some masterful stroke of foreign policy. French public opinion was determined to regard German unity as an offence to be prevented by force of arms, or at least to be condoned for by some substantial compensation to France in the shape of the German Rhineland or neutralized Belgium. And the weary and agonized adventurer had no choice but to submit to a strong line from which he was probably averse.

This was to play right into Bismarck's hand. An ostensibly righteous war was the very thing he needed to weld Germany together; a French foreign minister, himself spoiling for a fight, rushed into a quarrel from which Bismarck gave him no chance of withdrawing; the result was a foregone conclusion.

France had not a friend in the world. Italy, whom she had abandoned in 1859, only desired to see the French troops out of Rome. Austria, if she had any thought of intervening, was held back by the fear of Russia, and Russia had her own game to play by tearing up the treaty which had concluded the Crimean War, and building a Black Sea fleet. In a by no means brilliantly fought campaign the Germans, who outnumbered their opponents by nearly two to one, smashed up the French regular army, captured the Emperor, and marched to the investment of Paris. The untrained heroism of the newly-constituted French Republic only availed to prolong the struggle. Had Germany now practised the restraint in victory that she had displayed after Sadowa, she might have established the Empire, which came into being during the war, upon impregnable foundations. It is possible that Bismarck was overruled by the generals. For whatever reason, Germany made the fatal mistake of mortally wounding her adversary's feelings without crushing his power. She imposed a trifling indemnity, but she seized two provinces and perpetrated the boorish insult of a parade march through Paris. Henceforth France's hope and Bismarck's nightmare was "*la révanche*".

England's attitude throughout the struggle was one of scrupulous neutrality, qualified only by a determination to maintain her time-honoured policy of preserving the neutrality of Belgium. Opinion was divided, though there was, thanks to Bismarck's diplomacy, a general disposition to regard France as the aggressor. The aged Carlyle waxed positively lyrical over the triumph of his beloved Germany, and *The Times* threw the ponderous weight of its influence continuously on the Teutonic side. As time went on, the natural English sympathy with the man who is down came into play. But at no time was there any disposition to take more than a spectator's interest in the struggle, still less to see in the newly-formed German Empire a menace to ourselves. And indeed the danger was not in Germany herself, but in the new spirit which had triumphed in her victory. An age of limited idealism was passing into one of realism unlimited. Machiavelli had put Christ out of date.

"Europe," said an English diplomat,[1] "has lost a mistress and gained a master." A complete change had come over her politics. Bourgeois Liberalism was not only dead but damned. Germany had achieved her nationality, but at the price of her freedom. The old sleepy and soulful German was a disappearing type; it was Prussia that set the tone to the new Empire, a pushful, efficient, self-confident and unimaginative culture was generated by intensive governmental discipline. Germany was triumphant; Europe was afraid of her—but she was not safe. France was on her flank, a France that would not forget, and on her unprotected Eastern frontier was a gigantic and semi-barbarian Russia. How if these two should some day combine and close in upon Germany? So long as she held Alsace and Lorraine—and her pride would never permit of her resigning them—there was no peace for her. What blood and iron had won, blood and iron must hold. Germany was an armed camp; she must go on arming, arming; not for a moment dared she relax her watch on the Rhine or on the Vistula.

Prussia had set the pace to Germany; now inevitably Germany must set the pace to Europe. A horrible circle was created—Germany must arm more and more for fear of her neighbours and her neighbours must arm more and more for fear of Germany. It was as if, in some rather leisurely business, the latest American methods of speeding up and standardization had been introduced. The Second Empire of France may have disturbed the peace of Europe, but it was, at worst, a slipshod and unscientific affair. The Hapsburgs and Romanoffs may have been tryants, but they were anything but hustlers, nor, despite individual geniuses like Radetzky and Todleben, did their ideas of efficiency go much beyond those of the drill sergeant. But now Moltke in Generalship, Roon in organization, Clausewitz in the theory, and Bismarck in the practice of statesmanship had set a new standard to which these others must either conform or go under. Nations must be organized; commerce, education, diplomacy, armaments must be forged and hardened to one spearpoint of—the phrase was soon to be coined—the will to power.

Romance, which had been the accompaniment of bourgeois Liberalism, had received its deathblow. Bismarck, the protagonist of the new era, was, in the face he turned to the world—albeit a certain Protestant mysticism lay near to his heart—an out and out realist. He had no use for sentiment except as a weakness to be taken advantage of. If he sought to have a just quarrel, it was because he

[1] Quoted in Morley's *Life of Gladstone*.

calculated on being thrice armed under such circumstances. If he blurted out the truth, as he very often did, it was because, like Machiavelli, he knew that a reputation for honesty was the most valuable asset of a statesman. From pure egotistic or rather patriotic calculation he sought to stand well in the opinion of Europe, to practise a studious moderation even in the hour of victory, and, having once attained his object of making a United Germany, to seek peace and ensue it, and to keep his country from ambitious schemes that might make her a terror to her neighbours. Complete lack of sentiment and public morality, backed by supreme cunning, might almost have seemed to justify itself, had it not been for the fatal slip of the annexed provinces—a step for which a plausible case could have been made out on the highest grounds.

Bismarck's proceedings had imported a new and deadly atmosphere into European politics. For even he could not, and perhaps did not, desire to disguise the absolute cynicism of his motives. The familiar libel of his having falsified the Ems telegram originates in his own reminiscences. In his old age he preferred to twist a perfectly honourable and straightforward act into a piece of bloody-minded sharp practice. The Tartufferie of the new age was not that of the crooked man protesting his respectability, but that of the occasionally respectable person trying to establish the complete immorality of his supermanliness. Under such auspices, the rulers of the various nations strove to key up their governmental machinery to a pitch of efficiency worthy of a machine-ridden age, and there was no time to answer so antiquated a question as whether, in the long run, the advantages of the new *Realpolitik* would be cheaply bought at the sacrifice of a man's or a nation's soul.

16

The Passing of Middle-Class Rule

These swiftly moving events, that were ushering in the fourth act of the European tragedy, the long, feverish, thunder-charged peace preceding the final catastrophe, had scarcely ruffled the tranquil surface of English life. England felt herself even less vitally concerned in the wars of 1866 and 1870 than she had in the revolutions of 1848. Never was there any serious prospect of her taking a side in either, unless the neutrality of Belgium, which she was bound in honour to maintain, and which she regarded as vital to her security, should be violated.

But the middle class Liberalism which had been scarcely threatened in 1848 and was as yet unaffected by the menace of Germany, had, of its own free-will and in the silent process of constitutional development, yielded up its practical monopoly of the franchise. Even that staunch Whig, Lord John Russell, for all his nickname of Finality Jack, was a convinced though very cautious advocate of further reform, and those protagonists of the middle class, Gladstone and Bright, were both thoroughly in favour of a generous trust in the people. The Conservative party, who seemed doomed under the existing franchise to remain in a permanent minority, had an interest in broadening it which, though it might not have been obvious to the crusted landowners to whom any sort of change was anathema, was not likely to escape the shrewd eyes of the parvenu, Benjamin Disraeli, whose transcendent ability had marked him, in despite of racial and class prejudices, for their leadership in the Commons. It is notable that Bismarck, a much more pronounced Conservative, had preferred a manhood to a middle class suffrage for his North German Confederation, and, subsequently, for the Empire.

So long as the old Canningite, Palmerston, remained at the head of affairs, the electoral *status quo* was likely to be maintained, but he was a dam across a rapidly swelling stream, and in 1864 Gladstone, whom the aged Premier regarded with an ever-increasing distrust, had electrified the country by what amounted to a declaration of faith in manhood suffrage. Palmerston's death, in 1865, released the now irresistible torrent of opinion in favour of reform. A fairly cautious Reform Bill was introduced, in the next year, by Gladstone himself, but this was too much for some crusted Whig champions of the bourgeoisie, who were horrified at the idea of power passing into the hands of the lower orders. They therefore joined hands with the Conservatives in defeating Gladstone's measure.

The Conservatives were now, for the third time, in office owing to the dissensions of their opponents, and were therefore, as before, governing on sufferance and in a minority until such time as the Liberals could agree to sink their own differences and turn them out. The lesson of this was not lost on Disraeli, who had all along consistently pleaded for making the Tories (which was the word he preferred) a national as opposed to a class party. The first Reform Bill, as he had foreseen, had upset the balance of the Constitution by throwing power into the hands of one class. It is true that the notions of a great many Conservatives merely comprehended a

shifting back of power from the moneyed to the landed class, and Disraeli, though he had bitterly satirized such reactionaries in his novels, knew that to force the principles of the Tory democracy, in which he himself believed, upon the noblemen and squires of his following, would have been merely suicidal.

Disraeli now decided that the time had come to break up the long middle class dominance by a really generous measure of reform. To the Premier, Lord Derby, the scheme probably appealed merely as an astute move in the party game, it was he and not Disraeli—to whom the saying is usually attributed—who talked of dishing the Whigs. Disraeli talked not of dishing the Whigs but of educating the Tories, to principles which he had always held. He was not in any degree afraid of trusting the people, "this great and understanding people" as he called it. He believed that given inspiring and sympathetic leadership the people would follow, not demagogues nor revolutionaries, but the national party he aspired to create and to lead. Only, he maintained, when the Tory party degenerates into an oligarchy does it become unpopular.

Disraeli would probably never have been able to break up the middle class dominance with the help of the Tories alone. The genuine oligarchs of the party, like Lord Cranbourne, the future Lord Salisbury, were horrified at what they quite naturally regarded as a betrayal. But where his followers failed him his opponents helped or—as they believed—forced him forward. Gladstone and Bright were great enough to rise above a merely class policy. No doubt they did not realize, as Disraeli did, how surely they were undermining the foundations of the middle class Liberalism by which they lived, moved, and had their being. But they believed that what Gladstone called the great social forces were fighting for reform, and they followed a noble instinct in ranging themselves on their side. Disraeli was nothing loath to have his original Bill widened and democratized almost out of recognition, and to the horror of Whig and Tory reactionaries he replied with goodnatured chaff about the boots of the "Blue Boar" and the chambermaid of the "Red Lion" embracing each other, in perfect accord in denouncing the wickedness of railroads.

And so the middle class rule passed away after thirty-five years of not unfruitful progress. What sinister forces were at work beneath the surface, what unsolved problems clamoured for solution, time had not yet revealed. No pressure from without, no threat of revolution, had forced the wearers of top hats to resign their power

and put their own fortunes and those of their country at the mercy of poor and frequently uneducated men. It was a rare tribute to the genius of the British Constitution that a Parliament, so thoroughly representative of capitalists, great and small, should, of its own free choice and with the agreement of a majority of both parties, have invited the working man to share with them the privileges of citizenship. It would be a piece of unwarrantable cynicism to attribute to them the foreknowledge that what the vote had given the caucus might take away.

The momentous effects of the Reform Bill of 1867 were so slow to display themselves that it might have seemed as if the irruption of the working class into the franchise had made no such vital difference after all. There was no intense feeling in the country such as had caused the political landslide after the first Reform Bill. When Disraeli, who on the retirement of Lord Derby had become Premier, was forced, in the next year, to appeal to the new electorate, he found that the working men, as Mill put it, said "thank you" to Mr. Gladstone for the Reform Bill, and returned the latter and his Liberals to power by a substantial majority. But Disraeli must have known that middle class Liberalism was ultimately incompatible with democracy. How long the inevitable decline might be delayed, and how long Toryism could establish itself in power as the national party, were questions beyond his or any man's power to answer. It might be that the workers would develop, some day, a policy and party of their own.

Meanwhile, under Gladstone's great ministry of 1868–1874, middle class Liberalism attained to the zenith of its power and usefulness. Palmerston was dead and Russell had retired, so that Gladstone was free to embark on a policy of thoroughgoing reform on lines consonant with the doctrines of the Manchester School, interpreted in a liberal and human spirit. Peace and retrenchment were constantly pursued; an honourable neutrality was maintained during the Franco-German War, an equally honourable settlement was arrived at, by arbitration, of our outstanding differences with the United States; Russia was at least induced to pay a formal homage to the sanctity of treaties before rebuilding her Black Sea Fleet. The Income Tax dropped to threepence and would have disappeared altogether if Gladstone could have framed the Budget of 1874.

The Irish Protestant Church, whose establishment was a standing grievance, was thrown on its own resources, and the first attempt

made to protect the Irish tenant from the rapacity of his landlord; the army was reformed by the introduction of the Short Service system, and purified by the abolition of purchasing commissions; the Civil Service was protected against a Spoils' System by the final establishment, in all departments except the Foreign Office, of the Chinese test of competitive examination; one of the six points of the Chartists was conceded in the shape of the ballot; a much needed reform was made in the law by the inclusion in one Supreme Court of the hitherto independent Common Law and Equity jurisdictions; but the most important of all the many achievements of this ministry was the establishment of a system of universal, State education—as yet neither free nor compulsory. Unhappily the attention of legislators was concentrated, as it had been ever since the beginning of the century, not on getting the children educated so much as on getting them indoctrinated with this, that, or the other version of Christianity. And it is hardly to be wondered at that real education, which had been dangerously postponed owing to these squabbles, was, when it did come, a far from creditable product as judged by Continental standards.

All these measures were in accordance with the average middle class orthodoxy—Mill himself had been an advocate of universal education, though Spencer's unmitigated individualism would have anathemized even this. And no doubt Gladstone's ministry had a record of achievement second to none of its predecessors. But other problems were coming up for solution with which his stern individualism was quite incompetent to grapple. Social reform, as we understand it to-day, was almost wholly beyond his purview, though the political reform, which is its inevitable prelude, found in him a generous champion. His ignorance of the working class point of view led him into one blunder that, more than anything else, proved fatal to his ministry. Not for the last time did the Trades Unions find themselves deprived, by a judicial decision, of a privilege, that of picketing, which they had claimed and exercised for years. And Gladstone, who could not read the signs of the times, allowed matters to take their course. At the next election the working man did not say, " Thank you, Mr. Gladstone ! "

CHAPTER III

THE WILL TO POWER

1

Signs of Change

It is, as nearly as we can fix any date in a process so gradual, about the year 1874 that we see the first definite signs of the middle class Liberalism, which had dominated England for more than a generation, having passed its zenith. It was in this year that the long, political supremacy of the Whig-Liberals was decisively reversed by the new, working-class constituencies. It was a supremacy that had really become established with the passing of the First Reform Bill, for Peel's ministry of 1841, though Conservative in name, owed both its triumph and its downfall to the fact that, as Disraeli had said, it represented a policy of Tory men, Whig measures, a complete surrender, in fact, to middle class ideals. The mantle of Peel had fallen on Gladstone and needed very little tailoring to make it a perfect fit.

This obvious and sensational phenomenon of the return to power of a Tory party in fact as well as in name was, however, of less fundamental significance than a subtle and gradual process of change, partly material and partly spiritual, that was destined to transform Britain, as it had already gone far towards transforming her neighbours.

Hitherto she might have seemed hardly affected by such events as Napoleon III's experiment of a Liberal Empire, the rise and triumph of Prussian imperialism, even her own democratic Reform Bill. While Paris had been burning, the same Liberal party, that had come to be regarded almost as a permanent depository of supreme power, was busy legislating into practice the most approved principles of middle class individualism. Scarcely a whisper was heard of the newly-enfranchised workers taking power into their own hands and developing a class policy of their own; Karl Marx was nothing accounted of in the England of 1870. The statistics of prosperity, which had been mounting with such staggering rapidity since the repeal of the Corn Laws, took a fresh spurt after the Franco-German

war, largely owing to the great demand for English capital and exports, particularly of iron and steel, for the development of comparatively backward countries. This prosperity rose to its height in 1874, but after that a long period of depression set in, with its usual accompaniments of liquidations, contraction of exports, unemployment and falling wages. By the end of the decade, things had begun to improve again, but improvement was now at a more sober pace than had obtained during the fifties and sixties. The declared value of our exports—though the figures are certainly affected by the fall in the world's level of prices occasioned, in part, by discoveries of gold—instead of multiplying in geometrical progression, fluctuated, up to the end of the century, round about the level attained in the early seventies. And whatever may have been our progress in comparison with our own past, as compared with that of our principal rivals it was slow indeed.

That we could not forever establish ourselves as the workshop of the world was, of course, only to be expected. The momentum of the start we had gained at the Industrial Revolution and during the Napoleonic wars had kept us ahead throughout the first half of the century, and the fact that we kept comparatively peaceful while our rivals, from 1848 to 1870, were exhausting themselves in mortal combat, contributed to prolong this agreeable state of things. But the man-power and vast natural resources of Germany and the United States must inevitably begin to pull their weight so soon as they had put their affairs in order and settled down to a strenuous course of peaceful development.

Nor were these powers minded to play into our hands, as they considered it, by swallowing whole the principles of the Manchester School and exposing their rising industries to the full blast of British competition. Inevitably with the waning of middle class and partly cosmopolitan ideals, the stern nationalism propounded by List began to supersede what was known, in Germany, as Smithianismus and Manchesterthum. It was in 1879 that Bismarck introduced a highly protective tariff, and France was not long behind him in finally breaking with the principles that had inspired the Commercial Treaty of 1860. The United States had, since the Civil War, been wedded to protectionist principles. Thus was the expectation of Cobden, that other nations would follow our example of throwing open their ports, falsified, though up to the end of the century British opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of sticking to our chosen policy, and fighting tariffs with free imports.

The resources and ideals of our neighbours were things beyond our control, but one cause of our loss of ground in the race for wealth lay in ourselves and our failure to keep pace with the requirements of a scientific age. Too easy a success is good neither for men nor nations, and circumstances had been so overwhelmingly in our favour during the fifties and sixties as to create a subconscious impression that British industrial supremacy was part of the order of nature, and Free Trade a veritable panacea.

There was one disadvantage in the very fact of our having stolen so long a march on our rivals. For the mental habits of our industrial leaders had been inherited from a less exactingly scientific age. The abstruse calculations and exhaustive research which the latest developments of industry necessitated were hardly dreamed of in the days of Arkwright or even of George Stephenson. Nor were the advantages and economies of large scale production appreciated so early in England as in either America or Germany. The old generation of self-made and comparatively uneducated employers was passing away, and their sons were men of an easier gait, content to carry on the business on the old lines and not to be hustled out of their stride into the adoption of new-fangled or foreign methods. And the independent and individualist employer was already beginning to give place to that inhuman entity, the limited liability company.

It was not only with the employers that the fault lay. Our national elementary education was sadly behindhand, owing to the paralysing squabbles of sects about the infinitely insignificant aims of competing proselytism. With regard to the teaching of science, it is not altogether easy to generalize. The strength as well as the weakness of British science lies in its individualism. Organized effort does not suit our national genius, and it was long the aim of our ancient universities rather to train the mind in the humanities than to encourage specialism. Accordingly we find that in the production of individual, scientific genius, Britain, with her Darwin, her Lister, her Kelvin and her Clerk Maxwell, is second to no nation in the world. But when it comes to organized effort, to the teamwork by which the discoveries of genius are exploited and developed, there is a different tale to tell. Thus we find again and again that the harvest of some originally British discovery has been reaped by the foreigner.

A typical instance is that of the aniline dye industry. One of our greatest chemists, Sir William Perkin, experimenting with the

products of coal tar, discovered, in 1856, quite accidentally, how to produce the colour mauve. This opened up an entirely new range of possibilities in the art of colouring, which at first redounded to the advantage of the British industry. "But after the Franco-German War," to quote Mr. Clerk Ranken's excellent little manual of Industrial Chemistry, "the German factories took the lead, and the period 1870–80 must be recognized as that in which British dye-making was definitely overtaken by the German industry." One of the reasons for this, as Mr. Ranken goes on to explain, lay in the excellent use the Germans made of part of the French indemnity, by which they subsidized their scientific colleges, and trained up an abundance of skilled chemists. Moreover, the docile nature of the German allows experiment to be organized with minute thoroughness by the employment of a great number of brains on the details of one task.

This capture by Germany of the artificial dyeing industry is merely one—perhaps the most conspicuous—manifestation of a tendency that was more or less at work all alone the line. Britain was ceasing to set the pace to her neighbours; she was beginning to show signs of flagging in the race. Her strength now lay in the soundness and honesty of her output, and in her reserves of individual genius which enabled her, when the supreme trial came, to catch up and ultimately to surpass even the German in the application of science to war.

The glory of middle class England had lain, if the spokesmen and organs of that class are to be trusted, first of all in her abounding prosperity. It was this attitude of pocket-slapping optimism against which the keenest satire of Matthew Arnold was directed, but satire was not nearly as effective to damp self-complacency as the fact that prosperity itself was ceasing to prosper quite so conspicuously, that Britain was entering a period in which she would have much ado to hold her own against the ever-increasing competition of nationalities who thought in terms not of peaceful co-operation, but of a never-ceasing war in which every weapon, short of direct violence, was legitimate.

The middle class itself, as Cobden and Dickens had known it, was entering upon a transformation that was to rob it of much of its mid-century grandeur. The most conspicuous quality of that class, the dominant note of its thought, had undoubtedly been an uncompromising individualism. Such a character as that of Herbert Spencer, with his aggressive contempt for any sort of authority, of Carlyle, who spurned any honour, however tactfully

pressed, of Bright, with his idealization of the old merchant princes, bespeak a class thoroughly conscious of its own importance and dignity, and certainly not disposed to imitate or truckle to the landed aristocracy. Dickens, who knew his middle class through and through, never even dreamed of any special divinity hedging a lord or gentleman, nor was his interest in them even great enough for him to take any special trouble to understand them. Mr. Brownlow and Mr. Grimwig are as sufficient to themselves as any Duke alive, and Scrooge, though in his unregenerate days he may have had every other unpleasant quality, would never have dreamed of using those hard wrung sovereigns to purchase the acquaintance of Sir Leicester Dedlock.

But Dickens, towards the end of his career, had seen with evident disgust and apprehension the beginnings of a change in his beloved middle class. His sketch of the *nouveau riche* Veneering household, with their courtship of needy aristocrats, and their pretentious absence of any proper self-respect, was a danger signal, too lightly disregarded. About this time a *Punch* artist, Du Maurier, was beginning to find his feet as the satirist of a bourgeoisie that was fast exchanging the reality of independence for the veneer of gentility. This class was multiplying with great rapidity in the suburbs which were springing up round all the great towns, and especially London, for in the industrial North the old middle class grit made the process of change more gradual.

A contributory factor was the breaking down of the upper class exclusiveness that had made " society ", in the more restricted sense of the word, almost a closed circle—even more so during the early years of the Queen's reign than in the eighteenth century, with its queer streak of democracy that accounted for the dominance of adventurers like Beau Nash and Casanova. In France, during the reign of Louis Philippe, we have the sure testimony of Balzac to the extent to which fashionable society was honeycombed with a singularly vulgar and heartless plutocracy. But in England, partly no doubt owing to the strict exclusiveness of Victoria's court, the doors were kept shut much longer. As Lady Dorothy Nevill points out, even Hudson, the railway king, was never in society. " The forties and fifties," she says, " were aristocratic days, when the future conquerors of society were still without the gate." It was a time when conversation was an art, and manners, at least within the pale—for there was a different tale to tell regarding governesses and inferiors generally—of a dignified urbanity quite out of date in modern

drawingrooms. And there was individuality bred in the upper almost as much as in the middle class. It was an age of "characters". Even blackguards like Lord Cardigan were at least far from commonplace.

But gradually the fortunes that were made during the booming fifties and sixties began to assert their owners' claims to recognition with an insistency not to be denied. The English aristocracy has ever had the Wellington prudence of effecting a timely withdrawal from a position that has become plainly untenable. But it was only very gradually that money began to take the place of breeding as a social passport. The Queen herself had no idea of compromising with the new spirit, and her court remained as exclusive as ever up to the end of her reign.

It was in 1874 that the fortunes of the landed interest began to undergo an eclipse, that rendered it wholly incapable of resisting the encroachments of plutocracy. The prolonged depression affected the agricultural with all other interests, and a series of bad harvests culminated in the wretched summer of 1879. But agriculture did not, like other industries, recover, for now the vast grain fields of Western North America were coming into competition, and as the century declined the unfortunate agriculturist found himself forced to compete with a flood of imports, both of meat and grain, from all the ends of the earth. The result was, not only that progress of every kind was thrown back, but that the rental of estates was often as much as halved, and that these estates had to be disposed of to *nouveaux riches* who were ambitious to assume the style and prestige of the country gentleman.

It had a further effect in that the members of old families were often desperately put to it to keep their heads above water. Many of them went into trade, some even condescending to the practice of lending their names to the directorates of companies, in order to provide a somewhat dubious guarantee of honesty. There was also the chance, not to be despised, of retrieving the family fortunes by a rich marriage, and even for a daughter a wealthy husband was worth a few dropped aitches. The leaven of wealthy Americans, from the seventies onwards, had a marked effect in accelerating the process of change. And finally the shameless and increasing corruption by which honours were sold to recruit party funds, enabled the new rich to flood the aristocracy itself.

This breaking down of barriers between the landed and moneyed classes had more than one notable effect. The old standard of upper-

class manners, dignified and yet simple, was gradually superseded. Social life was speeded up and a strenuous pursuit of pleasure and excitement replaced the old leisurely routine. Instead of living on his estate for at least ten months out of the twelve, and perhaps being dragged up to London under great protest and for the shortest possible time, the wealthy landowner became a more or less frequent week-ender on his own estate, especially after the advent of the motor-car. His friends were no longer his neighbours, but smart and rowdy people hurried down in relays by train or car to make the most of the Sabbath.

Such birds of passage were not likely to retain the old, eighteenth-century flair for scientific agriculture. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, with its generally good times for the farmer and its resident landowners, there had been considerable enthusiasm for up-to-date methods, and notably for the breeding of pedigree stock. But the great agricultural depression unfortunately coincided with the gradual break up of the old order and the weaning of the landowner from the land. The slumping of rents and the merciless incidence of foreign competition were enough in themselves to take the heart out of the most improving owner, but social and economic forces were working in the same direction, and a state of things could not fail to be produced too ominously reminiscent of that which had gone before the French Revolution.

To the *nouveau riche* landowner, whose fortune was derived from trade, an estate was not a means of livelihood, but a costly luxury, partly a pleasure-ground and partly a sort of alpenstock in the business of social climbing. His heart was anywhere but in the country. The old squire, whatever his faults, had been the centre of rural life, the cornerstone of the social edifice. But now that his direct influence, even his tyranny, was in so large a measure withdrawn, the tendency was for village life to languish. All sorts of small collective activities, village bands and the like, gradually lapsed; rustic life became not only an unprofitable, but a dull and soulless grind, from which any high-spirited or ambitious lad was only too glad to escape to a town or a colony. Thus social and economic causes combined to deplete that agricultural population which had been traditionally the backbone of England, and by a steady elimination of the fittest, to devitalize that which remained.

Swift waters seldom run deep, and the surrender of birth to wealth was not unnaturally accompanied by a decline not only of manners but also of intellect. The days when conversation was an art, when

dinner parties were carefully arranged to produce the most agreeable clash of wits, receded into a past that became almost incredible. The atmosphere of such gatherings as those that had frequented Holland House in the days of Fox and of Macaulay did not survive the century. The last attempt to resuscitate it was by that brilliant group of young people which was nicknamed " The Souls ". But the social forces, as Mr. Gladstone might have put it, were moving onwards in their might and majesty, a veritable Juggernaut of dullness, so far as the upper ranks of society were concerned. The owners of country houses ceased to stock their libraries with the most learned and imaginative literature of their time, and those ancestral folios that remained unsold, the Livies and Horaces, the Humes and Voltaires, mouldered untouched as ornaments, often locked up in glass cases. But a sufficient sprinkling of magazines and sporting works remained accessible to show that their owners still retained the art of reading.

This flight from intellect may be partly accounted for by the gradual transformation of the public schools, which were now the sole medium of upper class education, and were catering for a rapidly increasing proportion of middle-class families. Educational reformers like Thomas Arnold of Rugby and Butler of Shrewsbury had been appalled at the state of anarchy, tempered by flogging, that had prevailed early in the century. Adopting principles that had been formulated in a humbler sphere by Bell and Lancaster, they succeeded in tightening up discipline by deputing a considerable amount of authority to the bigger boys as monitors or prefects, besides humanizing the school system in all kinds of ways.

The immediate effects of this reforming spirit were no doubt all to the good, and no one could regret the passing of such Hells of vice and cruelty as the old Long Chamber at Eton. But the tightening of discipline implies, by its very nature, some curtailment of freedom and individuality. Under the old system a Shelley may have been shamefully persecuted, but he was at least able to experiment in science and devil raising, not to speak of writing *Zastrozzi*. At the end of the fifties, in spite of the monitorial system, we gather from Dean Farrar's stories that out of school hours a boy's time was still his own, to wander at will climbing for seabirds' eggs or picnicking on the top of mountains.

But a time was at hand when a boy's play would be subjected to an even more rigorous discipline than his work, when the education of the body would acquire an importance not conceded, in practice, to that of the mind. The turning point was signalized by the dramatic

episode, in 1875, of Oscar Browning's dismissal from Eton. This egotistical but liberal-minded house master had endeavoured to realize the ideal of "educating a governing class in the delight of all intellectual pursuits, a governing class that would owe its position not only to wealth and privilege, but also to the Platonic virtues of wisdom and goodness."[1] But it was not to be. The headmaster, Hornby, and his eventual successor, Warre, both noted athletes, believed in allowing the boys to work out their own manly salvation on the river and in the playing fields, without any nonsense about Platonic virtues.

Their triumph was decisive, and it was the triumph of an ideal which, if it de-intellectualized upper class education, was by no means wholly contemptible. For it did, undoubtedly, succeed in creating a school of character unequalled anywhere in the world. It was not the kind of character that would have appealed to moralists like Thomas Arnold,[2] for the Victorian sentimentalism about public schools frequently masked a state of things which only twentieth century frankness has dared expose to the light of day, but it included the Kiplingese virtues of restraint, discipline, and power of command.[3] It turned out a type of white man who was unrivalled in dealing with every kind of "native" but the educated native, platoon commanders of an excellence that almost compensated for the mediocrity of a public-school trained higher command. But the tremendous efficiency of a discipline that was about the boy's path and about his bed, regulating every moment of his existence at the most formative period, could not fail to nip any tender shoots of creative genius, and to merge the individual in a type, manly and well-groomed and urbane, but with an invincible distaste for mental effort, a mind hardened in racial and class prejudice, and a religion comprehended in the words "good form".

And the working class, all this time, the great unvocal majority into whose roughened hands a Parliament of well-to-do gentlemen has seen fit to confide the supreme power in the State—what of them? For the most part they had remained, through the years of mid-

[1] *Oscar Browning* by H. E. Wortham, p. 44.

[2] Mr. Strachey, having raked Arnold's career for a greater earnestness than would be quite good form in a modern headmaster, suddenly clinches his indictment by branding him as "the founder of the worship of athletics and the worship of good form". *Post Arnold ergo propter Arnold* would seem to be a good enough logical cudgel for the game of Victorian Aunt Sally.

[3] Though Mr. Kipling's own "Stalky and Co." were fighting the last battle of the old individualism against monitors and compulsory games. They would have been caned or kicked out of it in the 'nineties.

Victorian prosperity, contentedly unobtrusive. There was no movement of revolt anything like as widespread or intense as Chartism. An attempt on the part of Karl Marx to form an international working men's association for carrying on class warfare *à outrance* gave birth to a so-called national congress at Nottingham in 1872, but it was a complete failure. Says Mr. Beer, the historian of British Socialism, " the British section of the I.M.W.A. lingered on for some time and expired from exhaustion. The working classes had definitely abandoned all socialist agitation and class warfare, and not even the genius of Marx could bring them back to Chartism."

Nevertheless quiet and steady progress had been accomplished during these years. The Trades Unions had been consolidating their position, and obtained full legal recognition of their claims from Disraeli's government in 1876, though the years of depression saw, as such years always do, a temporary decline in power and membership. The co-operative societies were beginning to cover the country and supply a training in self-help that might come in useful, some day, for more militant activities. The Education Act was destined to train up a generation more susceptible to mass suggestion than that which had preceded it, and more easily organized for combined action. And above all there was the vote, an irresistible weapon for a class-conscious Demos could he but pluck it out of its scabbard. That scabbard was not so much talked about as the sword it retained, and its name was called Caucus.

Disraeli and the New Toryism

The most sensational, though perhaps not the most important event of 1874, was the resounding fall of Gladstone's Liberal administration, and the triumph under a democratic franchise of Disraeli's Conservatives. The social forces, to which Gladstone had fatalistically appealed, were now beginning to work not for, but against, his policy of middle-class Liberalism, but the dramatic suddenness of the change was due to the far-sighted genius of the man who had guided the fortunes of Conservatism through long years of eclipse and discouragement, and provided it with a policy based, not on the expediency of the moment, but on a reasoned and consistent philosophy and interpretation of history.

The character of Benjamin Disraeli is one that will provide material for historial disagreement, until such time as human

nature is studied with the same scientific detachment as chemistry or biology. The long duel between him and Gladstone has been kept up by their partisans, long after the principals have been quiet in the grave. And, for more than one reason, Disraeli has received less than his due proportion of fair play. Largely, no doubt, this is due to the fact that so many of the historians of modern England have happened to inherit Whig or Liberal sympathies. A vague anti-Semitic bias has been imparted to the controversy from the fact of Disraeli's Jewish descent. Perhaps, however, he has suffered most of all from the fact that of all his contemporaries he was the one who most consistently refused to bow the knee or pull the long face before the smug little god of Victorian respectability. Whether his righteousness exceeded the righteousness of Mr. Gladstone is a question on which opinions may plausibly differ, but there is no doubt that in perpetually suggesting to his contemporaries that every day and in every way he was getting more and more righteous, Disraeli neither could nor, indeed, would hold a candle to the Grand Old Man of Victorianism. And yet he, too, cultivated a pose—an intellectual pose, less tolerable to Englishmen than the moral variety.

The cynical and self-seeking Jew of Liberal tradition is hardly more absurd than the flawless and nearly omniscient hero that some ardent Tories would make of Disraeli. His was a strangely complex character, by no means to be comprehended in the sweeping generalizations of up-to-date biography. To invoke his Jewish origin as a ready-made explanation of everything he was or did is surely the last resort of disingenuousness. His youthful flamboyance of dress and manner he borrowed from the set among which he moved, a set that included Count D'Orsay, the prince of dandies; his occasional lusciousness of imagery was that of a typical Romantic; his *penchant* for the East was thoroughly in keeping with the Byronic fashion of his adolescence. He had the far from Hebraic characteristic of being in perpetual monetary embarrassment, and of being weakest, as a statesman, on the side of finance.

In spite of the fact that he carefully cultivated the appearance of inscrutability, his was an exceptionally impulsive and affectionate nature. In one of his early novels, *Contarini Fleming*, he was admittedly depicting his own nature in that of the hyper-sensitive hero, who is perpetually craving for love—"love me, love me always!" This was the Disraeli who as husband and brother was able to give and inspire a love as constant and intense as any on human record, and who, at the end of his life, solaced his heart by a friendship, at

once pure and passionate, for those two gracious and venerable sisters, Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, and who brought back a little sunshine to the widowed heart of his Queen. This was the essential Disraeli, but there was another side to his nature which was almost inevitable in a parvenu with nothing but sheer brain and will power to help him climb to the summit of his ambition. This side is depicted in his first novel, *Vivian Gray*, also an attempt to explain his own nature, this time under the guise of a brilliant but not too nice young superman of the Byronic order. This streak of the adventurer is also from time to time apparent in Disraeli's career. Sometimes it pleases him, in his correspondence and political manoeuvres, to sink the statesman in the cynic, the wire-puller, even the charlatan. On one celebrated occasion he lied, boldly and unblushingly, to the House of Commons, denying that he had ever sought office from Peel, and staking his whole career on the chance that Peel would have lost the damning letter. He once sought alliance with the Cobdenites, and on their refusal of so monstrous a coalition made a speech in which he himself denounced coalitions. He was capable of putting things in his letters, in moments of petulance or affectation, that made nonsense of his whole philosophy, but by which, most unfortunately and ungenerously, he has been judged and condemned. Gladstone was only obeying the dictates of an upright though not inconvenient conscience when he allowed himself to be converted to Home Rule so soon as this was the only apparent way of securing a majority, and in leaving the ship of Toryism as soon as it was obviously waterlogged; his abandonment of Gordon, his far from delicate treatment of Parnell, are tactfully explained away; but Disraeli, who was no less honourable and public-spirited, and far more consistent to his principles, is surely entitled to an equal measure of generosity. Hath not a Jew . . .

What brought Disraeli, in spite of every handicap, inevitably to the front of the Tory party was the fact that he was the only active politician of that party who had the least claim to rank as a political philosopher. Wellington was a reactionary at heart and a patriotic opportunist in practice; Peel had a genius for administration, but was, without realizing it, no Tory at all, but a middle class Liberal; Shaftesbury, in spite of his splendid practical work for social reform, was not to be taken seriously as a thinker; Lord Derby was a thorough-paced party tactician, more concerned with dishing the Whigs than providing a reasoned faith for the Tories. Disraeli, on the other hand, had been born in a library; his father

was not only a man of enormous if somewhat discursive erudition, but a student of the great constitutional struggle of the seventeenth century, who had put the case for our first two Stuart Kings against their politicians.

It was on this basis that the Young Disraeli built up his philosophy of Toryism. The Tories, in his view, were the party of the whole nation, and their opponents, Roundhead or Whig or Radical, were that of a class or faction. He showed how the "patriots" of the Long Parliament had opposed direct taxation that fell on rich men like Hampden, and had ended by substituting crushing indirect taxation that fell on the people. The Whigs of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries he characterized as a Venetian oligarchy, a clique of titled and moneyed men seeking, under the cant of liberty, to bind the fetters of their tyranny on sovereign and people alike, an unpatriotic faction that had done its best to weaken the hands of our leaders in the struggle with France.

But Disraeli had a more subtle distinction in mind when he characterized the Tories as the national party. His view of nationality was the evolutionary or dynamic one, as contrasted with the abstract principles to which his opponents were constantly appealing. In his *Vindication of the English Constitution* (1835), a classic of political philosophy which has received less attention than it deserves, he justifies our fundamental institutions, not because they are perfect in the abstract, but because they are perfectly English, with roots deep in the past. Indeed, he has nothing but contempt for recent attempts to transplant them to soils, such as that of France, to which they are not indigenous. And with a historical insight remarkable for a writer in the thirties, he clearly realizes how firmly rooted is the English Constitution in the English law.

This standpoint of course involved Disraeli in irreconcilable opposition to the utilitarian and Radical doctrines that had begun to capture the now dominant middle-class. The sole test of a constitution to him was whether, in practice, it was suited to the nation. The proof of the pudding, in fact, is the eating, and not the cookery book. Mehemet Ali probably acted wisely, thinks Disraeli, in saving his Egyptian subjects the trouble of electing members to their brand-new Parliament by electing them himself. A King, a bench of Bishops, a House of Lords, may conceivably be more truly representative than a House of Commons elected by universal suffrage. The curious superstition that the tyranny of a majority is more sacrosanct than that of an autocrat is not for Disraeli. He

is constantly applying the test—how does your constitution work, not on paper nor in communities of economic men, but here and now, in that partnership which includes, as Burke once declared, the living and the dead and those yet to be born ?

In one respect Disraeli goes beyond Burke as a political philosopher. He does not conceive of the past as a dead weight on progress. The nation is in a perpetual process of development and the national party ought to develop with it. Only progress ought to be organic, inspired by a tender reverence for the past, and based not upon abstract but upon national principles. It was always Disraeli's chief pre-occupation to get his party out of the ruts of blind reaction, whose protagonist, Eldon, he had satirized in one of his early novels as Lord Past Century. He was equally opposed to the uninspired Conservatism of men like Peel, whose policy it was to construct as many temporary dams as possible across the stream of progress. From the first, his proposals were bold to the point of scandalizing hidebound Whigs as much as crusted Tories. He started by advocating the ballot and Triennial Parliaments, and when taxed with vote-catching, appealed triumphantly to such Tory fathers as Bolingbroke and Windham for support. When the Chartist movement was at its most alarming phase, he boldly professed his sympathy with the workers as against a capitalist bourgeoisie, who, as he pointed out, were monopolizing power without performing any corresponding duties. He flung himself heart and soul into the question of social reform, which he always maintained was the especial concern of the Tory party, and his novel *Sybil*, published in 1845, is a burning plea, in which selfish landowners come in for as drastic censure as selfish capitalists, for the masses as against the tyranny of the rich.

Disraeli's early career was one long struggle to guide his party back from what he described as political infidelity to political faith. This was bound to bring him into conflict with his leader, Peel, who in his eyes was politically the arch-infidel, and whom he assailed, in a series of terrible Philippics, on the latter's *volte-face* on the question of the Corn Laws. It is about this time that Disraeli, a born Romantic, plays a leading part in what was known as the Young England movement, a sentimental attempt of some young aristocrats to reproduce under their own auspices such a medieval England as the imagination of that time loved to conjure up, with a happy people loyally devoted to benevolent lords of the soil, and a Church solicitous alike for the material, intellectual, and spiritual requirements of the people. But " Young England " was never more than a

vague aspiration, and Disraeli was soon at work, as Conservative leader of the House of Commons, at the thankless task of guiding his party through their twenty-eight years of minority, never forgetting the political faith in which he had started, though it is probable that his leader, Lord Derby, regarded his not altogether welcome colleague in no other light than that of a fellow opportunist. It was Derby, we repeat, and not Disraeli, who talked of dishing the Whigs.

"The Whigs invoke the people," Disraeli had cried, "let us appeal to the nation," and that, so far as it can be compressed into so small a compass, expresses his political creed. Jew though he was, he was proudly and passionately devoted to the land that had given him birth, and only prejudice can deny him a leading place on the roll of English patriots. But in the very intensity of his nationalism there lurked a danger. It is possible to conceive of the national well-being as the end of all statesmanship, and its promotion the supreme dictate of morality. Nations, viewed from this standpoint, constitute an anarchy of giant egotists, with no other object in view than that of satisfying, by any means and at each others' expense, their lust for wealth and power. It is significant that at the height of his power, when defending his Eastern policy, which his critics, not without reason, had characterized as selfish, Disraeli, then Lord Beaconsfield, should have replied, "It is as selfish as patriotism." In those half dozen words is implicit the doctrine of Machiavelli, of Bismarck, of the men who made the world war and marred the Peace of Versailles.

Now it was just on this question—whether morality stops short at the individual, or whether it applies equally to communities—that Gladstone was most fundamentally opposed to Disraeli, and Gladstonian Liberalism to Disraelian Toryism. Gladstone said and believed that selfishness is the greatest curse of the human race, and to him a patriotism that was selfish would have seemed no patriotism at all, but a devilish mockery of it. He loved England not for her power or wealth or splendour, but because, as he said, wherever in the world a high aspiration was entertained or a noble blow was struck, it was to England that the eyes of the oppressed were turned. He loved her, in fact, most of all because he believed her to be lovable. He believed that the way to make her great was to let it be known that she would, before all things, be just, for national injustice was, he held, the surest road to national downfall. And in these principles he was at one with the greatest of the mid-century Liberals, and most of all with Bright, who in speaking in 1858 on

foreign policy, asked his audience to believe that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and that only by the guidance of that law can we be permanently a great nation or our people a happy people. And Freeman, the historian of the Norman Conquest, a lover of his country if ever there was one, could go so far as to say, when it was a question of upholding Turkish oppression by British arms, "Perish the interests of England, perish our dominion in India, sooner than that we should strike one blow or speak one word in the cause of the wrong against the right!"

It was evident then that Disraeli was the exponent of an altogether different kind of patriotism from that of his Liberal opponents. The difference is more clearly marked by the fact that patriotism was with him less a question of ideals than of race. Race, he maintained, was the key of history, and the importance he attached to it is, perhaps, one of his few idiosyncrasies that we may plausibly attribute to the fact of his Semitic origin. But he was at least in harmony with a tendency that was growing on the Continent to think in terms of the Latin or Teutonic or Slav races, enormous super-national groups, whose interests soon came to bound the mental horizons of their champions, to the exclusion of those of humanity.

It was impossible that with these views Disraeli could remain satisfied within the bounds of a merely insular patriotism. Inevitably his vision of England widened to include those members of the British race who had left her shores to plant her flag and institutions in distant lands, those of them at least who retained their allegiance and loyalty to the Motherland. Disraeli came to maturity at a time singularly unpropitious for the growth of imperialist sentiment, particularly in his own party, which had by no means entirely shaken off its delusion that colonies, if not to be abandoned, must be governed. Accordingly we find in Disraeli's earlier productions few references to colonial questions, though a lively interest in the gorgeous and romantic Near East to which the Byronic as well as the Jewish tradition had, from the first, attracted him, and which was very much to the fore both in the literature and politics of the thirties.

There is a passage, however, in *Contarini Fleming*, written in the year of the Reform Bill, which shows how, even in these early days, Disraeli had grasped the root of the matter, which was that the bond between the mother country and her colonies ought to be, above all things, spiritual and not merely businesslike. "There is a great difference," he says, "between ancient and modern colonies. A

modern colony is a commercial enterprise, an ancient colony was a political settlement. In the emigration of our citizens, hitherto, we had merely sought the means of acquiring wealth; the ancients, when their brethren quitted their native shores, wept and sacrificed. . . . I believe that a great revolution is at hand in our system of colonization, and that Europe will recur to the principles of the ancient policy." Had the relations between England and our American colonies been ordered on the principles of this noble passage, there need have been no Declaration of Independence.

That thoughts of empire were simmering in Disraeli's mind is evident from a strange and flamboyant romance published in the year following *Contarini Fleming*, entitled *Alroy*. This describes the attempt of a scion of the House of David to revive the glories of his race. He so far succeeds as to found an Empire by the conquest of Bagdad. But he is ruined by the defection of his spiritual guide, the priest Jabaster, a devotee of the race doctrine in the narrowest sense, who holds that the school of Empire is the law of Moses. Alroy has broader views, he scorns to think that the Lord of Hosts must needs fix the boundaries of omnipotence between the Jordan and the Lebanon. "Universal empire must not be founded on sectarian principles and exclusive rights", in other words, there must be no "lesser breeds without the law". This early imperialism is, however, too tentative and nebulous, too much the product of a romantic imagination, to constitute more than the glimmering dawn of a reasoned philosophy.

After the separation from Peel, we find Disraeli, now the Tory second-in-command, revolving schemes for a closer union with those colonies whose eventual separation from us most of our leading statesmen anticipated without regret. In 1849 we first find him toying with the idea of admitting colonial representatives to the British Parliament, and in 1851, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, pressing his scheme upon the notice of Lord Derby, who seems to have turned it down with the polite depreciation of an unimaginative man confronted by an innovation. It is shortly after this that we find Disraeli, in a moment of discouragement or petulance, writing to Lord Malmesbury of the colonies being a millstone round our neck, and despairing of their retention. Such a reaction was not unnatural, and it is absurd to judge of Disraeli's serious and considered opinion by the salvage of Lord Malmesbury's wastepaper basket.

It was in 1859, when Disraeli was next in office, in the usual Tory minority, that, addressing his constituents at Aylesbury, he

made the significant pronouncement that England, though bound to Europe by many ties, was not merely a Power of the Old World. "If ever Europe by her short-sightedness falls into an inferior and exhausted state, for England there will remain an illustrious future. We are bound to the communities of the New World and those great states which our own planting and colonizing energies have created by ties and interests that will sustain our power and enable us to play a part in the times yet to come as we do in these days, and as we have done in the past." So that Disraeli had now the vision, that may yet prove prophetic, of England casting loose her moorings to an exhausted Europe, and taking her place as the head of an amphibious and world-wide league of "great states".

It was in 1872, when the victory for which Disraeli had planned and waited for so many years was now in sight, that his political philosophy attained its full maturity in the greatest of all his speeches, delivered at the Crystal Palace. Herein he laid down three great principles as the basis of a Tory or national policy. The first of these was to maintain the institutions of the country, and on this head Disraeli had little to add to the doctrine formulated nearly forty years before in his *Vindication of the Constitution*. There was nothing new, either, in his making social reform, the elevation of the condition of the people, a main plank in the Tory programme—the author of *Sybil* could hardly have done less. The most original and important part of the speech was his plea for the maintenance not only of our institutions and domestic prosperity, but also of our Empire, an ideal to which one of the great parties in the State, and that the one which was to be in the ascendant for more than a generation, was henceforward committed.

This declaration reveals both the grandeur and the imperfection of Disraeli's matured imperialism. Though he coined the phrase "*imperium et libertas*", he could never quite rise to the conception of a Commonwealth of Nations whose service was perfect freedom. He held that self-government ought to have been conceded to the colonies as part of a great policy of imperial consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied not only by a representative council in London, but by an imperial tariff, a military code, and the retention by the Crown—a euphemism for Downing Street—of unoccupied lands. But if anything could have been more certain than another—and a study of Canadian politics ought to have enlightened Disraeli on this point—it is that no colony would have dreamed of tolerating such interference. These regrets, though they avowedly refer to the

past, are too reminiscent of a petulant outburst of Disraeli's, in a letter to Lord Derby in 1867—"what is the use of these colonial deadweights which *we do not govern* ?"

Disraeli had, in fact, approached the imperial question from the racial standpoint. He had the vision of the Anglo-Saxon race spreading its power and civilization to the remotest corners of the earth, and he saw, as plainly as he had seen in 1832, that to regard imperial affairs, as the Manchester School were inclined to do, merely in a financial aspect, was to pass by "those moral and political considerations which alone make nations great, and by the influence of which alone men are distinguished from animals."

That is finely said, but Disraeli, for all his historical insight and philosophic grasp, lacked one thing that some of his opponents possessed. He had, throughout his career, a strangely imperfect sympathy with liberty. This was no doubt partly due to his aversion from all abstract principles in politics, but it deprived him of that generous sympathy for oppressed and struggling peoples that was the strength of Gladstone. And it blinded him to those very aspects of the colonial problem which Gladstone, whose imagination was much less fired by the vision of Greater Britain, divined by a sure instinct. For Gladstone saw plainly that the less we attempted to govern or interfere with the colonies, the more surely we should bind them to us. And to Gladstone the pursuit of racial supremacy was of little importance compared with the maintenance of God's law of justice and liberty, and Christ's golden rule, which is binding in all ages on men and communities.

"I believe," he said, at the conclusion of one of his great Midlothian speeches, "we are all united in a fond attachment to the great country to which we belong, to the great Empire which has committed to it a trust and function from Providence, as special and remarkable as was ever entrusted to any portion of the family of man. When I speak of that trust and that function I feel that words fail. I cannot tell you what I think of the nobleness of the inheritance that has descended upon us, of the sacredness of the duty of maintaining it. I will not condescend to make it a part of controversial politics. It is a part of my being, of my flesh and blood, of my heart and soul. For those ends I have laboured through my youth and manhood, and, more than that, till my hairs are grey. In that faith and practice I shall die."

Romantic Imperialism

In 1874 Disraeli, now old in years but incurably young in spirit, found himself in power with an overwhelming majority for his threefold policy of constitutional stability, social reform and imperialism. His ministry started with the fairest prospects. He was particularly fortunate in his Home Secretary, Mr. Cross, under whose auspices a good beginning was made with housing and sanitary reform—"*sanitas sanitatum*" had been one of the happiest of Disraeli's verbal coinages. The privileges of the Trades Unions were restored and established upon what all parties imagined to be a permanent basis. Finally the efforts of Lord Shaftesbury and his fellow philanthropists were crowned by the grand consolidation of the Factory Laws in 1878.

Could Disraeli have confined himself to these paths of peaceful progress, there is little reason to doubt that he would have died in the premiership. The electorate had returned him as they had returned Peel before him and were to return Salisbury and Bonar Law after him, because they fancied that he would pursue a policy conservative in fact as well as in name—perhaps his most effective indictment against the very able ministry he superseded was that they had begun to attack every interest, every class and calling in the country. The Englishman seldom calls for a sensational policy: he prefers to be godly and quietly governed, and Gladstone, though abounding in godliness, had displayed a disquieting energy in speeding up the advance of his "great social forces".

Disraeli was not the man to embark on any grandiose programme of legislation. The restlessness of his genius impelled him in another direction. For he was an inveterate Romantic, and the East had the same attraction for him that it had had for Napoleon. He was also—what was rare in a Romantic—a follower of the same kind of national and racial egotism as formed the basis of Bismarck's *Realpolitik*, and this had led him to the ideal of a world-wide British Empire, effectively united in the pursuit of wealth and power. But, unlike Bismarck, he was also a constitutionalist, and this made him a seeker not only of *imperium* but also of *libertas*, blended in not always calculable proportions. This threefold strain in his nature renders Disraeli's imperialism less simple and absolute than that of such whole-hearted enthusiasts as Chamberlain and Milner, and

certainly the prosaic colonies touched a less sympathetic chord in his heart than the gorgeous East. Sometimes we are at a loss to determine whether his policy embodies the seed of modern imperialism or the flower of Victorian romance.

That Disraeli had even yet failed to grasp the essentials of the colonial problem was proved, soon after his accession to office, by the policy he permitted his Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, to adopt with regard to South Africa, then just beginning to emerge from her purely pastoral and agricultural stage. His Lordship displayed true statesmanlike insight in divining that the supreme need of the four white communities, two of them independent Boer Republics, was to attain some sort of political union, but what he did not realize was the almost aggressive independence of the self-governing colonial, who would rather suffer the utmost inconvenience than have the wisest policy imposed upon him from Downing Street.

Lord Carnarvon, to whom the whole business appeared exceedingly simple, proposed a conference between representatives of the chief white communities, of Griqualand West, whose participation was intolerable to the Free State, and the Eastern Province of Cape Colony, whose separate recognition constituted an offence to the Cape government. To make matters worse, he coolly proposed himself to nominate all except the Boer representatives. The matter was further complicated by an extraordinary roving commission to James Anthony Froude, an eloquent speaker and distinguished historian, but a man wholly lacking in tact and relevant knowledge, to go about making speeches and trying to convert all and sundry to the Government's policy. Of course, the combined efforts of Froude and Carnarvon had no other effect than that of setting everybody concerned by the ears. The Cape Parliament flatly refused to have part or lot in the conference, and the Boer Republics had grievances which made them even less willing than they might have been at ordinary times to dance to the piping of the British minister. The Tory government's attempt to box the compass on the policy of its predecessors, who had positively insisted on driving the Boers out of the pale of British sovereignty and responsibility, thus ended in what amounted to a hint to Downing Street to mind its own business.

It was, however, to the East that Disraeli's thoughts most naturally turned. His romantic loyalty to the throne no less than his instinct for enhancing our prestige found expression in the title "Empress of India", which he caused the Queen to assume. He

brought off a notable financial *coup* when, acting through the great Jewish house of Rothschild, who cleared a hundred thousand over the deal, he snapped up, from under the very nose of our French rivals, the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal. But his great opportunity came when the Christian populations of the Balkans broke out into desperate rebellion against their Ottoman master, and it became evident that orthodox Russia was not going to see them crushed without herself taking a hand in the struggle against the Turk, and thus re-opening the whole question which we had thought to settle in the Crimean War.

It was not long before domestic problems had receded into comparative insignificance; the reforming progress of the ministry slowed down, and the eyes of Western Europe were turned to the Balkans, where the Cross, long trampled in the dust of conquest, was once again raised in defiance of the Crescent. But to most Englishmen, a more dramatic and absorbing contest was that between the two great men who occupied the centre of their own political stage, Disraeli, now Earl of Beaconsfield, and Gladstone, drawn irresistibly from what he had fondly imagined to be his final retirement from active politics. It was one of those noblest quarrels in which not personalities, but great and fundamental principles are at stake. For with Beaconsfield, the whole matter was frankly one of his adopted country's interests. If the Turkish hordes were let loose on the insurgent Bulgarians, to practice every form of devilry—that was no concern of his. With a cheerful conscience, he elected to discuss all reports of such massacres as "coffee-house babble" *Realpolitik* was his game, the statecraft of Machiavelli's *Prince* and he played every move with consummate skill and single-hearted devotion to Britain.

Gladstone, on the other hand, took the ground that the Turk was in the wrong, and he could not bear to think of our countenancing or abetting his tyranny under any pretence whatsoever. Like the Hebrew prophet, he felt that God's law should override the calculations of political expediency. The Turk ought to clear, bag and baggage, out of the province he had desolated. Beaconsfield was haunted by the fear lest the newly enfranchised peoples should become pawns in the hands of Russia. But Gladstone, with his faith in liberty held that the best defence against tyranny, Ottoman or Muscovite resided in the breasts of free men. Thus, while Beaconsfield justified himself on the grounds of national self-interest, Gladstone appealed to the national conscience.

It can at least be said of Beaconsfield that he displayed a mastery of his craft that moved the admiration of Bismarck himself. After a good deal of diplomatic manoeuvring, Russia, whose deepest feelings were roused by the defeat of orthodox Servia, came to the rescue, and though her unwieldy armies encountered an unexpectedly strenuous resistance as they attempted to debouch from the Balkan passes, the Turks were at last beaten and the way cleared to Constantinople. This roused feeling in England to fever-pitch. The name of the Japanese goddess, Jingo, was somewhat incongruously imported into our language in a song which asserted that we had fought the bear a thousand times before—when and where were not specified—and that "they" should not have Constantinople. Another song, about this time, was to the effect that "they" should not wipe their nose on the flag. This sort of thing had been heard before the Crimean war, but the Premier was now a cooler if a less scrupulous hand than Aberdeen. One of Tenniel's cartoons represented him as a guide, leading Britannia to the edge of an abyss, and balancing himself on his toes, with his heels over, imploring her to come a step nearer. But his balance was sure, and he knew to an inch how far he could go without losing his footing.

It was a thrilling and tense time, when war with Russia, a war conceived and planned on the grandest scale, seemed inevitable, when the fleet was brought up to cover Constantinople, when a force of Indian troops was landed in Malta—and all because the Russians had imposed upon the Turks a treaty which created a Bulgaria stretching from the Black Sea to the Ægean, a strong Christian state in which English opinion foresaw a vassal of Russia. A time was to come when England would have given much had this foreboding of Bulgaria's subservience to Russia been justified.

Russia, secretly furious at England's attitude, but unwilling to proceed to extremities, stayed her hand and agreed to a Conference. A bigger game was on hand, had anyone except Bismarck realized it, than the comparatively petty question of whether a few wretched Christians could or could not be forced back under the Turkish yoke. For the alliance of the three Emperors, which was nothing less than the old Holy Alliance brought up to date, had developed a fatal rift. Austria had her ambitions and still more her fears in the Balkans, and she dreaded above all things the rise of Russia's special protegé, Servia. Hapsburg and Romanoff were jostling one another in the South Eastern gate of Europe, where their ambitions fatally overlapped. The spectacle, to the far-seeing eyes of Bismarck, was

infinitely disquieting. If Europe believed in Germany's invincibility, he was under no such illusion. He had realized, too late, his mistake in neither conciliating nor annihilating France. The indemnity had proved a mere bagatelle and a severe blow to German commerce. His first thought had been to remobilize, with or without excuse, the armies of Moltke, and finish the business once and for all in the true spirit of Clausewitz. This desperate plot was frustrated by the joint influence of the Tsar and—to her everlasting honour—Queen Victoria.

Henceforth the Chancellor was, for all his terrible seeming, in a state of mortal fear for the Empire he had founded in blood and iron, and the dynasty whose fortunes he had raised to such a towering height. He knew—none better—that France would never forget, that France was recovering, and that when the day of reckoning came she would see to it that she did not stand alone. He had therefore, from his own point of view, done the best thing possible in uniting the three great reactionary powers of the Holy Alliance in what he hoped would be an abiding union. So long as that held, all was safe. But, like the original authors of the Holy Alliance, he had reckoned without the Balkans.

When, therefore, Beaconsfield, accompanied by his foreign secretary, Lord Salisbury, came to Berlin, his contention with Russia, upon which all the limelight was turned, must have seemed a matter of minor importance to Bismarck, as compared with the question whether, in the last resort, Germany was to sacrifice her Russian or her Austrian alliance. On the whole, Bismarck inclined towards Austria. A Franco-Austrian alliance was no new thing, but, judiciously handled, Austria might so be drawn into the German orbit as to become practically a vassal state. Of a choice of evils, the best was to hold fast to Austria and to lose as little of Russian friendship as possible. Now Austria was more vitally concerned than England to keep Russia at a distance from Constantinople, and to prevent the formation of a greater and presumably pro-Russian Bulgaria. Accordingly the weight of German influence was thrown, reluctantly but decisively, into the scales against Russia.

Bismarck, and neither Beaconsfield nor his Russian opponent, Gortschakoff, was thus the dominating figure at the Berlin Congress. The English Premier, however, had the opportunity in figuring in the splendid role for which his temperament and ambitions had cast him. There was talk of his quitting the conference and letting the sword decide if he did not get his way. As his way happened to be

that chosen by Bismarck, get it he eventually did. For that master of *Realpolitik* had other ends in view than the advancement of his Hapsburg client. The supreme object of his policy was now to prevent a combination of European powers against Germany, and therefore to divert their interests into harmless channels, or to set them at each others' throats. With Austria the most obvious policy was to set her face towards the Aegean and her back to Germany. England and Russia might, with judicious management, be made to keep each other busy. It would, at any rate, be far better if Russia's resentment at her rebuff could be directed against England. Accordingly Bismarck was only too happy to let "that old Jew", as he called him, achieve a triumph not for English but for Austro-German interests, and happier still to have created a tension between England and Russia that for a whole generation maintained a pleasing state of Anglophobia on one side and Russophobia on the other, and might, with any luck, have involved France's two chief potential allies in a ruinous and suicidal war.

Disraeli returned home in a blaze of triumph. He had secured "peace with honour". Russia had given way so far as to break her Greater Bulgaria into three parts. Of these, the Macedonians were handed over to the tender mercies of the Turk, and the Southern portion of Bulgaria was—and it was on this question that Disraeli had nearly broken up the conference—formed into a separate vassal state of Turkey under the title of Eastern Rumelia. In a few years, this precious arrangement was terminated by the inhabitants themselves, who meant to belong to Christian Bulgaria, and did so. Meanwhile Russia compensated herself by filching from her allies, the Roumanians, the tract of Bessarabia that we had made her give up after the Crimean War, and thus creating a grievance which, when the Great War came, seriously compromised our situation in the Balkans and might easily have brought in Roumania on the side of the Central Powers. Self-compensation was a game that we also could play, to the extent of filching Cyprus from its sovereign, Turkey, and its natural guardian, Greece. It was a trumpery enough picking. Among other points scored by Beaconsfield was an undertaking by Russia not to fortify the port of Batoum. Needless to say, the power that had recently swallowed the camel of Sevastopol and the Black Sea Fleet, did not strain for very long at this gnat. Furthermore, the clumsy attempts of Russia to assert the Balkan hegemony that Beaconsfield had so much feared, merely served to show the truth of Gladstone's contention that the best safeguard against

tyranny lies in the breasts of free men. These intensely self-conscious and truculent nationalities soon showed themselves little more willing to be dictated to by the Tsar than by the Sultan.

What Beaconsfield did at Berlin will probably redound less to his credit in the long run than what he refrained from doing. For to embroil England, or any other power, with France, was even more important for Bismarck than to provide enemies for Russia. The value of the Suez Canal to England and the significance of her Premier's coup in buying up the Khedive's shares had not been lost on him, and he was well aware that France regarded Egypt as a special preserve of her own. It is not, then, very difficult to understand his motive in going out of his way to inform Beaconsfield with what benevolent interest Germany would watch any extension of British power or influence in that direction. It was the very bait that might have been considered most attractive to such a nature as Beaconsfield's—a Liberal historian writing more than twenty years afterwards thought him merely inept in refusing it—but here, at any rate, the wily old statesman was not to be caught napping. He would have nothing to do with any Egyptian adventure.

Had Beaconsfield chosen to go to the country on the strength of " peace with honour ", there can be little doubt that his government would have been returned to power by an overwhelming majority. But there would have been no honest excuse for such a stroke of political *finesse*, and the country was soon to exchange the sweets for the bitterness of a forward policy. In these dismal years of depressed trade, and bad harvests it would have been hard for any government to have stopped in office with unimpaired prestige, and the Tory policy was now beginning to produce a crop of petty and inglorious troubles. In South Africa, where they had already blundered sufficiently, they could do nothing quite right. They had been persuaded by that Afrikander Machiavelli, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, into reversing the Liberal policy of the Sand River Convention[1] by annexing the Transvaal Republic, anarchic and debt-laden as it had become, to the Crown, a step which, though it was no doubt for their material advantage, was profoundly distasteful to the freedom-loving burghers, and which was made still more unpopular by tactless administration.

On the top of this came a Kaffir War, and afterwards a more serious struggle with the Zulus, in which of course we were victorious in the long run, but only after much blundering and one humiliating

[1] By which, in 1852, Britain had renounced sovereignty over the Transvaal.

reverse, the consequences of which might have proved disastrous for Natal. The government were fortunate at this time in having as High Commissioner Sir Bartle Frere, who had distinguished himself by conspicuous ability among the many able Indian civilians trained up in John Company's service. But they showed, in their treatment of him, a spirit more worthy of their leader's notorious creations, Taper and Tadpole, than of men fit to sway the rod of Empire. Though they were too much dependent on Frere's services to dispense with them outright, they were not above attempting to saddle him with the blame for a state of affairs that was fast beginning to involve them in unpopularity. They treated him with studied discourtesy, superseded him in his post of High Commissioner while leaving him his governorship of the Cape, and even refused his request to vindicate him, tongue-tied as he was by his official position, against an outrageous slander launched at him by Gladstone in the course of one of the Midlothian speeches. All this treatment Frere bore with the patient dignity of one conscious of his own integrity. But the spirit, neither liberal nor imperial, in which the politicians at home misjudged the problem of South African politics—which was fast becoming the supreme test of imperial statesmanship—must inevitably produce its harvest of misadventure.

It was on the Indian frontier that the nemesis of Beaconsfield's anti-Russian policy overtook him. Foiled and humiliated in what she regarded as a crusade, Russia began to push ahead, with maliceful energy, her South Eastern expansion, which brought her ever closer to the Himalayan barrier. It was the dream of her greatest soldier, Skoboleff, to plant her standards on the fort at Delhi. Under these circumstances the buffer state of Afghanistan became of decisive importance, and there the situation was most disquieting, for not only was Kabul honeycombed with Russian intrigue and her bazaars overflowing with Russian goods, but the Amir himself was secretly a tool in Muscovite hands. Our viceroy at this time was Lord Lytton, an imperialist statesman of the new school, and an exponent of the forward policy in its most uncompromising form. Such a man was no more capable than Beaconsfield himself of appreciating that the best safeguard against Russian aggression lay in a free and jealously independent Afghanistan.

The situation was no doubt one of extreme difficulty, and it is hard to see how, in face of the Amir's intrigues and insults, we could have avoided striking, as we did, with the full force of our military power, to restore the situation. We were brilliantly

successful, chasing the Amir from his kingdom and occupying his capital. Now, however, the forward policy led us into disaster. We insisted on taking Afghan foreign policy into our own control, and on sending a British mission to Kabul. Old Lord Lawrence, who probably knew more about India than any other man, sought to approach the Premier with a view to protesting against what anyone, who remembered what had happened in 1841, must have known to be madness, but, with a strange discourtesy, he was not even received. "They will all be murdered," was his mournful comment—and so it came to pass.

This, of course, meant another Afghan War, longer and more bloody than the last, and in the course of which a small British and Indian army, based on Kandahar, was half destroyed at Maiwand. Visions floated through Lytton's mind of the permanent occupation of Kandahar, the ancient gate of India, and the disintegration of Afghanistan. But before the monotonous and expensive triumph of civilized over barbarian arms could be finally consummated, the Tory government, which had plunged deeper and deeper into unpopularity and discredit, had fallen from power. The country was not yet ripe for a full-blooded imperialism. Gladstone, now at the height of his oratorical powers, was swaying vast audiences with an impassioned appeal to turn from the unrighteous and uneconomic courses of the last few years to the principles of middle-class Liberalism. These principles he summarized as—

1. Economy and just legislation at home.
2. Peace abroad.
3. To maintain the concert of Europe.
4. To avoid needless and entangling engagements.
5. To acknowledge the equal rights of all nations.
6. Sympathy with freedom everywhere.

His triumph was as astonishing and complete as that of his opponent five years before. His majority at the polls was overwhelming, and though *Realpolitik* was triumphing everywhere abroad over the old Liberal idealism, the latter was, to all outward appearance, stronger than ever in England.

4

The Morrow of Midlothian

When Gladstone committed himself to that flight of rhetoric about social forces moving onwards in their might and majesty, he little knew in how ironical a sense the fates had destined him to

give proof of his own doctrine. For a new social force was gathering strength against which the thunders of Midlothian might peal in vain. Even Beaconsfield's cynicism might have shrunk from predicting that within three years of taking office the government of idealism and international morality would have goaded one freedom-loving people into rebellion, would have crushed into the dust an army of patriots, fighting against tyranny, would fain have employed, if that had been possible, the unspeakable Turk on this congenial task, and would have embittered our relations with Europe and launched us on a policy of armament and expansion by planting our foot firmly on that very Nile Valley with whose lure Bismarck had striven, and striven in vain, to tempt Beaconsfield! There are times when even the least imaginative historian finds it hard to resist the belief that there are ideas abroad, which exercise a hypnotic effect over men and lead even the wisest whither they would not.

The failure of Gladstone to guide England into the ways of peace and righteousness is no condemnation of the Midlothian speeches, unbalanced and unjust as parts of those speeches no doubt were. Had he dared to live up to them, had he handed over, promptly and generously, Cyprus to the Greeks and the Transvaal to the Boers, had he insisted upon allowing Egypt to work out her own salvation without the assistance of British shells and bayonets, how much better would it have proved for England and the world at large!

The atmosphere of Downing Street is one in which ideals have little chance to thrive. Things may be said which, as every permanent official knows, are not done, and ministers are more dependent on their permanent staff than the world realizes. Gladstone's principal colleagues in the Cabinet were anything but idealists. The two chief of them, the men who had led the party during Gladstone's temporary retirement, were the ponderous-witted and utterly unimaginative Lord Hartington, and Lord Granville, the Foreign Minister, a polite and indolent Whig magnate, with no particular faith in anything except the capacity of most affairs to right themselves if they were only left alone sufficiently.

If there was one thing to which Gladstone was more plainly committed than another it was to reverse what he himself had denounced as the insane and dishonourable annexation of the Transvaal, in defiance of the wishes of practically the whole of its Boer population. Certainly the Boers themselves, to whom Gladstone's

prenouncements were perfectly well known, imagined that he would honour words of such unmeasured emphasis upon coming into office. But, to their amazed indignation, nothing whatever was done, and the government made it plain that what England held, England would hold, by force of arms if necessary. Of course, all sorts of official reasons were found for this apparently brazen repudiation. There was doubtless some vague idea of a South African confederation, though Gladstone himself recognized that the total failure of the Cape Parliament to move had put this wholly out of view "for a time quite indefinite and almost certainly considerable." And not only did the Liberal Government refuse to give the Boers their independence, but they neglected even to provide them with a free constitution within the Empire, and left them at the mercy of a stupid and tactless military governor.

This was too much for the Boers. They proclaimed a republic, surrounded the few British garrisons, and shot to pieces a handful of British troops who tried to drive them from the Natal border. The government, who saw themselves threatened with a Dutch rising throughout the whole of South Africa, were convinced, by this leaden argument, that the time had come to honour their own principles, but before the Boers had had time to reply to their overtures, the general on the spot made a desperate effort to retrieve his reputation by occupying a certain Majuba Hill which commanded the Boer position. Unfortunately he neglected to command the slope over which the Boers might advance to attack him, and, in fact, allowed them to accomplish one of the most remarkable military feats in history, for they stormed the crest, killed the general, and drove what remained of his force in panic-stricken rout from the hill with a loss to themselves of only one man.

Gladstone had at least the sense and magnanimity not to listen to the cries for vengeance upon this perfectly legitimate act of self-defence. He decided to cut our losses, and dictated a peace to the Boers which granted them independence under British suzerainty, whatever that might mean. Three years later his government consented still further to modify these terms. It was not to be wondered at that the Boers, flushed with the splendid success of their little war of independence, should have imagined themselves more than a match for any force that the British Empire could bring to bear against them, either now or in the future. Could they, however, have remained the simple, pastoral community they were in 1881, no harm might have been done, and time might have wiped

Majuba gradually from the slate. But beneath the soil of the Transvaal lay hidden a wealth of precious stones and metals which must inevitably, sooner or later, attract a huge British population. Sir Garnet Wolseley, the hero of so many little wars, had plainly foreseen this and warned Beaconsfield's government, but an exact knowledge of economic geography was no part of the old diplomatic training. Amply sufficient for Gladstone's ministry was the evil of 1881.

This affair of the Transvaal was, for the nonce at any rate, far removed from the main stream of international politics. The grey eyes of Bismarck were not, as yet, fixed with any intensity upon South Africa, and it was Bismarck who called the tune to which the rest of Europe danced. To compensate, in some measure, for his failure to maintain the triple league of Emperors, he had thrust Austria into the Serb provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus diverting all her attention to her expansion South Eastwards *away* from Germany. He had set England and Russia by the ears for a generation. Finally, he had lured on France herself to an adventure as rash as it was wicked. He dangled before her, with a benevolence worthy of the snake in Eden, the bait of Tunis.

France had, as early as 1830, begun to carve out for herself a dominion in North Africa, and she had at least the excuse that she was finally stamping out the cruel piracy that had terrorized the Mediterranean for centuries. For the seizure of Tunis she had no shadow of an excuse, it was a sheer act of brigandage only to be justified by the immoral principles of *Realpolitik* which had now definitely put out of date the old Liberal idealism. Even from the new standpoint the crime was a blunder. France was playing against a supreme master of the game, and playing, not for the first time, straight into his hands. For Italy had also had her eyes upon this Naboth's vineyard so close to her door, and such was her estrangement from her Latin sister that Bismarck was able to draw her into alliance not only with Germany but also with Austria, lately her hated oppressor and still the mistress of " Unredeemed Italy ".

Bismarck had accomplished a masterstroke of finesse in his game of isolating France, but even he did not understand with what smouldering fire he was playing. No practical statesman, at this time, attached much importance to the great Islamic brotherhood which had been the terror of Europe until John Sobieski had called halt to the Turkish advance beneath the walls of Vienna. Since that crowning mercy, not European arms but European machinery had

put the East more and more at the mercy of the West. There had been no Industrial Revolution East of Suez. India and Algeria had already furnished examples of the conquest and exploitation of industrially backward peoples; China had shown how a peaceful community could be exploited without even the formality of conquest. What was to hinder similar methods being applied to Syria, to Mesopotamia, to Central Asia, to the remains of the Turkish Empire in North Africa, to the vast uncharted lands in the centre of that Continent? What, indeed, except such obsolete precepts as those forbidding men to murder, to steal and to covet? Such bogeys had little enough chance of sustaining the dry light of *Realpolitik*.

And yet a very farsighted observer might have found another reason. What if the slumber of the East were to be broken? What if she were some day to recover the terrible strength of old days, and snapping her chains, to drive these dogs from her doors? In the heyday of European Liberalism even Turkey had showed signs of responsiveness to Western ideas, and in 1876 the strange and ephemeral spectacle was witnessed of a Liberal constitution for her whole Empire. In Tunis there had been faint stirrings of Liberalism, and in India there had been Ram Mohun Rai and Keshab Chandra Sen. But theirs was essentially a doctrine of free co-operation, as befitted the time, and not of conquest.

None the less the East was beginning to awaken to the danger that threatened it. Islam was anything but a spent force, and had, in fact, been actively and successfully proselytizing throughout the nineteenth century. A fiery prophet, one Djemal-ed-Din, an Afghan, who had travelled widely and acquired enormous influence with his co-religionists, gave voice to a creed that had little in common with Liberalism. He proclaimed, not without some plausibility, that Christians, however much they might differ among themselves, were at least united in the determination to destroy all Moslem states and to suppress every attempted reform or revival on the part of Mussulmans. There was nothing for it but to unite against this common enemy, to acquire his science and fight him with his own weapons.[1] A like spirit was already beginning to breathe new life into another warrior community in the islands of the furthest East.

Simple prophets, like Djemal, might divine the spirit but were hardly capable of understanding the latest and deadliest method of Western exploitation, nor the urge which was driving the white man to grow rich at the expense of his coloured relation. The

[1] See *The New World of Islam* by Lothrop Stoddard, pp. 53 and 54.

Industrial Revolution had resulted in the creation of ever-increasing quantities of surplus wealth, or capital, and it had become a fundamental article of Western belief, that wealth was not meant to be hoarded but put out to usury. He that hath, to him shall be given, and the faster capital accumulated the more persistently it clamoured for employment. But the market value of capital, like that of everything else, is fixed by demand and supply, and industrial progress sooner or later tends to accumulate wealth even faster than it can profitably reabsorb it. Capital becomes a drug on the market, and the rate of interest goes down. The small investor, with a hundred pounds to spare, finds that a cotton mill or a railway company is only prepared to offer him a beggarly 3 or 4 per cent. for the use of his wealth. And the investor feels himself aggrieved, because, quite a short time ago, money was fetching considerably more than this—the difference may conceivably be to him that between comfort and penury. It is irrelevant to point out that perhaps a majority of his own countrymen are pinched for lack of food and brutalized for lack of the houses and comforts that capital could supply. There may be demand for these things, but it is not what the economist calls an effective demand, a demand backed by money. The poor man will die before he can offer 5 per cent., and until the State can either borrow or steal on his behalf, the poor man, the less-than-5-per-cent. man, is out of the reckoning.

The investor seems hard put to it, so long as he has to go about banking his little all among his fellow Christians. But the resources of civilization are not exhausted. It seems almost too good to be true that a coloured potentate has been discovered who will offer ten, fifteen, twenty, even thirty per cent to the officer's widow or retired tradesman for the use of their money, and pledge thereto the resources of his subjects. But then, these timid people may reflect, extravagant interest means desperate risk, and it is more than probable that so extravagant a borrower may render neither principal nor interest, and so leave them to the workhouse. "Not so," replies civilization, "no matter how heavy the interest, pay he shall, and his heirs and subjects after him, to the uttermost farthing, even if we have to possess ourselves of his land and administer his finances and bleed his peasantry and blow any opposition to pieces with our constantly improving weapons. Can you doubt our strength to do it?" And the countenance of the timid investor lightens, and joyfully he or she shoulders the white man's burden. Only, in real life, the matter is stated with not quite so much directness. Just as

we employ the butcher to kill our mutton and pork out of sight, so we use the international financier to oil the wheels of our investing machinery. And yet *Punch*, still the mouthpiece of a Philistine but not illiberal middle-class opinion, could depict respectable British shareholders as being ready to enslave other countries, or even to sell their own for the sake of dividends.[1]

5

The Winning of Egypt

Ismail Pasha, who in 1863 became Khedive of Egypt under the nominal suzerainty of the Porte, was a potentate of the kind just described. He was, in fact, one of that pernicious class of Orientals who discard all that is best in their own civilization in order to adopt what is worst in that of the West. He had ideas, of a sort, for the development of his country and its resources, but his main object was to enjoy all the sweets of a magnificent despotism and to be on terms of familiarity with the sovereigns of Europe. What rapture for him to have entertained, at prodigious cost, Napoleon III and his beautiful consort for the opening of the Suez Canal!

Unfortunately the sweets of despotism are not to be purchased for nothing, and Ismail's subjects were miserably poor. Certainly he was ready to employ all the resources of tyranny to extract the utmost piastre, but one cannot get blood out of a stone, and the proceeds of the utmost taxation were insufficient to pay such a way as Ismail Pasha's. To his other expenses were added those of an expansionist military policy to the Southward, and lavish bribes at Constantinople to regularize his status as an independent sovereign. But Ismail had found a way in which wealth could be acquired in practically unlimited quantities, by the mere signature of his name on a piece of paper. Obliging contractors were at hand to finance and work his schemes; the House of Rothschild was very much at his service. There was nothing of the skinflint about Ismail: he allowed Europeans and Semites to charge him rates of usury that out-shylocked Shylock and attained ever more staggering figures as he plunged deeper and deeper into the mire. Under these circumstances, Egyptian bonds became a most attractive investment, and feathered the nest of many a kindly soul who had never heard of Ismail nor dreamed of the blood and tears which their payment forced out of the wretched peasantry of the Nile Delta.

The inevitable crash came. The peasants were taxed till they

[1] See especially two articles on the same page, dated February 18, 1882.

could be taxed no more; the revenue of the Crown lands was poured into a bottomless gulf of bankruptcy; the utmost resources of Ismail were insufficient to meet the interest on his debts. To an unsophisticated observer it might have seemed as if the obvious thing to do would have been to leave the usurers and bondholders to the consequences of their extremely questionable adventure, and Egypt to the shattering of credit which is the sequel of national bankruptcy. Had Egypt been capable of defending herself, reasons would perhaps have been advanced for this line of procedure; as it was, there was nothing to check the outraged honesty of the two powers concerned in the financing of Ismail, and upon whose policy such great financial interests as that of the Rothschilds exercised an incalculable but palpable magnetism. France and England accordingly agreed to set up a joint control of Egyptian finance, importing for the purpose an army of European officials for whom Egypt had to provide. It was decided that the bondholders should have the uttermost farthing of their bond, and that even a scaling down of the rate of interest would be quite unthinkable. The wretched Ismail, having served his purpose, was quietly got rid of, and allowed to retire with a princely fortune that nobody dreamed of impounding. But the peasants of the Nile Delta remained, to be squeezed for the debts of their departed tyrant, no longer with haphazard brutality, but with the scientific efficiency of Western administration.

This—from the bondholder's standpoint—eminently desirable state of things, was destined to receive a rude shock. Among the economies pressed upon the new, puppet Khedive, was that of cutting down the army, and incidentally of dismissing without their pay a number of officers, for whose interests the Control evinced somewhat less moral sensitiveness than for those of the bondholders. This had the effect of precipitating a military revolt, under the leadership of a colonel of fellahin origin, called Arabi. This remarkable man succeeded in placing himself at the head of a geniune national movement, directed not at the Control, but at the Turkish clique that surrounded the Khedive, men who despised and misgoverned the Egyptians and were answerable for most of the evils that had fallen upon them. The watchword of the new movement, which by the admission of no less an authority than Lord Cromer was a genuine revolt against misgovernment, and not necessarily anti-European, was " Egypt for the Egyptians ", and its object was to create a free, self-governing state in the valley of the Nile. An assembly of Notables accordingly began to draft a constitution.

It might have been thought that Gladstone, who had seen even in Cetewayo's murderous impis an oppressed people rightly struggling to be free, would have hailed this new-born Liberalism in Egypt with feelings of unqualified sympathy. But Gladstone's mind was a mass of prejudices, one of the strongest of these being directed against Mahommedans. In consequence he was inclined to accept for gospel the opinions of the two chief Englishmen on the spot, the consul-general, Sir Edward Malet, whose sympathies, if they existed, were well bound up in diplomatic red-tape, and Sir Auckland Colvin, a thoroughly able administrator, trained up in the strictest traditions of Anglo-Indian bureaucracy, and anxious to apply the same British panacea to the sick man of the Nile. Both of these men saw in Arabi's revolt merely the conspiracy of a fanatical clique to establish a military tyranny and make chaos worse confounded. There is little doubt that they were both honestly convinced that the only thing to be done was to smash up Arabi and procure British armed intervention, if not annexation.

Gladstone was only too willing to be convinced that the patriot leader was nothing but a vulgar conspirator. The harshest possible view was taken of the efforts that were being made to draft a free constitution. The nationalist leaders were quite ready to concede to the European Control the administration of that part of the budget which was allotted to the payment of the debt, but what was left over they asked to have in their own hands. Even this was regarded as an intolerable presumption on their part. And early in 1882 Lord Granville, either wittingly or through sheer incompetence to realize to what he was committing himself, put his signature to a joint dispatch, drafted by the French premier Gambetta, in which England and France plainly expressed their determination to uphold the existing order of things, the very Khedival and Turkish administration of which Arabi and his nationalists aspired to disburden their country. This note was not unnaturally taken as a declaration of war on Egyptian freedom.

But the British government were not yet disposed to back the policy of the joint note by force of British arms. Gladstone was actually coquetting with the idea of introducing the very Turkish soldiers at whose recent atrocities he had made all England shudder, to stamp out the first tender flames of Egyptian liberty. This, however, was a conspiracy in which his prospective confederate, Sultan Abdul Hamid, was too wily or too timid to join him. By way of striking terror into the nationalists, a British and French squadron

anchored off Alexandria. Anti-foreign feeling rose to such a pitch that the mob of Alexandria, not without the connivance of the Khedive's police, massacred a number of foreigners, mostly Greeks and Maltese, and were only put down by Arabi's troops. Not long afterwards the British admiral on the spot, who found that Arabi was putting up batteries for the defence of the town, summoned him not only to desist but to surrender some of the fortifications, and on his merely offering to withdraw the guns, promptly opened a bombardment by which the Egyptians, who stood up pluckily but hopelessly to their guns, were driven off with the loss of about 1,000 men. As might have been foreseen, in the confusion and anger of the evacuation, the town was set on fire and looted. The French fleet, which refused to have part or lot in these proceedings, steamed away to Port Said, and John Bright resigned his office in the government in horror at what appeared to him as a breach of moral and international law.

But the government had not done with Arabi. He had retired from Alexandria, but his army was still in being, and might threaten the Suez Canal.[1] It is true that Arabi offered his alliance to Gladstone, but this was not taken seriously. So it was decided to smash him once and for all. In this venture the French were invited to co-operate. But Gambetta had fallen from power, and his successor, De Freycinet, had grasped just that fraction of the essential truth that may be worse than ignorance. He realized that behind all these events, and controlling them in his own interests, was the sinister personality of Bismarck. He realized that the supreme object of the Chancellor's Machiavellian benevolence was in some way to weaken France, but he thought that the trap consisted in the locking up of French troops in Egypt. And so, without in the least realizing what he was about, he did the very thing that Bismarck intended, and rendered inevitable a quarrel between France and England which was to keep these two natural allies angrily glaring at each other for the next twenty years, and might at any moment have flamed into actual war. France refused to join in the attack on Arabi and left England to go on alone with the occupation of Egypt. But if she could not join she could still less forgive her. Egypt had been regarded almost as a French sphere of influence; French culture and education

[1] In this connection the "Jones" of *Punch*, obviously an old-fashioned Liberal, had been made to say, "Whatever the end may be, it never justified the means. The slavery of Egypt is too high a price to pay to secure the quasi independence of Hindustan." (Feb. 18, 1882.)

had long been prevalent there, and indeed the new interest and research into her past glories dated from Napoleon's expedition, with its staff of *savants*. The seeds of discord that had fallen on stony ground at the Berlin conference were now fairly planted, and Bismarck might look forward, with every confidence, to the harvest.

The inevitable Wolseley was called in to finish Arabi, which he did with all the businesslike precision that at that time made the expression "Sir Garnet" the slang emphatic of "all right". The Egyptians would have stood no chance against the numbers and discipline of their assailants, even if treachery had not been at work; taken by surprise they ran in every direction, those of them who were not cut down in the pursuit dispersed to their homes. Sir Garnet became Lord Wolseley and another threepence was clapped on to the English income tax. Arabi was taken prisoner and Gladstone was strongly inclined towards abandoning him to the Khedive to be done to death, on which Morley's comment is worth quoting, "It is a great mistake to suppose that Mr. Gladstone was all leniency, or that when he thought ill of men, he stayed either at palliating words or at half-measures." Arabi's sentence was, however, ultimately commuted to honourable banishment to Ceylon.

Whatever may, or may not, have been the ultimate designs of Colvin and Malet, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of ministerial professions that no permanent occupation of Egypt was intended. No doubt they had hoped to make the country safe for investors, and then retire. Why they had ever gone in it is difficult even now to understand, and the only explanation that at all covers the facts is that the hidden financial interests, that were more and more beginning to determine the course of international politics, were not without their influence. However, having smashed up the only power in Egypt capable of working out her salvation from within and laid the country at her feet, it was less easy for England to get out than it had been for her to get in. An obvious responsibility devolved upon her of bringing order out of chaos, and this would take time. And Sir Garnet's march across the desert had stirred up fires more dangerous than those of Egyptian patriotism.

The great world of Islam was moved to its depths, and such teaching as that of Djemal-ed-Din had received terrible confirmation. Central Asia had gone, and Algeria, and Tunis, and India—and now Egypt. A Pan-Islamic movement was beginning to gather momentum, an uncompromising, unrelenting unison against the infidel, which had nothing in common with poor Arabi's Liberalism. The Sultan Abdul

Hamid, to whom any form of nationalism, even among his own people, was anathema, took very seriously his office of Commander of the Faithful, and made Constantinople a centre of Pan-Islamic propaganda. There was the mysterious Senussi, who was spreading the religion of the Prophet further and further into the heart of Africa from his inaccessible fastness in the Libyan desert. Local prophets and Mahdis were constantly arising, and attracting more and more followers.

The troubles of Egypt had not been without their repercussions on the vast Soudanese hinterland over which a few governors in the service of the Khedive had exercised an uneasy sway. There was no particular reason why the warlike tribes inhabiting this region should submit to a sway from which they derived no good and which had no effective force to back it. It only needed the appearance of a Mahdi to unite them in overwhelming revolt against a country that could neither defend itself nor pay its own way. An Egyptian army, dispatched by the Khedive's pashas, under a retired English colonel called Hicks, was too frightened at the onrush of the Mahdi's wild dervishes even to run away.

Here was a nice dilemma for the government! They had, at any rate temporarily, assumed the control of affairs in Egypt, and it was impossible for them to remain passive spectators of a catastrophe which threatened to deprive her of those upper waters of the Nile the control of which was, even in the time of the Pharaohs, considered necessary to her welfare. On the other hand neither Gladstone nor the bondholders had anything to gain by committing England to a far more bloody and expensive war than Sir Garnet's ball-cartridge parade of Tel-el-Kebir. The ministerial instinct, displayed already in the Transvaal and Lower Egypt, was to postpone the taking of a vital decision one way or the other, in the hope that the course of events would, after all, relieve them of the necessity.

What they did was to send out, as Governor-General of the Sudan, one of the last and certainly the most remarkable of those evangelical officers who flourished during the Queen's reign. This was General Gordon, "Chinese Gordon," as he had been styled from his success in suppressing a rebellion against the Manchu Dynasty. Gordon, a man of extraordinary intuitive genius, but perfectly incapable of acting a subordinate part to less single-hearted or imaginative men, was commissioned first to report on and then to arrange for the evacuation of the Sudan. The plan that had appeared to him to offer the best hope of success, the handing over of the

province to a certain Zobeir Pasha, a notorious slave-trader, was rejected by the Cabinet on party grounds, although it had the backing of Sir Evelyn Baring, our Agent General at Cairo. Confronted with a hopeless task, Gordon went up the Nile to Khartoum, and was soon wiring proposals, not for evacuation, but for smashing the Mahdi by British aid. His own course was clear. He had been greeted in Khartoum as a saviour, and as a man of honour he could not abandon people who trusted him. He declared that, orders or no orders, he would not leave the Sudan until everybody who wanted to go down had had the chance to do so, that he would stay and fall with the town and run all risks.

It now became a question of whether or not Gordon was to be left to his fate. Public opinion, headed by the Queen, demanded the rescue of the "Christian hero".[1] But Gladstone was obstinately determined not to invoke the slaughter of thousands in order to rescue one mutinous subordinate whom he suspected of trying to force his hand. The Cabinet was divided on the subject, with the result that an expedition was, at long last, resolved upon, which, after desperate and bloody fighting, failed to rescue Khartoum or Gordon, and succeeded merely in striking a blow in the air. Gladstone was at least able to stand firm against the subsequent demand for avenging Gordon, and for the next ten years British efforts were limited to safeguarding Egypt against the danger of a Mahdist advance northwards. But we were now more deeply than ever committed to the occupation of Egypt. Meanwhile the Sudan was left to the tyranny of the Mahdi, a tyranny so awful as to reduce, by slaughter, famine and disease, a population estimated at 8½ millions to something less than 2.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, the new British imperialism was at last showing itself at its best. Our representative there was Sir Evelyn Baring, a man whose unemotional demeanour had infuriated Gordon, and whose autocratic ways had not tended to his popularity. And yet, behind his reserve, there was an intense if disciplined enthusiasm: he was a bureaucrat, but that best type of bureaucrat who is possessed with a passion for good government. In the Carlylese sense, this silent and indefatigable worker might have qualified for the Book of Heroes. But, like Carlyle, he had little use or enthusiasm for

[1] A drunkard, insinuates Mr. Strachey, on the ground that Gordon once snubbed an agitated and importunate staff officer, whose duty it was, as commander of the camp, to provide for its defence, instead of bursting, against orders, into the Governor's tent. There happened to be a bottle, alleged to contain brandy, on Gordon's table and—Gordon is dead.

liberty, particularly where Oriental races were concerned. "The first thought," he said, almost in the words of Cromwell, "must be what is good for them, but not necessarily what they think is good for them."

With such ideals, and infinite patience, he set himself to the task of cleansing the Augean stable of Egyptian administration. It was a task of appalling difficulty. In form, at any rate, the Sultan's representative, the Khedive, still ruled the country, and all that Baring could do was to offer him advice, though the presence of an occupying army was a sufficiently strong argument against overtly flouting it. But even the Khedive's sovereignty was by no means absolute. The Bank of the Debt absorbed about half the revenue, the numerous foreign consulates could hold up legislation and impede the course of justice, and France, furious at our promise to evacuate the country never being fulfilled, pulled with the whole of her not inconsiderable weight to make our task impossible.

But Baring was not for a moment discouraged. Without chafing at his limitations, he patiently set to work, conquering one difficulty after another. Economy was his first need, and he saw that, until she was much stronger, it was necessary for Egypt to cut her losses in the Sudan and leave that unhappy province to stew in its own juice. But as practically the whole of the revenue came from the peasantry of the Delta, no penny-wise considerations must be allowed to interfere with a bold and scientific policy of irrigation. Having laid these two cornerstones of his policy, Baring went on, with the help of a few able Englishmen, to put the finances in order, to reduce the debt by a successful conversion, to create an army capable of standing up to the dervishes, to reform every branch of the administration, to lighten the burdens of the peasantry, practically to abolish forced labour, to purify and humanize the administration of justice, and to bring to the valley of the Lower Nile an abundance and prosperity such as it had not known for centuries. What proportion of this went to benefit the peasants, and how much was diverted into their own pockets by the financiers and big landlords, is a matter open to debate, but that all benefited to an appreciable extent there can be no doubt whatever.

Sir Evelyn Baring, or, to give him his more familiar title, Lord Cromer, was faced by a difficulty which was inherent in the very nature of his task, and which no conceivable statesmanship could altogether have removed. He was, in Mahommedan eyes, the representative of an alien and infidel power. Arabi's revolt had proved

that there was such a thing as Egyptian patriotism, but deeper and more powerful was the ancient and militant communion that united all true believers under the Crescent. The Egyptians might accept our gifts, they might acknowledge their excellence and even be thankful for them in a way, but gratitude for benefits, which, in the material sense, bless him that gives equally with him that takes, never did and never could reconcile Egyptians to the fact of their country lying at the proud foot of a conqueror.

Considerations of this kind never greatly disturbed Lord Cromer. He did not contemplate a permanent occupation of Egypt, though he would have postponed our departure until we could hand over our work to a government fit to carry it on. As the scanty education we vouchsafed to the Egyptians was exactly calculated to create a class of obedient understrappers to the Egyptian civil service that, on Lord Cromer's advice, we began to train up from the examinational pick of the English public schools, it is not surprising to find that he did not finally envisage our withdrawal as an event likely to become desirable for quite an indefinitely long period. It would, Lord Cromer opined, probably never be possible to make a Western silk purse out of an Eastern sow's ear.

6

Irish Nationalism and the First Home Rule Bill

For the twenty years following the first visitation of the Black Famine, England might fairly congratulate herself on having got rid of her Irish difficulties. The drain of man-power went steadily on from the unhappy island : the leaders of Young Ireland were dead or in exile ; the romantic harp sounded but fitfully. When England was hard put to it in the Crimea and in India, Ireland did not stir a finger to embarrass her. The Catholic hierarchy, headed by Cardinal Cullen, frowned on anything of a revolutionary nature. The bitter hatred of England was not quenched, but it was driven beneath the surface. Meanwhile the process of eviction went on unchecked. An Encumbered Estates' Act, which was the best the English government could do towards solving the land difficulty, merely made it easy for creditors to sell up the estates of a needy landowner, and had the effect of replacing many of the old owners by speculators, who valued the land for what it would fetch, and rack-rented without mercy.

In Parliament, the Irish representatives were never so ineffectual. And yet even as early as 1852, a golden opportunity came their way. The parties were very narrowly divided, so narrowly that the Irish vote sufficed to turn out the Tory government, and had the Whig Peelite Coalition that followed dependent on its support. But now England was able to employ the same insidious means as had enabled her to carry the Union. O'Connell, the chief of whose weaknesses was a tendency to nepotism, had set the example of allowing Irish patriots to accept English places. And now the Irish opposition was practically bought off by the government. The leaders settled down into comfortable appointments and not much more was heard of Ireland and her grievances. One of these leaders, Sadleir, turned out to be a thief and a swindler, and another of them, Keogh—what was far worse in many Irish eyes—became solicitor-general for Ireland and, ultimately, one of the judges who condemned the Fenian prisoners. The Irish vote made little appreciable difference during the fifties and sixties. It was, in fact, fairly evenly divided, and at one election there was actually a Tory majority. These years, so prosperous for England, were for Ireland a time of dull misery, of eviction and depopulation.

The real centre of Irish resistance had, in fact, shifted to the other side of the Atlantic. The Irish emigrants, such of them as survived the horrors of the voyage and the first rigours of transplantation, prospered in a way undreamed of under the English regime. Many of them made money, some fortunes, and during the American Civil War some of the most distinguished commanders on the Northern side were Irishmen. Not for a moment did these men forget the wrongs of their forsaken Motherland nor their hatred of England. In every centre of American population the Irish vote was eagerly courted, and it was bitterly anti-English. Nothing would have pleased the American Irish more than a war between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon people, and it was only by the intervention of the dying Prince Consort—for which, if for nothing else, England owes a debt of profound gratitude to that much-ridiculed man—that such a catastrophe to civilization was averted, over the case of the " Trent " in 1861.

But the leaders of the American Irish trusted to more direct methods. The Young Ireland movement had collapsed miserably in Ireland, but its spirit was not dead, and America afforded an asylum to its leaders from which they could finance rebellion in Ireland and organize against England in perfect safety. One of the

most intransigent of these men, James Stephens, had built up a secret revolutionary association which had its centres dotted all over Ireland, and was prepared, at a given signal, to rise and proclaim the Irish Republic which, Stephens maintained, already virtually existed. The American Civil War brought matters to a head. The Irish, who had played so conspicuous a part in the Northern armies, were burning to employ their victorious arms in the service of their own country. These revolutionaries, both in Ireland and America, called themselves by the name of the Fianna or Fenians, after the old heroes of Irish epic.

The Fenian rebellion missed fire almost as ignominiously as that of Young Ireland. The two attempts made by Irish Americans to invade Canada were easily repulsed. In Ireland it had been hoped to take advantage of the war believed to be impending between England and Prussia over Schleswig-Holstein. When this failed to eventuate, Stephens, who probably saw the hopelessness of the whole business, was compelled by pressure from his followers to make good his promises about rebellion. But the government was fully apprised of the danger and in 1865 had most of the leaders clapped into jail. Stephens, who soon managed to escape, and was suspected, though without proof, of having betrayed the whole plot in advance, suffered the typical fate of an Irish leader by being deposed and branded by his own followers as " a rogue, an imposter and a traitor ".

For another two years the movement continued to simmer, and in 1867 an attempt was made to carry the war into England itself. An attempt to seize Chester Castle failed by the merest chance, and a bomb placed against the wall of Clerkenwell Prison, where some Fenians were confined, killed a number of innocent people. But the most lasting result of Fenianism was to furnish another of those martyrdoms which, whether rightly or wrongly, stir so profoundly the sentiment of Irish patriotism. Two Fenian leaders were rescued from a Manchester prison van by a band of their supporters, and in the course of the rescue a revolver, fired to blow off a lock, killed a constable. Five men were sentenced to death for this affair, of whom three were hanged. On receiving sentence,

> " ' God save Ireland ! ' said they loudly ;
> ' God save Ireland ! ' said they all."

an incident which gave birth to a song whose effect has been likened to that of Lillibullero.

Fenianism was crushed, but not before it had ruffled up the depressed spirits of Irish patriots and—what was only less important

—convinced the most influential of English statesmen that something must at last be done by England to right the wrongs of her sister island. With more candour than prudence, Gladstone acknowledged that the effect of the Clerkenwell bomb had been like that of the bell which warns people that it is time to go to service. His great government of 1868 came into office pledged to disestablish the Protestant Church of Ireland, which it did in the following year. In 1870, Gladstone followed this up by a bill which endeavoured to remedy one of the most crying wrongs of the Irish peasantry by securing to the tenant the value of his improvements. Unfortunately these excellent intentions were largely foiled by the fact that the drafting of the act permitted it to be generally evaded by contracting out.

The combined influence of famine and corruption had postponed the nemesis of the Union for another generation, but the inevitable time was now at hand when Ireland would become conscious of her strength and pass to the offensive. The decline and fall of the Union is, in fact, to be measured with approximate accuracy by the record of election statistics. The democratic franchise of 1867 and the Ballot Act of 1872 could not fail to result eventually in making the Irish membership in the House of Commons representative of the Irish people. And in 1874, out of the 103 Irish members, a solid block of 65 was returned to advocate the cause of Home Rule for Ireland.

Had Disraeli been as far-seeing about the Irish as he was about some other questions, he might have recognized a unique opportunity of establishing his "*imperium et libertas*" on unassailable foundations, by meeting the moderate and statesmanlike proposals of the Irish parliamentary leader, Isaac Butt, an eloquent lawyer who had defended two generations of rebels. Butt was no enemy of England; all he wished was for Ireland to have the control of her own affairs and leave that of imperial matters to Parliament. He was, in fact, an imperial federalist, and there is little doubt that Ireland could even then have been brought into the Empire by a timely act of generosity. But Disraeli, like the rest of English statesmen, was utterly blind to the signs of the times, and to the power that the Act of Union gave to a united Irish party to impose its own terms on Parliament. But he allowed it, in his decorous and gentlemanly way, to bring forward a yearly motion in favour of Home Rule, which both sides of the House, with a decorum and gentility equal to his own, voted down.

The effect of this was to throw the leadership of the Irish movement into the hands of the extremists, whom the Irish Americans took every occasion to encourage and finance. A big, good-natured and far from refined member called Joseph Biggar was the first to discover that if the Irish could not get their business attended to by Parliament, they could at least give tit-for-tat to the British. Much to the disapproval of Butt, a few of the more active Home Rulers began systematically to take such advantage of the singularly elastic rules of the House of Commons as to hold up all business. These rules had been evolved on the assumption that they would be applied in a reasonable and patriotic spirit by an assembly of gentlemen who, whatever their party differences, possessed the goodwill that the honourable traditions of the House should be maintained. These Irish members, who had been forced to Westminster and denied access to College Green, cared nothing for these traditions except to bring them into contempt. And by introducing, as they did, the cult of obstruction into Parliamentary tactics, and by compelling governments to arm themselves with powers of gagging opposition, they permanently severed the continuity of the House of Commons tradition and dealt a fatal bow to the usefulness and prestige of that assembly.

A more formidable leader than Butt had now come to the fore in the shape of Charles Stewart Parnell, American on his mother's side, Anglo-Irish on that of his father, a Protestant landowner. The secret of this man's extraordinary ascendancy over Irishmen is perhaps to be explained by the fact of his being thoroughly un-Irish in everything but his patriotism. He knew and cared nothing about Irish history and Celtic tradition. He had no gift of eloquence and not the faintest spark of humour; he was a frigid and haughty egotist. He was, in the hard and disillusioned age that had set in after 1870, perhaps the most consistent of all practitioners of *Realpolitik*. Compared with him Bismarck himself was emotional and human. As a youth he seems to have cared nothing about Irish aspirations until a police raid, in which his sword was stolen and his sister put to inconvenience, bent all his faculties to a cold hatred of England. He neither desired nor attracted the love of his followers, but the power of his ascendency was irresistible; he saw plainly what winning advantages a solid Home Rule party possessed, and he played them without scruple for all they were worth. Poor, good-hearted Butt strove in vain to oppose this new ascendency; his own people forsook him, he was rewarded for a life of service by being

thrust rudely out from his leadership, and, like O'Connell before him, he died of a broken heart.

But the Irish offensive was not to be confined to the Parliamentary front. The long oppression and misery of the peasantry had engendered a spirit of revenge that knew neither pity nor discrimination. The teachings of Lalor were now beginning to bear fruit, and in 1879 the Land League was founded by Michael Davitt, one of the imprisoned Fenians who was out on ticket of leave. This was the direct successor of Ireland's many secret societies, and worked in open day to wage unsparing warfare, ostensibly by legal means, against the landlords. The most formidable of its weapons was that of the boycott or social ostracism of anyone who incurred its condemnation. But the campaign did not stop short at the officially prescribed methods. In the early eighties every form of outrage was rife throughout the Irish countryside, murder and cruelty in which not even the dumb animals were spared.

The election of 1880 returned 61 Home Rulers, of whom 39 were under Parnell's direct leadership. Gladstone, who was fully alive to the seriousness of the situation, determined to pursue a twofold policy of upholding the authority of government and making a really heroic effort to remedy the chief Irish grievance, that of the land. With this object he threw all his amazing energy into the passage of a Land Bill which conceded what had been known and agitated for as the three F's, fixity of tenure, fair rent, and freedom of sale. Independent tribunals were set up to take the fixing of rents out of the hands of landlords. This was an immense advance, but it was accompanied in the same session by an act that placed Ireland under what amounted to martial law, and the government showed no signs of conceding the demand for a repeal of the Union. The land war, therefore, went on more bitterly than ever, and the Irishmen continued to give all the trouble they could in Parliament.

It was a miserable situation, and there appeared to be no prospect of an end to it. The principal Irish leaders, including Parnell, were shut up in jail, and then released in virtue of an understanding to moderate their "no rent" campaign, which led to outrages that multiplied with every attempt to exert the strong hand Only two days afterwards, Parnell himself was horror-struck at the assassination of the newly appointed Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, with the Under Secretary, in broad daylight, by a gang of patriotic ruffians calling themselves "The Invincibles". The wave of horror that this crime excited in England extinguished any hopes of

conciliation, and the Liberal government was driven, for the remainder of its existence, to govern by the strong hand.

In 1885 it gave a notable access of strength to the Irish, by passing a Reform Bill which extended the franchise in rural districts. In the General Election that followed, Parnell, with consummate tactical skill, threw the now disciplined support of the Irish vote in England on to the Conservative side. The result of the election was to bring back a small Liberal majority over the Conservatives, but leaving either a Conservative or Liberal government at the mercy of a solid body of 86 Home Rulers, who had swept practically every Celtic constituency in Ireland.

Both parties were now, unless they could achieve the almost unthinkable feat of coalescing, at the mercy of an Ireland whose demand was for nothing less than a reversal of the Act of Union. Even the Conservatives who, under Lord Salisbury, had formed what was aptly styled a government of caretakers, began coquetting for Irish support. Their chief secretary was Lord Carnarvon, a liberal-minded peer who had worked hard, but unsuccessfully, as Beaconsfield's Colonial Secretary, for the Federation of South Africa, and might be presumed to favour some such scheme of federation as had been in the mind of Isaac Butt. With the Premier's leave, he had an interview with Parnell, from which the latter came away with the impression that the Conservatives were prepared to offer some sort of self-government to Ireland.

It was possibly the idea that his rivals might be before him that decided Gladstone to cut the knot by conceding the substance of the Irish demand and making Home Rule the first plank of the Liberal programme. Accordingly, with that immense energy that even in old age he could devote to any cause to which he had once given his heart, he tried to carry his party with him in offering this supreme act of conciliation to men whom he had previously characterized as marching through rapine to the dismemberment of the Empire. Of course, the Irish support was at once thrown on his side, and Gladstone returned to Downing Street to frame a measure of Home Rule in which Ireland should have her own Parliament, under various restrictions, for domestic affairs alone, though without the essential right of protecting her own industries. The Irish members were to disappear from Westminster. Most important of all, the Protestant North East was lumped in with the rest of Ireland, and placed at the mercy of the inevitable Catholic majority. Parnell, coldly contemptuous as ever, resolved to accept this instalment for the nonce,

though without the least abatement of his hatred for England or his ultimate aspirations for an independent Ireland.

Gladstone had miscalculated on the support of his party. So revolutionary a departure, which at least bore every appearance of a shameless sacrifice of principle for power, shocked many of the steady-going members of his party, and particularly the heads of the old Whig Houses, of whom Lord Hartington was the most influential. The leader of the Radical advance guard, Joseph Chamberlain, whose relations with Gladstone had for some time been anything but cordial, joined the seceders, or Liberal Unionists, as they came to be called. Undaunted, the Grand Old Man, as he was now affectionately styled by his admirers, proceeded with his Bill, and in a speech of solemn eloquence adjured the House to think well, to think wisely, to think, not for the moment but for the years that were to come, before they rejected a measure so fraught with the promise of conciliation. But reject it they did, amid a scene of wild enthusiasm, and at the election that Gladstone immediately challenged, the country endorsed their verdict. The once dominant Liberal party was now split from top to bottom, and the Conservatives, with the support of the Liberal Unionists, were able to secure a majority over Liberals and Irish combined that, with one brief interval, was to last for nineteen years.

Transvaluation of Values

All this time, a subtle and unperceived change had been taking place in the mental and spiritual atmosphere of Western civilization, a change whose importance infinitely transcended that of the merely superficial vicissitudes of domestic and international politics. The transvaluation of values—to adopt a phrase coined by Nietzsche—that had begun with the first stirrings of the Renaissance, was now almost complete. Under whatever high-sounding terms he might choose to disguise the fact, civilized man had come to fix his main endeavour upon the knowledge and control of external nature to the almost complete neglect of his own soul.

The Industrial Revolution, with its enormous advance in the knowledge of external nature, unaccompanied by any corresponding advance in the knowledge of the inner man, had enormously strengthened the tendency to value the meat above the life. But for a long time this had been masked and its effects delayed by the

Romantic Revival, the tendency to hark back, at least in sentiment, to an age of faith and spiritual values. But the Romantic movement had never given birth to a reasoned faith capable of compensating for the ever-increasing materialistic bias, and in the last quarter of the century, Romanticism was thoroughly discredited. The very veneer of spirituality was indignantly discarded; the new age stood forth realistic and unashamed.

It was a matter of something deeper than theory, an urge at once subconscious and almost universal, against which conscious reaction battled in vain. Things were in the saddle, as Emerson had said, and rode mankind. Symptomatic of this new phase was a notable decline in outstanding individuality. The mid years of the century had certainly constituted a heyday of giants—of Wagner and Victor Hugo, of Mazzini and Lincoln, of Auguste Comte and Darwin. There was a completeness or—as one might say—a rotundity about these personalities and their achievement that claims, with an assurance not to be denied, the epithet " great ". In such men the human spirit rose proudly superior to its environment; they pegged out imperial claims; whatever they touched they revolutionized. We know now that much of this achievement was neither so complete nor so unassailable as appeared at the time; subsequent criticism has revealed too much that was false, too much that was tawdry. But at least these frock-coated worthies succeeded in keeping the flag of the human spirit flying above the tide of the world, almost as proudly as in the days of Michelangelo and Leonardo.

But now the tendency is more and more to dwarf the individual, to acknowledge that the human spirit is no longer equal to the complexity and might of things. In every department of mental activity this is apparent, and especially in the science which is the chief glory of a machine-ridden age. It may fairly be argued that the science of the end of the century was more fruitful of true progress than that of any preceding period, that the methods of exact and exhaustive research, the innumerable qualifications, the shrinking from grandiose generalizations, more than compensated for the absence of towering personalities like Newton and Darwin and such revolutionary discoveries as that of the atomic law and natural selection.

There were certainly some notable personalities in the period with which we are now concerned; it was at this time, for instance, that Pasteur was doing his greatest work and that the inventive genius of Edison was working its mechanical miracles. But on the

whole its progress is not by leaps and bounds, but by multitudinous though comparatively small increments. There are no such sudden and sensational changes as accompanied the first stages of the Industrial Revolution, or the substitution of steam for animal transport. There is nothing to compare with the mental revolution associated with the name of Darwin, nor with the almost reverential homage paid by his contemporaries to Newton. It is more and more, as the great figures of the mid-century die off, an age of specialists. Standards in every department are made continuously more exacting; accumulated knowledge becomes too vast and complicated to be mastered except by limiting the field of vision to microscopic dimensions. To obtain a comprehensive view of all science, or even of one science, becomes less and less of a practical ideal. Each explorer confines his vision to his own particular tree, and leaves it to the popular journalist to convey some sort of impression of the wood.

The philosopher scientist who dominated English thought of the sixties and seventies was Herbert Spencer, who, starting as an engineer-mathematician, cast his shoe over bi', psych', and sociology, not to speak of ethics and metaphysics. Auguste Comte, the founder of the Positivists, had swept into his vision an even vaster field, comprehending the whole of human knowledge from mathematics to phrenology. By the end of the century, such claims seemed as out-of-date as those of the schoolmen. Even before the last bulky volume of his *Synthetic Philosophy* had left the press, Herbert Spencer had become an awful but superseded relic of a less critical age.

Along with the great personalities went the great certainties of the past. There were, of course, multitudes of imperfectly educated people who believed in Adam and the seven days' creation as unquestioningly as they accepted the sloppiest romance in novelette and melodrama, but with the leaders, whose opinions were bound gradually to leaven the inert thought of the multitude, faith in anything whatever was at a discount. Even the dogmatic and self-confident rationalism of the evolutionist pioneers had its foundations undermined. In 1879 a young philosopher-politician, Mr. Arthur Balfour, produced a remarkable *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, which suggested that the scientists themselves might be building their house upon the sand, and that a godless world was at least as incredible as one created. By the end of the century the evolutionary rationalism that had gone forth conquering and to conquer under the auspices of Huxley and Haeckel, Clifford and Tyndall, had shrunk,

at least in England, to the creed of a bitterly dogmatic and somewhat Philistine clique of enthusiasts, more honoured in Hyde Park than in the vital centres of thought.

Indeed, the sweeping generalizations of the days when Disraeli ranged himself on the side of the angels and Huxley preferred a simian to an episcopal grandfather, were quite out of the new fashion. In the first flush of victory over the Old Adam, the self-constituted apostles of the New Darwin had exploited their victory with an extravagance worthy of Versailles. The unfortunate doctrine of evolution was dragged violently out of its biological setting, and treated as a sort of master-key to all knowledge and all mysteries. Naturally in such an incongruous environment as that of sociology (a name that Spencer had coined for the science of society he imagined he had discovered), such high-sounding biological catchwords as natural selection could be, and were, used to justify any and every preconceived doctrine. State socialism and individualism, military violence and world-peace, egotism and altruism, strengthened or diluted to taste—you had only to formulate the magic word evolution and, preferably, to repeat some incantation of long biological words, wish devoutly for the triumph of your particular doxy, and lo, with the most infallible certainty, it would emerge crowned and dignified with all the authority of a scientific dogma! New scientist was old priest writ large.

Such an intellectual orgy was bound to produce a reaction. To scientists themselves it was soon apparent that such work as theirs did not thrive in an atmosphere of Belfast Addresses and theological controversies with prime ministers. They sought refuge in those peaceful realms of science that Darwin had never wished to leave. Natural selection was no longer a dogma to be trumpeted in the face of the infidel but a hypothesis to be carefully tested in the dry light of fact. Darwin's pre-eminence among the biologists of his century was less in dispute than ever, but he was no more infallible than Moses. As time went on, it became evident that the conclusions he had so modestly submitted were by no means the last word, and had not been the first word, on the subject of evolution. There was no going back on the now established fact of all species, including man, having somehow evolved by descent, though the gulf between living and dead matter remained obstinately unbridged. But natural selection offered no complete or final explanation of how this process had come about, nor was it by any means certain that something akin to purpose, some form of creative activity, might

not have to be invoked after all as an explanation. To borrow an analogy of Bergson's, no amount of casual stone-throwing will account for houses.

In her own steady and unobtrusive way science, with her army of specialists constantly at work, continued to advance, though by no means on an even frontage. In the eighteenth century mathematics had made the running, with the dawn of the nineteenth chemistry had caught up, but as the century advanced, biology took and easily maintained the lead. As a science, she dominated thought, though often with little enough justification; as an art, the art of medicine, with her handmaid, sanitation, she succeeded in prolonging the average of human life by at least a decade. It is only by reading contemporary novels and diaries that we realize how dirty and unhygienic were the habits of our grandfathers, particularly when a system of water drainage was introduced without the knowledge of how to safeguard it. At Windsor Castle the simple plan was adopted of having the cesspools underneath the living rooms, and when one was full up, of leaving it as it was and starting another. An interesting consumptive was an almost invariable attraction of fiction for young ladies; villages were decimated by typhus; recurrent epidemics of cholera swept the country; a mad dog was a not unfamiliar sight. All this had been got well under control by the end of the century.

Science was accomplishing great things for the body, but in the realm of mind, which was the most important of all, it still lagged woefully behind. Herbert Spencer had made a gallant attempt to put psychology on a new evolutionary footing, but he had neither the patience nor the scholarship to establish any permanent results. To the very end of the century psychology remained, what the other sciences had been before the Baconian emancipation, inextricably bound up with metaphysics. If in the year 1900 Locke or Hume had come back to earth, he would have found his authority still as unquestioned as ever, and would, without any "mugging up", have been able to take the chair of psychology at either of our ancient universities. There was certainly an experimental psychology, of a kind, but its scope was so limited and its results so trivial as to be practically negligible. The improvement of the mind had not become, like that of machinery, a practical proposition, and the only serious work in elucidating mental problems was accomplished not by the scientists, but by seers of character like George Meredith and Thomas Hardy. There is probably more to be learnt from

The Egoist than from all the textbooks and treatises on psychology that were published during the Queen's reign, and have now ceased even to bore.

On the other hand, if in the most necessary department of all science had lagged behind, in the most unnecessary and mischievous she was making up leeway with ominous rapidity. The art of international suicide, or war, had for a long time failed to reap the benefits of the Industrial Revolution. The military mind, in all countries, is naturally unprogressive; it is against the soldier's instincts to dirty his uniform with chemicals and turn a gentlemanly profession into an affair of machinery. Even Napoleon had gone on perfectly content with smooth-bore ordnance and wind-driven ships—though he might have had steamers for the asking. A certain chivalry sometimes revolted against the new-fangled killing machines, as when the British War Office flatly refused to entertain Cochrane's posthumous scheme for gassing the defenders of Sevastopol. But after the middle of the century science was no longer to be denied; rifles, breech-loaders, ironclads, machine guns, made their appearance, and it was claimed that the war of 1870 had been won by the German schoolmaster. In the armed peace that followed, progress was rapid; the range and killing power of weapons was enormously increased, and before the end of the century a Polish thinker, Ivan Bloch, demonstrated with prophetic intuition that European war on a big scale could henceforth only be terminated by the exhaustion and slow bleeding to death of the combatants.

It was perhaps the fact that the advance of science was so uncoordinated and uneven, that accounted for its failure to provide a substitute for the ecclesiastical bodies whose dogmas it had discredited. Here, too, the extreme free-thinkers—as the opponents of religious faith elected to call themselves—allowed themselves to be carried away by an excess of zeal. Instead of criticizing the Bible with the understanding sympathy that such a compilation of ancient literature demands, many of them fell on it with a fanatical excess of hostility, until Christ Himself was written down as a mere plagiarist of the Rabbis, one who had very likely never existed at all. Of course such extravagance invited reaction. In 1874 the unwonted spectacle was witnessed of a Bishop, Lightfoot by name, turning upon the most formidable assailant of the New Testament, and convicting him of grave faults of scholarship. As time went on it became evident that the Higher Criticism, as it was called, had frequently overreached itself, and that the critic's function is other than that of

prosecuting counsel in a forgery trial. A more tolerant and understanding spirit succeeded that of anti-religious dogmatism, but it was impossible for science, with its almost medieval backwardness in psychology, to deal satisfactorily with religion. It had done enough to shatter the prestige of the old orthodoxies, but it conspicuously failed to provide any sort of substitute, or to build up an art of life as it did those of medicine and engineering.

The effect of this was to produce a kind of spiritual interregnum, an age too obviously lacking in faith and principle. There had never, perhaps, been so much individual benevolence and philanthropy, but it was dissipated for the lack of any intelligible cause, any acceptable philosophy of life, to bind men's wills together. The Romantic Liberalism of the middle of the century had no doubt perished by its own proven insufficiency, but while it lasted it had provided some sort of compass for the good ship Civilization, something, at anyrate, more reliable than a weathercock.

In England, the reaction against the Victorian morality of respectability was proceeding apace. Matthew Arnold, whose *Culture and Anarchy* appeared in 1869 and *Friendship's Garland* two years later, struck a deadly blow at the complacency of the once all-powerful middle class. The respectable citizen, the object almost of adoration to men like Roebuck and Bright, was henceforward Mr. Bottles, a pretentious, ignorant, and tasteless Philistine, the scorn and laughing stock of those laborious Germans who, thanks to their disciplined unity, their *Geist*, were outdistancing us in every department of civilized activity. Arnold next turned to the already tottering fabric of religious orthodoxy, and with quiet sarcasm characterized its most cherished dogmas as mere superstition and "over-belief", not worthy of serious consideration by modern, educated people. This was all very well, as far as destructive criticism was concerned, but when Arnold started to substitute a positive faith of his own in place of the one he had demolished, he proved less satisfying than many a simple country vicar. The old God had been at least a more credible as well as a more satisfying object of worship than so bloodless a phantasma as "a Power not ourselves that makes for Righteousness"; nor was there much hope for a philosophy of life based on mere vague abstractions like "culture", "*Zeitgeist*", and "sweetness and light".

The greatest of all destructive critics of Victorianism was Samuel Butler, a man the intransigence of whose iconoclasm was too much even for the declining years of the Queen's reign, and who only

came into his own, posthumously, in that of her son. To twist the tails of the clergy or discover those of their ancestors was becoming almost a fashionable amusement, but to cap this by plucking at the whiskers of the scientific hierarchy, and even to blaspheme the sacred name of Darwin, was an indecency about which the less said the better. When Butler called attention to the fact that no amount of natural selection ever taught a chicken how to get out of an egg, the only dignified and, indeed, the only practicable thing to do was to ignore him. And Butler's taste for image-breaking did not stop here. Nothing would satisfy him but to uproot the very foundations of existing society and morality. Duty, which to Wordsworth had been the daughter of God's voice, was to Butler a poisonous inhibition of commonsense, and he had no more reverence for the bonds of the family than for those of duty. He hinted that if you were to punish crime, you might, with equal reason, punish disease. And above all, in his light-hearted way, he suggested a possibility of awful seriousness, to wit that civilization itself might be crushed by the power of its own inventions, that, with blind recklessness, man had summoned to his aid forces that he was unable to control, and would, in time, degrade him to being the drudge, and perhaps the victim, of his own machinery.

For the nineteenth century, perhaps the principal effect of Butler's criticism was the inspiration it gave to a more popular assailant of current orthodoxies in the shape of a young Dubliner, Mr. Bernard Shaw, who, starting as a musical critic, became one of the leading lights of a middle-class socialist society called the Fabians, and, in the teeth of long neglect and opposition, succeeded in galvanizing the now almost moribund English drama, by introducing a new type of intellectual play, partially borrowed from Ibsen. It was in an early work, called *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, that Mr. Shaw declared uncompromising war on romance, idealism and everything connected with them, and endeavoured, in the true Butlerian and—as he would have said—Christlike spirit, to make a clean sweep of formal morality. "The golden rule," as he remarked in a subsequent work, "is that there are no golden rules." He possessed a rare knack of pleasantly shocking, without really offending, that suburban intelligentsia to which his appeal was mainly directed.

Mr. Shaw was far from resting content with a merely negative philosophy. Not only was he an ardent socialist, but he believed in the necessity of a positive religion and, following Butler, he sought this in a sort of biological pantheism. For Matthew Arnold's Power

making for Righteousness, he substituted what he called a life-force, a somewhat vague entity that at times seems to be the mere sum of vital processes, and at others the old anthropomorphic God dressed up in a ready-made suit of modern clothes, a Being capable of laying plans, even to the extent of forcing a reluctant and protesting swain into the arms of a terrific virago who has hunted him to the remotest confines of Europe for the purpose of demanding marriage.

Whether by his own fault or the obtuseness of his public, Mr. Shaw's practical influence was almost entirely negative, but that, among the class to which he appealed, was immensely powerful. The old Victorian respectability was everywhere breaking up; it became the fashion of that increasing class who prided themselves on being in the intellectual swim, to adopt a cynical attitude towards any sort of moral earnestness or positive enthusiasm. The up-to-date educated mind, if it had little faith, at least harboured few illusions. It had no use for a Martin Tupper, and not much for a Spencer or a Ruskin. The three-volume novel passed, during the nineties, to the limbo of whiskers and the crinoline; sounds of unholy mirth began to affront the Sabbath gloom; the rakishness of the cutaway competed with ever increasing success against the portentousness of the frock-coat; even the top-hat was threatened! Middle-class women, greatly stimulated by Mr. Shaw and Ibsen, started to revolt against the hopeless ennui of their existence. Young ladies, in all the joy of conscious emancipation, enthroned themselves on the leather seats of safety bicycles and were off at a pace that no chaperon could keep up with. Others came out of their paternal villas, with untidy clothes and serious faces, to form committees and discover affinities with earnestly emancipated males in soft collars. In the nineties there was a naïve earnestness about this sort of thing; a self-consciously younger generation had not yet learnt to be cynical about itself.

It was all to the good that the pretentiousness and hypocrisy that had run riot in the heyday of Victorianism should be shown up in their true colours. But the Victorian age had at least been one of splendid and substantial achievement; its often unlovely earnestness was the source of a tremendous concentration. The three-volume novel demanded a capacity for sustained effort both in author and reader; the leading article and review of the sixties were addressed to a reader who was prepared to sit down and give serious consideration to the subject; even the Low Church Sunday had its uses as a discipline. A statesman or man of letters was more

often than not a scholar, and, in any case, he would be judged before a critical tribunal which, however defective its taste and standards, at least formed its judgment deliberately and generally knew its own mind. Flashiness, any form of journalese "snap", was under these circumstances at a discount. The art of literary self-advertisement was neither practised nor encouraged to any considerable extent.

It is the advent of Mr. Bernard Shaw that marks the transition from a deliberate to a hustling age, and therewith what, at least to the old-fashioned, must have appeared a definite lowering of intellectual and aesthetic standards. No one, least of all Mr. Shaw himself, could deny the genius that went to the making of his plays and prefaces. But it was a genius extraordinarily lacking in that austere self-restraint and conscientiousness which, as a professed Puritan, one would have expected Mr. Shaw to be the first to desiderate. In a moment of admirable candour, he pronounced what will probably form the final verdict on his own achievement. "The sceptic," he says, "who is cautiously feeling his way towards the next century has no chance unless he happens by accident to have the specific artistic talent of the mountebank as well, in which case it is as a mountebank that he catches votes and not as a meliorist." He was but telling the literal truth, as far, at least, as his own contemporaries were concerned, when in 1898, "For ten years past," he boasted, "with an unprecedented pertinacity and obstination, I have been dinning into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England; and no power in heaven or on earth will ever change it." To this may appropriately be subjoined an account of Mr. Shaw's rise to fame by a fervent admirer of his, the author of a cheap guide to success in life that achieved some notoriety in the year of its publication, 1906.[1]

"Being a failure in Ireland he came to London. Whenever a few 'advanced' people gathered together Mr. Shaw would somehow work his way in. Then he managed to make a speech, sometimes even when he knew nothing of the subject about which he spoke. But he got his name in peoples' mouths and he got his name in print. He made some progress every day."

Mr. Shaw was an ardent and entirely sincere believer in his message, but so anxious was he to get it before the public that he shrank from no means of booming it, and, in consequence, missed his desired

[1] *Get On or Get Out*, by Peter Keary, p. 51.

end altogether, being reverently invested, in lieu of the prophet's robe, with the cap and bells of a licensed Merry Andrew. By dashing on to paper any epigram or argument calculated to raise a laugh or an eyebrow, he undoubtedly won his way to European fame, he found scope and audience for his dramatic genius, he exercised a destructive influence comparable with that of Voltaire, but when he turned to the most important part of his work, the reconstruction of faith and society—he was as one that mocked.[1]

What Mr. Shaw had been accomplishing for the suburbans was being done, in the aesthetic field, for the upper class of the eighties and early nineties by Oscar Wilde. A man of dazzling talents and compelling personality, he was, not only in theory but, unlike Mr. Shaw, in practice, a rebel against all accepted standards. He fairly boxed the compass on respectability, and preached freedom from the seven deadly virtues to a delighted but incredulous audience, who refused to sully their lips with his name when it came out that he had actually had the courage of his convictions. Wilde was a scholar with a streak of literary genius, but in addition to being a snob and a libertine he was a past master in the art of advertisement. He might have justified his claim to be a lord of language earlier than during his sojourn in Reading Jail, had he been able to restrict the output of standardized paradox and epigram by which he boomed his own reputation.

It is a fact not without its significance, that during the early years of the twentieth century a philosophy was actually introduced from America and obtained a considerable vogue in no less a centre of ancient learning than Oxford, which flatly denied the existence, or rather the necessity, of what mankind had hitherto striven for under the name of truth. According to these pragmatists, a belief was only true in so far as it served a purpose. In other words, supposing we find belief in any proposition to serve an acceptable purpose, we ought both to proclaim and believe in it entirely irrespective of the trifling consideration whether or not it happens to be true. Such cynicism, couched though it was in academic jargon, was only too reflective of the spirit of an age which had discarded all the old faiths and standards and had hardly even faced the necessity of substituting new ones.

[1] A remarkable confirmation of this may be found in some just published correspondence between Mr. Shaw and Tolstoy, and Mr. Shaw's pathetic complaint of Tolstoy's "invincible preconception" of him as "a merchant of *jeux d'esprit*".

We have only touched on a few of the most prominent names and circumstances of a change that was subtly but rapidly transforming the whole spirit of English civilization. It is perhaps arguable that the change was good in so far as it was inevitable. The Victorians had steadily refused to go to the root of the problems created by the Industrial Revolution; their apparent prosperity was only on the surface, and before a true adaptation could be made of civilization to its ever-increasing requirements, it was necessary to make a clean sweep of the old half-solutions. But unfortunately those who had pulled down had totally failed to construct; the half gods had gone, the gods showed no signs of arriving. And the shadow of a measureless catastrophe was already beginning to darken the horizon.

The Muse Specializes

Oscar Wilde, though his views on art were of the most superficial, nevertheless stood in the public eye for a transvaluation of artistic values that culminated in the aesthetic movement of the Eighties and what was sometimes known as the Renaissance of the Nineties, but whose sources are in the palmiest times of Victorian Romance. The Pre-Raphaelite movement was, as its name implies, an attempt to discard finally the heritage of the Renaissance and recover the pure spirit of Gothic Christianity. Its rising hope, Millais, whose *Ophelia* had constituted the manifesto on canvas of the new spirit, and Ruskin, its champion on paper, were as robustly Victorian as Tennyson himself.

But what was, at first, a revolt merely against the tasteless standards of the emancipated middle class, became, as the torch was passed on to a younger generation, a conscious revolt against the whole spirit of the age. The theory of Ruskin, which he had clothed with gorgeous prose in his *Stones of Venice*, had been that a nation's art is the mirror of its soul. But the idea of the rising school was that it is the business of the artist to cut himself wholly loose from the world around him and cultivate art for its own sake, a somewhat vague ideal, but which amounted in practice to a belief that life had become too hideous for art to ennoble, and that art must therefore shake the dust of life off her feet. But if life, uninformed by art, is bestial, art separated from life must needs become devitalized.

The theory became aggressively self-conscious in Whistler, who, though born in America, trained in Paris, and thoughly contemptuous of England, is too much a part of the Chelsea he transfigured not to have his niche in the temple of English art. Whistler brought with him from France a more scientific and economical method of transmitting to canvas impressions of colour, and above all of depth and spaciousness, than had been possible by the laborious accuracy of the Pre-Raphaelites. His study of Japanese art, though of the late and rather decadent Ukiyoye school, imparted a new grace and delicacy of coloration to his work. It was in his *Ten-o'clock*, a prose masterpiece as unique in its own kind as the Peacock Room, that he declared the independence of art in its most uncompromising form. The spirit of creative beauty was, by this account, entirely arbitrary in its visitations; there was no discoverable reason why it should have avoided Switzerland and dwelt at Nankin. Art was, in fact, a mystery with its priesthood of trained devotees, and woe betide any layman presumptuous enough to make his voice heard within the precincts. To such, the high priest himself did not disdain to act as chucker out, even when the intruder wore the pontifical robes and frown of John Ruskin.

What it amounted to was this: art was not a spirit, but a technique, specialized in all its branches as rigidly as late nineteenth century science. Beauty, that had cried in vain in the cities of the Philistines, had shaken off their dust from her feet, for a testimony against them.

In spite of the doctrine of Ruskin and the profitable understanding that Millais and Holman Hunt contrived to establish between themselves and the Five Lords of the Philistines, the tendency of the Pre-Raphaelite leaders, in proportion to their inspiration, was gradually to loosen the connection between art and life, and retire from an artistically impracticable reality into a dream world of their own, peopled by Rossetti with full-lipped and ripe-bosomed houris, and by Burne-Jones with practically sexless figures of austere delicacy. The supreme exponent of this quintessential Romanticism was William Morris, in spite of a socialism that was, in itself, a flight from life into Nowhere. In Morris Pre-Raphaelitism attained its *ne plus ultra*. With his extraordinary facility in most kinds of art and craft he not only explored every continent and island of the medieval dream world, but succeeded in rendering it almost as commonplace as Piccadilly. What had started as an inspiration had now become a trick of craftsmanship, reproducible *ad infinitum*.

The passing of the Gothic fashion only sent the fugitives from life in quest of other dream worlds to conquer. Walter Pater, who aimed at a cloistral seclusion rich with exquisite sensations, significantly named his philosophy of life the New Epicureanism, and indeed it was the product of a world-weariness not unlike that which had inspired the followers of Epicurus to take refuge in a sensuousness refined to the point of asceticism.

The waning of the Victorian complacency was marked by nothing so much as the increasing separation of art from life. In the eighties *Punch*, the mouthpiece of middle-class opinion, which had already punned Swinburne with "swine-born", did his considerable best to associate the very word "aesthete", coupled with his name, and those of Wilde, Pater, and Burne-Jones, with all that was unmanly and contemptible. The Elect were by no means disposed to turn the other cheek to the Philistines. A cant of sin, which usually meant sex, answered the cant of respectability, and it was the aesthetic assumption that to be popular was pretty certainly to be banal.

It was during the nineties that the new aestheticism gained enough strength, in the hands of a number of ardent and mostly ill-fated young men, to arouse hopes of a veritable literary and artistic Renaissance. It is curious how little of this work was destined to survive, how little, in spite of all the talk of revolt, bore the stamp of originality. Even Aubrey Beardsley, a consummate artist in black and white, represents the Pre-Raphaelite tradition in its last stage of decomposition. Stephen Phillips, who was hailed as the elder Dumas speaking with the voice of Milton, has dwindled in perspective to a rhetorician in a blank verse as horribly inflated as the frog in the fable. *The Yellow Book*, that manifesto of all that was young and advanced, exhales a remote, old-fashioned charm when we open it to-day, but its vitality has departed for ever. It is not so with Tennyson and his peers of the Victorian noontide.

The shock of the Oscar Wilde trial dealt a blow at the aesthetic movement from which it never properly recovered. It had, however, exercised an influence, even over the triumphant Philistines, whose effects were not destined to pass away with the cult of sunflowers and scarlet sins. The horrors of Victorian taste were at least mitigated. The hire-purchased shoddy that filled the rooms of suburban villas would at least fail to include plush-covered tables and painted looking-glasses. Not even their dressmakers would again induce English ladies to imitate their West African sisters in counterfeiting posterior expansion below waist-level. Church

windows were no longer adorned with colour schemes of salmon-pink and apricot, and the firm of Kempe, in spite of luscious sentimentality, did at least popularize the principles of William Morris and his School sufficiently to set up a new standard in the art of glass-staining, and to open the way for further developments. The art of monumental sculpture had a corresponding revival. Brock's recumbent effigy of Lord Arthur Hervey at Wells, on a tomb of cornelian-coloured alabaster, is a notable example, combining vividness of portraiture with great tenderness of feeling. If the dawning age could not rise to the heights of Victorianism, it would not, at any rate, sink to its depths.

This undoubted refinement of taste, important as it was, was not the most important effect of the transvaluation of artistic values during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It was that art was gradually ceasing to be an expression of anything vital in the national spirit, and passing from the hands of seers into those of specialists.[1] And where there is no vision, the old text may perhaps stand.

The Prefix "Pan"

What was taking place in England was only part of a movement that affected all countries of the white man. The shattering of the old orthodoxies, the discarding of moral conventions, was no insular phenomenon. If the Romantic period had harboured illusions, they were at least kindly and gracious phantoms; nations had their duties, had generous and disinterested enthusiasms as well as interests. Even war seemed less of an evil when waged for freedom by such a hero as Garibaldi—almost as much a hero in England as in Italy, or when John Brown's soul went marching on to the abolition of slavery, or even when Germany, long disunited and the prey of unscrupulous diplomacy, solemnly asserted her will to be a united Empire. And there was even an element of chivalry, however perverse its application, in the way the Iron Tsar came to the support of his brother Emperor against his Hungarian rebels.

After 1870—if we make an exception of the crusading ardour that undoubtedly inspired the Russian hosts in their advance on

[1] The most conspicuous exceptions were Mr. Kipling, in his relation to the imperialist spirit, Mr. Yeats and the apostles of the Celtic Revival, and, on the debatable borderland between art and sociology, the Shavian post-Ibsenite drama.

Constantinople in 1877, the very veneer of disinterestedness is dropped. Of the two conceptions of statesmanship, the collective righteousness of Gladstone and the frank egotism of Bismarck, that of Bismarck triumphed all along the line. But while the Iron Chancellor and his venerable master and friend remained at the helm of state, the egotism was at least intelligent and self-restrained, and, indeed, the old Protestant Emperor had a constant if narrow ideal of honour and humanity which more than once acted as a brake upon the more realistic temperament of his minister. For all his sovereign's loyalty to the superior intelligence, Bismarck knew that he would consent to no decisive action that he believed, in his heart, to be wrong.

The history of Europe, between the Peace of Frankfurt and the outbreak of the World War, falls naturally into two periods, divided, in 1890, by the fall of Bismarck. The man to whose piping the other statesmen danced was a realist in the rarest and best sense. He had no part in the megalomaniac illusions of the new school of Pan-German imperialists. The victory of Blood and Iron, which had established the Empire, was, he knew, only the first bout in a contest of which no man could see the end. To all outward appearance, Germany, in the person of her chief minister, played with the European states as the conjurer with his coloured balls. It seemed so easy as one watched the sureness with which the balls were thrown and caught. Only the master conjurer could realize the perilous and incessant difficulty of the feat he kept on performing with such an impassive visage, and what was likely to happen when some half-trained amateur took over the job.

The Germany of Bismarck's vision was not an irresistible giant preparing to dominate the world, but a strong man ringed round by jealous rivals and one implacable enemy, and in hourly peril of having to defend, against desperate odds, what he already possessed. " Give peace in our time, O Lord," fairly sums up Bismarck's policy after the abandonment of his half-formed scheme of crushing France again and forever in 1875, and he was resolved, if war did come, that Germany should keep out of it. When the race for the colonies began in the eighties, it was only against his better judgment that he allowed Germany to be drawn into it, though he played the game of grab, once he was committed to it, with his usual address and energy. But to embark on colonial expansion was, as the old statesman well knew, asking for trouble. He had not pushed France into Africa nor England into Egypt out of disinterested philanthropy.

And the possession of colonies would eventually lead to the building of a fleet, and a policy that might add England to the list of Germany's enemies. So little did Bismarck dream of challenging the mistress of the seas, that he gave it as his deliberate opinion that her possession of Heligoland was a good thing for Germany, in as much as it denied that advanced base to a blockading French navy.

In the eighties, Bismarck's policy was, in the face of ever-increasing difficulties, one of consummate skill and success. The fatal rivalry between Austria and Russia in the Balkans had compelled him to break up the league of the three Emperors, which was the ideal cornerstone of his policy, and choose the alliance with Austria which his finesse enabled him to expand into the Triple Alliance. But he was constant in his resolve never to let go the support of Russia, and with infinite skill he managed to re-establish the understanding between the three Emperors, and finally to conclude a "Re-insurance Treaty" with Russia which, so long as it lasted, secured Germany from any danger of a war on that side. But it was beyond even Bismarck's powers to drive Austria and Russia in double harness. Russia could never forgive her neighbour for having secured a couple of Turkish provinces for nothing, when Russia, after her sacrifices and victory, had been compelled to return empty home. Since then, the Tsar's blundering brutality had set the whole of the Balkans against her, and at every point Russian and Austrian ambitions kept coming into conflict, particularly in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, Bismarck succeeded in holding fast the bonds of the Triple Alliance, while keeping in close enough friendship with Russia to prevent her doing the thing he so greatly dreaded, and seeking the alliance of Germany's worst enemy.

The old Emperor, now in his ninety-second year, at last closed his eyes, exhorting his grandson William, with his latest breath: "Thou must always keep in touch with the Russian Emperor, there no conflict is necessary." After a brief interval of three months, during which his son was dying of cancer, the throne was occupied by that grandson, who was destined, by his very insufficiency, to play a leading part in the now swiftly developing world tragedy. This young man was endowed with a certain superficial brilliancy that for a long time induced the mass of his subjects to accept him at not far short of his own valuation, and to see in him a symbolic figure, destined to go forth, in glittering armour, conquering and to conquer before God's—or Odin's—chosen people. As a matter of fact, he

was possessed of that neurotic temperament which had become increasingly common as the century had advanced; he was a creature of sudden and incalculable impulses, incapable of pursuing any constant line of action or forming a dispassionate judgment. This temperament, combined with the adulation from which the heir to a throne can hardly escape, resulted in a morbid egotism that took perfectly seriously, and pushed to its extreme logical implications, the doctrine of a monarch's Divine Right. William II was determined to govern as well as to reign. In less than two years he had rid himself of the wise though domineering old Chancellor who had stood before his father and grandfather. As confident of his Empire as of himself, he had no need of such senile precautions as the Re-insurance Treaty with Russia. In 1890, when it came up for renewal, it was allowed, by Germany, to lapse. In Bismarck's phrase, the wire to Petersburg was cut. Three years later the Russian fleet visited Toulon and a secret treaty of alliance was concluded between the Slav despotism and the Latin republic. The thing that Bismarck had for twenty years succeeded in preventing had come to pass. France had found the ally she sought, and the forces were already beginning to muster for Armageddon.

The mere fact of this unnatural alliance, and the almost hysterical joy with which the dull and reactionary Tsar was welcomed in Paris, shows how completely sentiment of any kind had been banished from the international relationships of the *fin de siècle*. To understand the politics of this time we must realize the emergence of a collective spirit of vaster scope and more dangerous ambitions than the nationalism that had flourished in the middle of the century. Disraeli had identified himself with this spirit when he said, "race, all is race." Of all the catchwords that had such vogue in this age of professed realism, "race" was one of the vaguest and most abused. Most Europeans are in fact mongrels of inextricably mixed ancestry, and to sort out this or that stock is a task to baffle the stoutest ethnologist. But it did not much matter whether your head was round or long, or whether your remote ancestor was a Viking or a Mongol, provided you and a sufficient number of your fellows could convince yourselves, on any grounds or none, that you were all pure bred Slavs or Teutons or Anglo-Saxons, and, what invariably followed, that your race was the elect of God or the life-force.

This might have been a harmless enough piece of mass suggestion had it stopped at this point. But unfortunately the self-chosen

race might proceed to deduce serious consequences from its choice. Within their borders there were usually other peoples with different ideals and presumed ancestry. It was not only a right, but a sacred duty, of the superior race to force these Lorrainers and Finns and Poles and Celts to conformity with the superior civilization. As the lesser breed usually displayed its ill-breeding by kicking against the pricks, there was nothing for it but to be very firm indeed with them; twenty years or so of firm government never did but always would work the required change. A still more dangerous consequence of the race theory was that outside the existing frontiers were nearly always to be found certain alleged kinsmen waiting to be brought into the fold, by force if necessary. If they were as yet unconscious of their kinship and its obligations, that was an occasion for propaganda, or, again, force. And where two such racial ambitions overlapped, there was no way of decision but that of the sword.

The two most dangerous of these racial movements were known as Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism. It was with the final shattering of Romantic Liberalism in Russia by the bomb that killed Alexander II, that Pan-Slavism began to take on a distinctive and formidable character. Russian civilization was, according to this version, quite opposite and superior to that of Western Europe. Russia, ever expanding towards the East, was proud to acknowledge her Oriental affinities. Peter the Great, according to some devout Slavophiles, had put her entirely on the wrong track by his policy of Westernization. Again, there were those who held that her mission was to bring the blessings of just government and Western science to the backward Asian races.

In Alexander III, who ascended the throne in 1881, the Slavophiles found a Tsar of the good old Russian type. His mind, like that of his people, moved with the ponderous inevitability of a glacier. Under him the Pan-Slavic creed shook off every vestige of Liberalism, and centred round the triple ideal of autocracy, orthodoxy, and nationalism, or rather, racialism. Such religious persecution was seen in Russia as recalled the dragonnades of Louis XIV, such racial tyranny as rivalled that of the Turk. Finally, though the constant terror of assassination kept him shut up like a hermit in his palace, the Tsar wished to be regarded as the leader and champion of Slavdom both within and without the fold. As the Austrian Empire was now run by a tacit agreement of Germans and Magyars to assist each other in holding down the other peoples of that incongruous conglomeration, it is evident that between

the racial ambitions of Pan-Slavism and the dynastic necessities of the Hapsburgs there could be no common ground of reconciliation. Moreover, militant Pan-Slavism aimed at a revival of the Eastern Roman Empire, with its Caesar and Patriarch at Byzantium. This was likewise incompatible with Austrian ambitions in the Balkans.

Even more dangerous than this autocratic and semi-oriental imperialism was the new spirit that ever since the Franco-German War had been rising in Germany. After centuries of disunion, impotence, and humiliation, the wine of victory had gone to the German head. The thinking and dreaming Germany of old days was now finally discredited in the eyes of her sons; it was Blood and Iron, the iron discipline of Prussia under her Hohenzollern sovereigns, that had raised United Germany to that headship among European powers she had enjoyed under her great Hohenstaufen. It was perhaps inevitable that a people of such immense thoroughness and so little humour should have carried their new-found belief in themselves to lengths of measureless extravagance.

Like all other peoples who get above themselves, the Germans had no difficulty in discovering their own membership of the chosen or supreme race. Their claims to be, *par excellence*, the *élite* of the Nordic, long-headed breed, were, as a matter of fact, based on a disingenuous begging of the whole question, since an exact inquiry would have established that in present-day Germany there is an actual preponderance of round-headed or Alpine men. But for purposes of racial propaganda, 'twere to consider too curiously to consider so. It was assumed that the modern Germans were the authentic and pure descendants of the Teutons described by Tacitus, and the fact that most of the great men of Europe could, by sedulous grubbing in libraries, be shown to have had red cheeks or fair hair or names that in some way suggested a German origin, was enough to establish that anybody who had ever done anything had been a German without knowing it. Even Christ was conscripted for this noble army of Teutons. Celts were Germans and even Slavs were Germans, according to some hardy theorists, always however with the proviso that these were inferior and diluted breeds in comparison with the central Teuton.

This theory might only have been harmful in the sense that all other muddled sophisms are harmful, had it not been for the fact that it implied the existence of a vast unredeemed Germany "without the law". This was an intolerable state of things for patriots flushed with victory, and more confident, with every succeeding year,

of their resistless strength. Another and more rational cause was impelling Germans to expand their frontiers. The new Empire, even with the addition of the French provinces, was not large enough to contain a rapidly increasing population. And with German industry, backed by all the resources of science and government, making prodigious strides, a need was felt for markets and an assured command of raw materials. Germany had come late into the race for colonies, and she looked with undisguised envy on those supposedly inferior peoples who had secured the best places in the sun, and then smugly expected to enjoy peaceful possession.

The men of the old school, Bismarck and William I, had little enough sympathy with the new megalomania. The new school does not get control of German policy till the dropping of the pilot by William II. Bismarck displayed his usual shrewd insight when he divined that what most distinguished the young Kaiser's character from that of his father and grandfather was his lack of humility, his boundless confidence in himself and want of consideration for others. A precisely similar judgment might be passed on the difference between the old, earnest and relatively humble Germany that had established the Empire, and the new, cocksure and hectoring generation that entered into that heritage, staked it on one mad throw—and lost.

The new morality, or absence of morality, the rise of which we have traced in England, reached its height in Germany. It was necessary to provide the Pan-Germans with a doctrine that should ease all scruples of conscience about such trifles as despoiling or enslaving a neighbour. Something could be done by gush about the old Teutonic gods, more by writing up history in the spirit of a not too scrupulous attorney. This was especially the task of Treitschke, who captured the imagination of his countrymen with an unfinished history of modern Germany in a number of ponderously tendencious volumes. But the philosopher who most impressed his personality on the imagination was a Pole, Nietzsche, who had scant respect for the German intelligence and detested the Empire as the grave of individuality. His ideal, as might have been expected from a Pole, was one of aristocratic anarchy. But what counted in Nietzsche's writings was not his essential philosophy, but stray aphorisms, that he threw off in beautiful German, expressive of an invalid's pathetic desire to compensate for his infirmity by posing as a very terrible fellow—he was really the kindest of mortals. Such sayings as "the good war justifies every cause", "be hard", "the will to

power", were eagerly seized upon by the apostles of the new Pan Germanism, that Nietzsche would certainly have regarded as the quintessence of Philistinism.

Nevertheless Pan-Germanism was one of the most formidable of militant creeds, and was by no means wholly contemptible. Germany, under her Prussian masters, had drilled out of herself her reflective and visionary soul—she would no longer produce a Goethe or a Wagner. But what drill could get out of a singularly docile people was at her command. She had that infinite capacity for taking pains that is the exact opposite of genius. Her education, if it was calculated to reduce everyone to the same level, at least assured that that level should be of a respectable altitude. Her professors were glorified officials; where Germany was concerned, or could possibly be dragged in, research catered for propaganda. Her missionaries found the service of God not incompatible with that of Caesar. Her industry, magnificently organized in great monopolistic federations, or cartels, and supported at every turn by the government, by sheer hard work and energy, together with the systematic employment of research, was catching up that of free-trade England. Most ominous of all, from the English point of view, it became increasingly evident that the great German army was not enough for the ambitions of the German people and their Emperor. The Teuton must assert his natural supremacy, not only on land, but also on sea.

Such were the two great racial ambitions that threatened the peace of Europe towards the close of the nineteenth century. Both were entirely selfish in their aims and unscrupulous in their methods; of both the motive force was nothing more nor less than what Nietzsche had christened "the will to power". They were not the only movements of the kind. There was Pan-Turanianism—a quite different aspiration from Pan-Islamism—which aspired to unite all branches of the Turkish stock, from Thrace to Siberia, and looked for its heroes to those scourges of the human race, Jenghiz Khan and Timour. There was a smaller, but intensely dangerous movement to unite the Serb, Croat and Slovene stocks in one Empire of Greater Servia; there were similar aspirations after a Greater Bulgaria, a Greater Greece and a Greater Roumania, but these are perhaps more appropriately classed as national than racial. The same remark applies even more strongly to the aspirations of the two great Latin powers. France was proudly conscious of her nationality; all her aspirations were at present sharpened to one fine point of desire to get back her

lost provinces; she was feverishly striving after an overseas Empire; but it was for the French nation and not for the Gallic race that she cherished ambitions. Italy too, the youngest among the family of European nations, had her unredeemed children still not escaped from the Hapsburg yoke, but no racial ambitions corresponding to Pan-Germanism or Pan-Slavism.

Such was the witches' cauldron of international relations. The spectacle was one of a Europe from which Liberal aspirations and altruistic sentiment of any kind had been well-nigh banished, of nations arming to the teeth in the support of aims any one of which could only be attained at the price of a general war, of a diplomacy which was really a cut-throat competition in grabbing territory or manoeuvring for position in the conflict that might break out at any moment. Dominating everything were the two great alliances, one between a Pan-Slavist Tsardom and a France burning for revenge, the other between a Germany obsessed by the will-to-power and the illusion of her own invincibility, an Austria wrestling with the insoluble problem of maintaining equilibrium between centrifugal racial ambitions, and an Italy which, as Bismarck well knew, might or might not be restrained by her compact of alliance from flying at Austria's throat at the first opportunity of getting back her unredeemed lands.

If the military struggle hung fire, an economic war was already in full swing, and was being waged *à outrance* on the principles of the Kilkenny cats. In every important country but England, the peaceable and individualist economics of Cobden and Adam Smith were definitely superseded by the militant and protective nationalism of which List had been the most authoritative exponent. Sometimes two nations—France and Italy, for instance—would wage regular tariff wars, much to the detriment of both. The tendency was to replace the free competition of individual traders by gigantic national monopolies. It was the grand object of every power to secure its own markets and own sources of raw materials, from which foreigners were as far as possible to be excluded. The idea of common access to the good things of the earth was scouted as unpractical sentimentalism. The result was that nations were compelled to strain every nerve to secure such parts of the world as were not already appropriated—and, failing that, those that were. How the vast Continent of Africa got parcelled out, under these circumstances, without a European war, though not without the imminent danger of one on several occasions, is nothing short of a miracle, and says

a good deal for the fear that kept the rivals from making the final plunge over the abyss.

Closely connected with this monopolizing tendency was that of industry to coalesce into larger and larger units. It was the United States that first set the example of amalgamating the bulk or whole of particular industries into enormous national monopolies, or trusts, ruthlessly crushing or freezing out rivals, utilizing all the economies of mass production, but holding up home prices at monopoly as distinct from competitive values. It is notable that centralization was carried to greater lengths in the trusts of democratic America than in the cartels of militarist Germany. Against these monsters the State itself, when it battled at all, battled in vain. The high protective tariffs, by blunting the edge of foreign competition, assisted the monopolists in getting entire control over the home market—it was a well-known occasional expedient to unload goods dirt cheap on the foreigner whilst selling them dear at home.

In every industrially backward community that was not the closed preserve of some civilized government, the capitalists of rival nations, usually backed by their governments, competed for concessions, or opportunities to exploit these peoples at higher rates of usury than could be obtained at home. The Turkish Empire was a happy hunting ground for these concessionaries, and here European *Realpolitik* was seen at its worst and meanest. The Sultan, Abdul the Damned, as he was nicknamed in England, soon began to realize that he could perpetrate with entire impunity the most flagrant outrages on his Christian subjects, in the face of Christian Europe. Germany, who had excellent military and business reasons for being on the right side of the Turk, was frankly indifferent to the death and rape of some myriads of wretched Armenians, and so, notwithstanding her recent crusading fervour for the Christians of the Balkans, was Holy Russia. Against such treason to civilization, the venerable Gladstone, emerging in 1897 from his final retirement, might thunder in vain.

The fact was that under the new conditions, in which national policy came to be more and more identified with that of "big business", as represented by a few leading capitalists working behind the scenes, there was no chance for ethical considerations to come into play, nor even for very far-sighted views of self interest. It is said to be a weakness of stockbrokers not to look beyond the next settling day, and though this is doubtless an exaggeration, the business is seldom the philosophic temperament. A ruthless

pursuit of immediate advantage may involve consequences ultimately disastrous to the pursuers, as when the South African Randlords manoeuvred for a war of Britain against the Transvaal. When the State and the capitalist work together, there is always a temptation to gamble with military support. The new capitalism was, in fact, as aggressive in its tendencies as the old was—generally speaking—peaceable.

The vast scale on which business was now conducted, and the practice of employing capital in exploiting distant and backward communities instead of earning low rates of interest in home manufactures, lent an ever-increasing power to the financier who worked the delicate machinery by which the accumulated wealth of a nation is made to flow, with the rapidity of quicksilver, now into this and now into that desired channel. Perhaps when, if ever, the inner workings of recent history are fully exposed, the part played by the international financier will stand revealed as the most decisive and sinister of all. Perhaps, on the other hand, it will be found that even Cassels and Rothschilds were in no sense supermen, but quite ordinary human beings, often moved by sentiments of sincere affection for their adopted countries, and more swayed by timidity than grandiose ambition.

This at least we can say with something approaching certainty, that in this latest age the most important events are seldom those trumpeted in newspapers or chronicled in text-books. What we chiefly want to know—too often in vain—is who were pulling the strings, what interests were competing behind the scenes. It may well be that in this age of capitalist operations on a vast scale, the individual capitalists and financiers were carried along as blindly as everyone else. That does not alter the fact that love of race and country was blended more indistinguishably than ever before with that of money; that men could be persuaded to die in the name of right and freedom for other men's dividends; that not even in the eighteenth century were the workings of international politics so frankly sordid and cynical. The sledge of civilization—to adapt a phrase from the Russian—had begun to fly downhill.

10

Founders of British Imperialism

It is now time to ascertain in what way this tendency towards a militant and commercial imperialism, aiming at racial supremacy,

had affected the British spirit. Is there, during the period between the Peace of Frankfurt and the Great War, evidence of a Pan-Britainism corresponding in any way to Pan-Germanism or Pan-Slavism or the other " Pans " of which this age was so prolific ?

The answer will be found to take the form of a carefully qualified affirmative. A Pan-Britainism, or British imperialism, did no doubt arise and flourish, and we shall find it exhibiting, at one time or another, all the characteristics that we have noted in the other imperialisms ; there is the same vague yet flamboyant appeal to racial pride, the same cynicism in the pursuit of the main chance, the same anxiety to be armed to the teeth not only against military but against economic rivals.

Of all this it is easy enough to produce evidence, and yet at no time, not even in the late nineties, would it be correct to say that Pan-Britainism, taken in this sense, was ever dominant in this country to the extent that Pan-Germanism was dominant under the auspices of the Kaiser. In the first place, Englishmen have too little logic or too much humour ever (unless we must take exception of the short-lived Puritan Revolution) to commit themselves wholly to the support of any abstract idea.

Again, the supreme motive of an unredeemed population beyond our frontiers was entirely absent. The Americans were certainly recognized as—more or less—fellow Anglo-Saxons, and the idea that blood was thicker than water was a powerful, if often relaxed bond of sympathy that might, in the opinion of a few, ultimately tighten into one of union, but nobody ever dreamed of our going out of our way to " redeem " our lost colonies. England was in the happy and unique position of having large communities of her sons occupying vast countries habitable by the white man, and united with her under a common sovereignty. So far from wanting to redeem these incipient nations, most prominent men of the middle of the century had been cheerfully discussing when and how we should get rid of them.

Perhaps for both these reasons, and perhaps, also, owing to the longevity and influence of Gladstone, a Liberalism, at once romantic and utilitarian, retained its prestige and influence, only slightly impaired, long after it had ceased to be taken seriously on the Continent. At a time when the other nations and our own colonies were building up tariffs, more or less scientific, the fiscal policy of the United Kingdom never swerved from the strictest Free-Trade orthodoxy. And though Liberalism was badly scotched after the

fiasco of Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill, it was so far from being killed that, within less than twenty years, it was able to sweep the country with a completeness undreamed of since the Whig triumph of 1832. Even among the Unionists, as the combination of Conservatives and dissentient Liberals was called, imperialism was a less absolute doctrine than among Prussian Junkers or the courtiers of the Tsar. More and more, in so far as the white communities were concerned—though with the notable exception of Ireland—it was understood to imply free cooperation between free nations. And even where coloured civilizations, like India and Egypt, were concerned, there was always at least lip homage paid to the ideal of preparing them for the privileges of self-government.

For the first stirrings of the imperialist spirit we must look to the sheer nationalist pugnacity that flourished, side by side with Manchester pacifism, in the fifties and sixties. From the Palmerstonian heroics of Little England to the Disraelian cult of Big England the transition is so easy, that it says a good deal for the conservative mentality of the elder statesman that he never thought of making it, even in the sixties. It was perhaps natural that the poets should have been among the first to bridge the gulf. The Laureate, Tennyson, naturally one of the most bellicose spirits that were ever inspired by the muse, who had thundered the wrath of Europe against Russia, and appealed in trumpet tones for volunteers against France, passed on easily to " hands all round ", " one life, one flag, one fleet, one throne ", and finally to that jubilee paean of science, commerce and imperial expansion which, regarded as a poem, is worthy of such predecessors in the laureateship as Pye and Eusden. So likewise did Algernon Charles Swinburne forsake the Mazzinian ultra-Liberalism of his most creative years, for the equally violent assertion of British racial supremacy that made him, at last, out-jingo the wildest jingoism of the South African War-fever.

It is to Thomas Carlyle that we can trace no inconsiderable part of the spiritual, or philosophic, ancestry of modern imperialism. Carlyle had always been in more or less conscious opposition to the utilitarian Liberalism of his own time, though he certainly partook, in full measure, of that time's Romanticism. The effect of German philosophy upon his Lowland mind had been to give him an ever increasing bias in favour of a State organization whose vital principle was not liberty but obedience, in the first place to the will of God, in the second to that of a godlike man or hero. Unfortunately the difficulty of ascertaining God's will drove Carlyle more and more

to applying the test of superior force, of accepting implicitly what Nietzsche formulated with brutal directness in "The good war justifies every cause". Carlyle's God was, in fact, not wholly unrelated to the "good old German God" employed by the Hohenzollerns.

As early as 1843, Carlyle had, in a few glowing pages of his *Past and Present*, anticipated all that was essential of an imperialism hardly dreamed of in that generation. He was an avowed believer in the merits and mission of the Anglo-Saxon stock, but his admiration was based on novel and significant grounds. To him, the best type of Englishman is constituted by the strong, silent man of whom we were to hear so much towards the end of the century. The countrymen of Shakespeare and Shelley, of Bacon and Newton, are not only assumed to be incapable of expressing themselves in any but the dullest and stupidest words, but are actually held up to admiration for it by this eloquent and voluminous apostle of silence. And here, conscious and over-conscious as Carlyle is of "Teutsch" ancestry, his doctrine is more intimately allied to Pan-Slavism than Pan-Germanism. It is by no accident that in this same chapter on the English we read:

"The dumb Russians too, as I said, they, drilling all wild Asia and Europe into military rank and file, a terrible yet hitherto a prospering enterprise, are still dumber. The old Romans also could not *speak*, for many centuries . . ."

Upon such a basis, Carlyle was able to sketch, in brief but unforgetable outline, what was to be the commonplace of fifty years later. He proclaimed that this little isle had grown too narrow for us, and his counsel was that we should fight the hostile tariffs, that were bound to arise, by securing our markets within the empire. Nor was this the only way of securing markets. In a passage only too ominously prophetic of the new spirit, he says:—

"All men trade with all men, when mutually convenient; and are even bound to do it by the Maker of men. Our friends of Chiña, who guiltily refused to trade, in these circumstances—had we not to argue with them, in cannon shot at last, and convince them that they ought to trade."

This enlistment of God in the task of breaking open the doors of weaker neighbours, characterized unctuously as "our friends", comes strangely from one who was never weary of denouncing cant. What Carlyle plainly has in view is the expansion of the Anglo-Saxons over as much as possible of the habitable globe, though without loss of political and spiritual unity, conscripting, *à la Russe*,

less advanced peoples for the service of civilization, God, and Anglo-Saxon commerce. Here was " a future, wide as the world, if we have the heart and heroism for it.' Had Carlyle understood the English mind, and not tried to saddle it with ideas that were the legacy of imperial Rome and the heritage of modern Prussia, he might have been a prophet indeed !

As it was, his influence was a potent force with the younger generation. John Ruskin, who, in his social doctrine, was much under his influence, and gave more developed and serene form to his essential message, was an apostle of imperial expansion, though certainly not of bombarding Chinamen to force them to accept our opium. But in his inaugural lecture at Oxford, delivered in 1870, his Pan-British creed is announced with trumpet clearness :

" This is what she (England) must either do or perish : she must found colonies as fast and as far as she is able, formed of her most energetic and worthiest men ;—seizing every piece of fruitful waste ground she can set her foot on, and there teaching these her colonists that their first virtue is to be fidelity to their country, and that their first aim is to be to advance the power of England by land and sea " —words that, with the substitution of Germany for England, might easily have been written by Treitschke and endorsed by General Von Bernhardi.

Another disciple of Carlyle was the historian Froude who, in spite of his notorious inaccuracy, did, in some measure, for English history, what Treitschke, Droysen and others were doing for Germany. With a style as lucid as Macaulay's, Froude displayed a very different though not less intense patriotism. Macaulay was no respecter of empire-builders, his theme had been the growth of constitutional liberty, his hero, William III, pre-eminently a good Eurpoean. Froude made his hero Henry VIII, and did succeed in showing, not that he was a good man—his attempt to do so was palpably disingenuous and foreign to his real purpose—but that he was an expert Machiavellian who united England by blood and iron, and made possible that future of our race on the water, and beyond it. It is not surprising that Froude should have constituted himself one of the first missionaries of Empire.

In 1869 another globe-trotter, Charles Dilke, notorious for his republican leanings, published the results of his travels two years previously, in the colonies, India and the United States. It was in this book that Dilke coined the name " Greater Britain ". The idea which had throughout been his inspiration was, avowedly, " a

conception, however small, of the grandeur of our race, already girdling the earth, which it is destined, perhaps, eventually to overspread." This Pan-Britainism explicitly included the Americans, and as explicitly excluded the Irish, who are coupled with the Chinese as typical of the "cheap races" against whom the Anglo-Saxons have to strive.

Among these pioneers of imperialism must be numbered Professor Seeley, whose lucid, if somewhat too highly generalized *History of British Expansion* first threw into the perspective of many educated people the historic significance of the Empire, and who followed it up by a *History of British Policy*, which carried the origins of the Empire back to the Reformation.

11

The Law and the Blood

These writers appealed to a comparatively limited circle, though their influence no doubt percolated to multitudes who had never read their books. But imperialism needed an exponent capable of appealing to the class most likely to receive it with gladness, that of the black-coated city workers who, from the humble clerk to the substantial senior partner, were fated for the term of their unnatural lives to an existence of conventional monotony, without even the bourgeois dignity of their fathers. There were, too, shop-assistants and other employees who went to swell the class that is somewhat vaguely characterized as "lower-middle". It was among these more or less educated town and suburb dwellers that a great yearning was felt for a life of colour and adventure, of the strong arm and the open air, that should offer the strongest possible relief to their present pinched respectability. The reality of such a life was out of the question for most of them, but that made it all the more necessary to get the idea or vision of it into the dream world upon which doors open even in Balham.

It was during the eighties, in so far as we can assign to any particular decade a process so gradual, that the old middle class of Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Caudle, of Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Bright, with its solid virtues and stolid Philistinism, gives place to the new semi-genteel bourgeoisie, profoundly dissatisfied with its own status,

and the lover of every sort of existence but its own. The old self-satisfied and class-conscious doctrines of the Manchester School suffer a corresponding eclipse. The time is ripe for a new gospel.

And it was just such a gospel that a young Anglo-Indian journalist of genius, Mr. Rudyard Kipling, was inspired to preach. Never was message more opportunely timed. From the first it was evident that a story-teller of consummate ability had burst into fame, and with the publication, in 1892, of *Barrack Room Ballads*, it became evident that the story-teller was also in the first rank of contemporary poets. Mr. Kipling's extraordinary faculties of observation and visualization were just what was needed to bring home to what he contemptuously characterized as " the poor little street-bred people ", their membership of an Empire upon which, as it became fashionable to say, the sun never set. And not only membership but, in some unexplained way, ownership, for the clerk on a pound a week was thrilled with a profound conviction that by the mere fact of his being an Englishman he held the gorgeous East in fee and was among the lords of the Seven Seas. And there is no doubt that Mr. Kipling did more than fifty Matthew Arnolds could have done to wean the middle class from the provincialism and Podsnappery of the sixties. The Golden Gate and the Horn, the Karroo and the great, green, greasy Limpopo became as real and vivid to the city dweller as his own street of desirable residences. More wonderful, perhaps, because, from his never having seen them, they came to him with all the added glamour of romance.

Mr. Kipling might be classed, with equal plausibility, as among the first of the Realists and the last of the Romantics. For a brutal realism was just the sort of romance for which the brain-worker of the towns, sick of a civilization which offered him nothing but the drabbest monotony, was yearning. It was delicious to exchange, even in imagination, the pinched and sallow security of an office stool for frail morals and strong liquor " somewhere East of Suez ". As the Celtic visionaries had dreamed of a land beyond the sunset where none should ever grow old or sorrowful, so " our Mr. Smith " dreamed of limitless horizons, of colonials, rough-tongued and large of limb, or perhaps of spattering shrapnel and " juicy " gun-wheels, of loot and drink and " learning about women " from a succession of exotic mistresses.

With admirable art, Mr. Kipling put in the forefront of his picture of Empire the figure of the British private soldier, a man taken away from miserable and squalid surroundings to what Mr. Kipling

described, and apotheosized to his readers, as " the lordliest life on earth ". Of all his poems, none has had so universal an appeal as *Mandalay*, the yearning of the ex-soldier amid the drizzle and grit of London to return to the spaciousness and spiciness of an Orient dreamland.

But it was romance of a strange and novel kind. Part of its attraction consisted in its sheer lawlessness, in the rein given to instincts that are choked by the conventions of life at home. This was also the attraction of Nietzsche's philosophy. The Kiplingese public schoolboy was even rougher, the Kiplingese Tommy even more ruffianly than the real article, and this constituted no small part of their fascination. It was exhilarating to think of " sons of the Blood " being able, in their teens, to rival Red Indians as expert torturers, and dreaming of a grand war in the near future " with plenty of loot and Sikhs ". There was something splendidly daring in the very lilt of :

> " Now remember when you're 'acking round a Gilded Burma god
> That 'is eyes is very often precious stones ;
> An' if you treat a nigger to a dose o' cleanin' rod,
> 'E's like to show you everything 'e owns."

It was a new idea, too, to write a song in the name of Her Majesty's Royal Marines containing the candid admission that most of them were liars, half of them thieves, and the remainder " as rank as can be ". In the imperial nineties, this passed for a compliment !

Whether or not Mr. Kipling may have come under the conscious influence of Carlyle, his imperialism does but fill the outlines that Carlyle sketched in long before. There is the same glorification of work, the same contempt of happiness and individual rights, the same cult of silence and the strong man who cannot express himself, the same familiarity with the purposes of an up-to-date Jehovah.

It is also in the true spirit of Carlyle that the corner-stones of Mr. Kipling's imperial faith should be what he calls " The Blood " and " The Law ". " The Blood," of course, is the English version of that cult of the super-race which, in Germany, Russia, and Turkey, was dignified by the prefix " pan ". Like Carlyle's, Mr. Kipling's Pan-Britainism was nearer akin to the Russian than the German model. He was no philosopher, and despite his own imaginative genius, he had a certain obvious distrust for what recent slang has christened highbrows. His man who comes out to India with an interest in Comte and Spencer gets nicknamed the " blastoderm " by the strong, silent Englishmen around him, and has any tendency

to unorthodox speculation quickly knocked out of him; subalterns of independent ideas are ragged. The Sons of the Blood are hard and silent men, scornful of theory, bottling up the emotions, chary of amenities. If they come together, they will not fall on each other's necks like foreigners, but will as likely as not hide their real comradeship by sparring and quarrelling continuously. In the *Barrack Room Ballads*, the Queen is the "Widder of Windsor", and the flag itself, the English flag which Mr. Kipling has elsewhere hymned with such a noble passion, is a "bloomin' old rag".

It is just these outwardly unlovely characteristics that make the "blood" what it is, and the British stock the salt of the earth. All other foreign or subject peoples are lumped together as "lesser breeds without the Law". What is the "Law"? The answer to this question brings us to the heart of Kiplingese imperialism.

Mr. Kipling's "Law" is, in fact, something more akin to the imperial centralization of Rome than the stubborn and often illogical insistence on "rights" that is the essence of the English Common Law. "My rights!" says Private Ortheris, in the true spirit of his creator, "S'trewth A'mighty! I'm a man." For everything savouring of Liberalism or democracy, Mr. Kipling is as contemptuous as Carlyle himself. Not liberty but disciplined obedience is his aim:

> "The head and the hoof of the Law and the haunch and the hump is—obey!"

It is curious that Mr. Kipling, when he wants to convey some notion of his ideal community, should have recourse first to the law of a pack of wolves, and secondly, to the disciplined harmony of a machine. Nobody can read that fascinating story, *The Ship that found Herself*, without seeing in it the obvious allegory of the community that finds itself, by an exactly regulated co-ordination of services. This same allegory is made the theme of the engineer M'Andrew's lyric rhapsody in praise of his engine-room machinery:

> "Interdependence absolute, foreseen, ordained, decreed,
> To work, Ye'll note, at any tilt and every rate of speed,
> Fra skylight lift to furnace bars, backed, bolted, braced and stayed,
> An' singin' like the Mornin' Stars for Joy that they are made . . .
> Now a' together let them lift their lesson, theirs an' mine:
> Law, Order, Duty an' Restraint, Obedience, Discipline!"

This, of its kind, is a noble and austere ideal, but most assuredly it is not English. It was not for nothing that Mr. Kipling was born in Bombay, the most cosmopolitan city in the world, next to

Constantinople. His imperialism is that of Rome, "*pacis imponere morem*," and, for that very reason, profoundly unenglish. It is "*imperium*" without "*libertas*".

Nevertheless Mr. Kipling was above the mere jingoism and music-hall bragging that were the too common accompaniments of the imperialistic spirit among what he characterized—and despised—as "the poor little street-bred people". There was a stern, Old-Testament humility about the gospel he came to preach. The Lord his God, and Tommy's Gawd, was a jealous God, and

> "Except ye pay the Lord
> Single heart and single sword,
> Of your children in their bondage shall He ask them treble-tale!"

This was a contingency that haunted Mr. Kipling, as it had haunted the prophets of Israel. He had no doubt about the rough colonials, "the men who could shoot and ride," but it became increasingly apparent to him that the very townspeople who acclaimed him as a prophet were not honouring the Blood nor serving the Lord at all, but whoring after "wise wood-pavement gods", who would leave them naked to their foes in the Armageddon that he foresaw. Even the Diamond Jubilee, that unprecedented proof and pageant of Empire, could only awake in its chosen apostle and laureate the fear,

> "Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"

In an age when moral standards were everywhere being set aside, without being replaced, when art was retiring from life and organized religion almost ceasing to count, Mr. Kipling came forward as the evangelist of a definite and intelligible gospel, a gospel of work and obedience, of a chosen race serving its chosen God:

> "Keep ye the law—be swift in all obedience
> Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford.
> Make ye sure to each his own
> That he reaps where he hath sown;
> By the peace among our peoples let men know we serve the Lord!"

There was, of course, one aspect of imperialism which Mr. Kipling, through whose austerity there ran a strong streak of sentimentalism, persistently failed to envisage. He could see the rough workers and adventurers who bridged the ford and sunk the mine, but he could not bear to visualize these men as the blind tools, not of the Lord, but of financiers, whose object it was not to civilize but to exploit "the sullen, silent peoples", to whom Mr. Kipling's imperialism would have denied a voice in the decision of their own destinies. The blood was fine enough to sing, but what of the heart that pumped

the blood? What of the financial interests that bled Pharaoh white before sending Sergeant What's-his-name, with "a sarse of leaden bullet", to civilize him into further remittances. Mr. Kipling never did, and perhaps, being a poet, never could, attain to the enormous frankness of Cecil Rhodes's "philanthropy plus five per cent."

Mr. Kipling was at the height of his genius and influence during the decade that elapsed between the Queen's two jubilees in 1887 and 1897. These events in themselves were gigantic advertisements of the Empire for which Victoria had now come to stand as the crowned symbol. In the earlier part of her reign she had been a power in the land and a personality often the reverse of popular. In her widowed seclusion at Balmoral, she worked as hard and asserted her constitutional authority as stoutly as ever. But her ministers had learnt to discount the vehemence of her prejudices, and on important matters of policy her will was seldom allowed to prevail. Her pet aversion, Gladstone, could be scolded, but not shaken. And when at last, after her long retirement, she was coaxed back into the limelight, she had ceased to be Victoria and had become an institution. The reins of power slipped unperceived from hands that no longer had the energy to grasp them, and, while honour and affection were lavished upon her such as no English sovereign had ever previously received, the power of the Crown had shrunk to proportions that not even the first two Georges would have deigned to tolerate. The sovereign was, in fact, though without any formal surrender, the passive mouthpiece of her ministers.

But by the very fact of her personal power having disappeared, the Queen's symbolical value was enhanced out of all measure. There was now no chance of her unpopularity; the sovereign was lifted, by universal consent, above the controversies of party politics; the offensive caricatures and innuendoes, that had been so common in the Prince Consort's time, and after his death had not stuck at lampooning the pathetic invincibility of her bereaved devotion, disappeared from the reputable press; the little old lady, with the impassive face, who was drawn through the street inclining almost mechanically to the salutations of her subjects, was now a kind of universal mother, a Pan-Britannic Madonna. To the colonies and dependencies beyond the seas she embodied the Empire in the most convenient, because the most inoffensive possible form. The freedom-loving colonial might have nothing but abuse for Downing Street, he might even advertise for labour with the proviso "no English

wanted here", but he was loyal to the Queen, because she never interfered with him and because, at heart, he was usually a bit of a sentimentalist. In India the prestige of the throne was immense and traditional, most of all among the proud Indian Princes. Even African and Maori chiefs liked to think of their Great White Queen.

It was therefore an event not only of spectacular but of historic significance when the Queen passed through cheering crowds between lines of scarlet-clad soldiers and attended by such novel escorts as slouch-hatted colonials and gorgeously turbaned sowars. To adopt a phrase from Mr. Kipling, the Empire might be said to have found itself. Even the first jubilee acted as a tremendous stimulant of national and imperial self-consciousness. Everybody, from the Laureate downwards, started to compute the results of fifty years' progress and to find them superlatively good. The most obvious gauge of progress, to the ordinary man, was the way in which the English red had begun to colour the map of the world. That any statesman should ever have wanted to check the process, let alone decarnadine the map, now seemed little less than treasonable perversity. The red, like the Queen, had become a symbol, a romance, and especially so to the middle-class in the towns, to whose cribbed existences the very idea of the Empire brought colour and spaciousness.

Between the two Jubilees, then, imperialist sentiment was rising to fever pitch. The process of painting the map red had gone gaily forward, and so far without any serious mishaps. Meanwhile, the effects of compulsory literacy were first becoming apparent, in a veritable revolution of the Press. The old bourgeois solidity and stolidity were less and less in demand. Everything had to be adjusted to the requirements of half-baked intelligences in a hurry, to the demands of that steadily growing majority who could read, but could neither reflect nor concentrate. What this new public required was not so much food for thought as emotional stimulus. The tamer a man's or woman's real life might be, the more ardently did they long to be transported into a world of adventure and dalliance, and the less exacting were their requirements with regard to truth or probability. The very fact of a man's being neither strong nor silent gave him a hunger for being a superman in his dreams. Where he sought for knowledge he preferred to take it in the form of easily received and easily forgotten snippets or *Tit-Bits*, as the first of the new order of cheap weeklies was appropriately styled.

Much of this new, sensational journalism was purely aimless, read one moment and forgotten the next. But it was inevitable that the capitalists, who were making fortunes by humouring the mentality of the new reading class, should come to see the advantage of exploiting crudely and on a vast scale the self-same needs for which Mr. Kipling's genius catered. In one form or another, the desire of the enormous mass of town-dwellers was to satisfy in imagination the instinctive lust for power and action, for which real life afforded no scope.

There were, of course, various ways of doing this which had no direct connection with imperialism. There was, most conspicuously of all, the vicarious satisfaction of the combative instincts that took the form of watching or reading about sport. It was at this time that sport began to be capitalized and professionalized on a vast scale. The watching of teams of hired footballers became the Saturday afternoon's amusement of multitudes who had sweetened a week of toil by the anticipation of one ecstatic hour. And for the instinct of adventure there was betting, often on horses or contests that the bold layer did not even aspire to behold.

There was, again, the cult of adventure of its own sake, and without any political or patriotic afterthought. The man of genius who rose on the crest of this wave was Robert Louis Stevenson, who, being, like Nietzsche, an invalid, felt in double measure the need for emotional consolation. But his mastery—perhaps a little over-conscious—of style demanded an educated mind for its appreciation. For the great mass of readers, coarser and more highly seasoned fare had to be provided. The nineties was the decade pre-eminently of magazine supermen, drawn with varying degrees of skill, detectives and criminals, sea captains and banditti, vivified mummies and nondescript mystery men, but all alike in their strength and silence, their practical omnipotence, and omniscience in pursuit of ends often the most trivial. There was the still lower form of standardized melodrama, in which the charms of blonde and submissive virgins are perpetually the reward of blameless fools in conflict with super-subtle villainy.

But the Empire afforded the most obvious and perfect satisfaction for desires of this kind. It was a vast collective adventure in which every one could picture himself as having a share. The vastness and prosperity and victorious progress of the Empire, ever getting bigger and bigger, enabled even the mild and anaemic clerk or shopman to suggest to himself that he, in some way, was

every day becoming prosperous and mighty. When his government took a strong line with a foreign nation, the line became his line, and the victory his victory. War itself, for which the State hired professional soldiers as his local club hired professional footballers, became the most exhilarating of all forms of sport, and he no more visualized the prospects of his being made to take a part in it, than he did of his being haled off to Lord's to stand up against Kortright's bowling. It is significant that a type of fiction that attained great vogue at this time was that of a future war, the more bloody and universal the better, in which, after thrilling vicissitudes, England always came out on top. "Stalky and Co." were by no means alone in their ardent desire for such a war. The Englishman was perhaps too essentially good-natured, too much of a sportsman, to emulate the concentrated and ruthless racial ambitions of his Continental rivals, but his very immunity from personal service and his confidence in the ability of the fleet to protect him from serious danger, added a light-hearted irresponsibility to his desire for the greatest of all thrills.

There was much that was human and generous in the desire to feel oneself as part of a great, civilizing Empire, to share in that mystic communion of all the British race, living, dead, and unborn, to be lifted out of the drudgery of a self-centred life into the service of a great ideal. To honour the Queen, to reverence the flag, to be jealous for the national honour—these were good things in themselves. But the danger of this new-born imperialism was lest these noble professions should cloak the desire to obtain a cheap emotional satisfaction, that heroism should take the form of vicarious bullying, that individual should be sublimated into collective egotism, and that the generous and liberal impulses of past years should be choked by a will to power which was not a will either to personal service or personal risk. Equally serious was the danger that an ignorant enthusiasm might be turned, by interested persons, to the service of their own ends, whether these took the form of turning bloodshed and tyranny to their personal profit, or of diverting the attention and energy of the masses from the improvement of their own condition. Perhaps the greatest, because the subtlest, danger was that the newborn enthusiasm for empire might stampede a newly-enfranchised and half-educated populace into forsaking their true heritage of British tradition and whoring after strange gods—perhaps those of Rome.

And yet, it may be, that for the chance of crowning British

civilization with the attainment, not of empire, in the old sense, but of a Commonwealth of free nations, heralding the dawn of a new and brighter phase of the world's history—the risk was worth taking.

12

Caucocracy

The Reform Bill of 1867 had hardly come into operation, when it became apparent that a new spirit had entered into politics. It was one thing to set up a democratic franchise, and quite another to make it function democratically. By a strange irony, the very expedient that was first hit upon for accomplishing this latter object proved to be the most effective means of frustrating it.

To strike a greatest common measure between the wills of millions of poor and uneducated men, in most of whose lives and interests politics plays an almost negligible part, and to get this average or general will translated into action, might seem, to anyone not obsessed by the catchwords of popular rhetoric, a task well nigh superhuman. This, however, was not the view of a few earnest Radical politicians in the city of Birmingham, the chief of whom, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, was destined to wield an influence in English politics comparable to that of Gladstone himself. In one respect the two men were strikingly similar. To an even greater extent than of Gladstone, we think of Chamberlain as a force, a torrential energy. He never displayed the least trace of Mr. Balfour's intellectual detachment or Disraeli's philosophic grasp. What manner of man he was his face reveals with extraordinary clearness—the head like a spear, the keen-cut features, the tight lips, the aggressive nose—one of those men who, whether for good or ill, are destined by sheer force of will to play the leading part on whatever stage they happen to figure. He started life as his father's representative in a screw manufacturing business, in which, in face of desperate competition, his tempestuous efficiency succeeded in establishing something like a monopoly for his firm, and a handsome fortune for himself. Still a comparatively young man, he next flung himself into municipal politics and, as Mayor of Birmingham, transformed that city, by a daring application of socialistic principles, from one of the most backward to the best-governed and most progressive in England.

This second not inconsiderable achievement was but the preliminary to a career first of national and then of imperial significance. To the man who had set up a new model of municipal government,

it did not seem an impossible achievement to make Birmingham give the lead to England in the application of Radical democratic principles. Disraeli's Bill had made the experiment of giving Birmingham a franchise designed to secure the representation of a minority by only allowing each elector two votes for the three seats. This was a direct denial of the Divine Right of a majority to absolute power, and the Birmingham Radicals, being a majority, would be satisfied with nothing less than the whole representation of the city for themselves. The actual plan for manipulating votes, by dictating to each member of the party which two Radicals he should support, emanated from a Mr. Harris, but Chamberlain's organizing energy made it certain of success. All three seats were secured and the experimental franchise was withdrawn.

But the Birmingham plan, as it was called, was by no means to be dropped with the attainment of its immediate object. Mr. Chamberlain had discovered a new model of political warfare, and one thoroughly after his own heart. For the effect of it was to organize a party as an army is organized, by the strictest discipline, for the purpose of enforcing its will, or the will of its leaders. As in an army, all individual liberty or freedom of judgment was mercilessly subordinated to the purpose of winning. It was a point of honour not to let a private opinion stand in the way of party efficiency. And as in war, almost any means were excusable for the attainment of the supreme object. To howl down opponents, to break up meetings, were regrettable but all too common expedients; even the employment of personal violence was an inevitable result of regarding amenability to argument as incipient treason.

The success of the Birmingham plan was rapid and conspicuous enough to make it apparent that the party that first adopted it would enjoy an advantage over its opponents similar to that of a disciplined army over a mob. First the Liberal and then the Conservative party hastened to refurbish their machinery on the Birmingham model. Not only were the rank and file regimented, as far as practicable, into hosts of enthusiastic partisans, but the candidates themselves, even veteran and distinguished statesmen, were expected to take their principles, with their orders, from the "caucus", as the new organization was called. The old sturdy individualism, that had been so conspicuous a quality of the mid-century bourgeoisie, was now a political crime to be suppressed without mercy by the caucus inquisition. Even Joseph Cowen, one of the old guard of

Romantic Liberalism, the friend of Mazzini and Garibaldi, was subjected to a merciless and minute persecution by the so-called Liberal organization in his own constituency, set upon by imported ruffians, and driven into private life, because he persisted in maintaining the right of a Member of Parliament to vote according to the dictates of his conscience.

It might have been foreseen that the caucus would not long remain true even to its narrow aim of enforcing the tyranny of a majority. The organization of an army is not the one best calculated for enforcing the preferences of its rank and file. Centralization was necessary for efficiency, and lavish subsidies were continually required to supply the sinews of war. As party organization became national, the importance of the local three-hundreds and six-hundreds rapidly dwindled, and that of the central office, from which the whole campaign was directed, became overwhelming. It was the central office that received and administered the great secret funds that were required for the success of competitive electioneering. And, paying the piper, it not unnaturally called the tune, only humouring the local associations on points of minor importance.

In this age of none too scrupulous politics, there was perhaps no system less obviously defensible than this latest developmentof English Parliamentary government. So far were the people from having the least control over the parties whose nominees governed them by turns, that all vital decisions of policy and legislation were taken by one or other secret junto whose very composition was unknown to all but a few favoured individuals. These bodies were in the uncontrolled possession of huge funds, a great part of which was raised by what can only be described as systematic corruption. It was a notorious but sedulously tabooed fact that one of the principal ways in which party funds were recruited was the prostitution of public honour involved in the sale of peerages, which were created on a scale of unprecedented lavishness, until the House of Lords was swamped with hitherto unregarded plutocrats whose titles amounted to little more than certificates of corruption. So jealously were the whole of these transactions wrapped with a veil of secrecy, so seldom was anything committal put into writing, so deeply was the reputation of both parties involved in keeping their shame from the light of day, that it was practically impossible to say in any individual case—"So-and-so bought his peerage for so much cash down." But the mere fact, that cannot be gainsaid, of all efforts to probe the facts having been sedulously burked, and, most of all, the damning

refusal to consider and unwillingness even to discuss the investigation and audit of party funds—theoretically contributed by the people themselves for public objects—is sufficient warrant for letting judgment go by default against those who make no secret of loving darkness rather than light.

The tainting of the fount of honour by the sale of peerages is only one of the crudest and perhaps one of the least important effects of the capitalization of politics involved in the caucus system. It has been already remarked that he who pays the piper calls the tune, and where the sinews of war come from the purses of very rich men, it is inevitable that the central office, and therefore party and national policy, can hardly fail to show a marked consideration for the wishes and interests of its patrons. There is no necessity to assume any such sensational corruption as that involved in the direct purchase of legislation; the "pull" that money exercises over policy may be quite informal and even negative. It may take the form of an extreme good taste in the eschewing of personalities, in declining to rake up the mud of public scandals, and generally in avoiding anything likely to be directly offensive to certain persons or interests. But corruption is none the less corrupt when it takes the form of avoiding trouble.

The Birmingham plan to realize the purpose of the democratic franchise had thus eventuated into the most effectual means of defeating it. The vote was no doubt in the hands of the poor man, but it was an instrument he had not the knowledge and perhaps hardly the will to use effectively. Every effort was made by constant and well-financed mass-suggestion to engender in him the team spirit, to make him desire the triumph of his political colour as he did that of his football team, to get him wild with enthusiasm about a few selected catchwords or formulas bearing scant relation to reality. Meanwhile the real decisions were taken and policies framed in a jealously guarded secrecy.

There was an intelligible defence of this system which for obvious reasons it was impossible to put forward in public. Probably few of the upper class in their heart of hearts believed that the newly enfranchised electors were capable of exercising their power with sufficient knowledge and self-restraint to preserve their country from disaster or bloody revolution. The Queen's government, the social system, must be carried on, the whole complicated mechanism of imperial and domestic politics must be kept beyond the reach of clumsy or violent hands. The old Liberal faith in

representative institutions, the instinctive trust in the people, were everywhere on the wane in an age dominated by the conceptions of *Realpolitik*. The English temperament was not enamoured of logical solutions and it might be held that a system, monstrous in theory, might produce, in practice, at least a better working compromise than any other within the range of practicability. To a generation inclined to doubt whether Pilate's question about truth admitted of an answer, there might not be any insuperable objection to a political system founded on falsehood and raised in corruption. The subject was one almost tabooed in political controversy and in the press, so that the ordinary man had few opportunities, even if he would, of becoming acquainted with the reality behind the alluring show of the political war.

Not only without but within the walls of Parliament was what Nietzsche would have called the breaking of the old Tables to be observed. Parnell and the Irish Nationalists, who were no friends to England, had shown how the old, dignified conventions of the House could be deliberately strained so as to make a farce of its proceedings. But it was for members of the Conservative party, the traditional supporters of order and precedent, to show that they could take lessons from Parnell, and better his instruction. A young politician of genius, Lord Randolph Churchill, succeeded, with no more than three friends, in forming what was known as the Fourth Party, for the purpose of carrying on war to the knife against the Gladstone ministry, and forcing their own official leader, Sir Stafford Northcote—as Parnell had forced his leader, Butt—either to conform to their methods or to stand aside.

Lord Randolph himself was a convinced Tory democrat determined to make his party no longer merely Conservative, but, as Disraeli would have had it, national and progressive. But the motive that united the four friends was one of sheer combativeness, a desire to defeat the enemy by almost any means. The first point on which they challenged the government was whether Charles Bradlaugh, an atheist, could be allowed to enter the House, to which his constituents had elected him, without taking an oath. The four, with a sudden access of piety, maintained that an atheist could only qualify as an M.P. by denying his principles as well as his God. This appeal to bigotry on the part of men who were certainly not obsessed with any fanatical piety was actually successful in inflicting a severe check on Gladstone. Encouraged by its success, the Fourth Party continued to employ, with great skill, every possible weapon

for the discomfiture of the government. Gladstone was attacked with a brutality almost unbelievable, and the gentle Sir Stafford Northcote fared little better. The arts of obstruction were practised with untiring assiduity. Outside the House, Lord Randolph was busy fashioning a Conservative caucus on the Birmingham model.

Gladstone and his colleagues were thus driven to an innovation which was as much at variance with their professed Liberalism as their conquest of Egypt in the interests of the bondholders. They started to interfere by law with the old freedom of debate. Needless to say, the caucus threw the whole weight of its authority on their side, openly asserting the view that members must allow party loyalty to come before individual convictions. The institution of the " closure " was only the first measure in a code which was continually strengthened by successive governments, and had the effect of placing the House almost completely at the mercy of the executive. It was now possible to force through legislation by an ordered process of tramping through the lobbies, with only so much debate as the government cared to tolerate, and that often on the most trivial issues, while vital clauses and amendments were dealt with wholesale and undebated. The talking shop of Westminster was fast becoming a voting shop.

It is remarkable, under these circumstances, that, in spite of everything, so much statesmanship and patriotism should have survived in the government of the country. This must in part be attributed to the occasionally blessed illogicality of the English temperament, to the businesslike capacity for cutting moral losses that had distinguished no less a statesman than Chatham, who could profit by Newcastle's corruption to keep in office and save England. It was an accepted convention that the Prime Minister should turn a Nelson eye on the dubious proceedings of the Whips' Office. Again, much of the solid work of statesmanship, for which the politicians took and got credit, was really performed by the permanent officials of the different departments, whom Gladstone's reform of the civil service had relegated to a useful obscurity out of the scope of the caucus. Thus it came about that party programmes, or principles, as they were somewhat euphemistically called in the Press, counted for a good deal less in practice than on the platform.

As regards the two traditional parties—as with Republicans and Democrats in the United States—it became increasingly difficult to understand what constant principles, if any, they represented. The Conservatives, now united with the seceding Liberal

Unionists, certainly made their first plank the maintenance of the Union with and firm government in Ireland, though only after coquetting with the Nationalists so long as their support had been in the market. But in Ireland the Conservatives were soon supporting the right of self-determination, even to the point of armed resistance, on the part of the Dissenting community in the North East. Again the Conservatives, the traditionally constitutional party, prompted the most violent constitutional innovation for two centuries by inducing the Lords, in 1910, to throw out a Budget.

The Liberals seemed almost equally rudderless. Between the old Gladstonian individualism and the new State socialism they oscillated uncertainly. A programme drawn up at Newcastle in 1891 was less a statement of principles than an attempt to provide what in acting parlance might have been called a bit of fat for each of their component groups. Between the new imperialism and the old Manchester Little Englandism they were, at the end of the century, openly and bitterly divided. They were in favour of applying the principles of Burke, much diluted, to Catholic Ireland, and those of George III and Lord North to the recalcitrant Protestants of the North East. Finally their attitude in respect of Free Trade was dogmatically and uncompromisingly conservative.

The dominating factor the whole time was the Irish Nationalist party. So long as either side could command a clear majority over this and its opponents combined, Home Rule might be shelved, even by the Liberals. Parnellite obstruction had been overcome, though the price paid had been the freedom of Parliamentary debate. In 1892 the Liberals managed, though in a minority themselves, to form, with Irish help, a government whose first business was, of course, to force through another Home Rule Bill by a drastic use of the new machinery for closuring debate. This Bill was promptly and contemptuously thrown out by the Lords, and Gladstone, whose colleagues would not allow him to challenge the verdict of the country, made his second and final retirement from the leadership of his party.

A new feature now comes into our political warfare. The House of Lords had long been, if not the sleeping, at least the dozing partner of the Commons. Since the first Reform Bill it did, as a popular opera had expressed it (the thing being too universally admitted to give offence)—

> " nothing in particular
> And did it very well."

It existed as a possible brake on revolutionary legislation and a useful adjunct to the Commons, it had also gained a somewhat evil name for pruning, in its unobtrusive way, such humane and progressive legislation as had not too strong a backing. But it had known its place, though on two occasions it had had to be reminded thereof by Gladstone, and that place, by tacit convention, was very much lower than a strict interpretation of the law would have prescribed.

In an age of foreign and domestic *Realpolitik*, however, conventions are not honoured when there is any immediate advantage to be gained by ignoring them. Moreover, one of the most serious results of the Liberal split of 1886 was to bring the heads of the great Houses, which had been the old-guard of Whiggism, almost solidly over on to the Unionist side. The House of Lords thus became overwhelmingly Unionist—the name that was now adopted to denote the reinforced Conservative party—and as the grant and sale of peerages was, for seventeen out of the next twenty years, conducted by the Unionist caucus, the disparity was only increased. The temptation to use the peerage as a mere pawn in the party game became too overwhelming to be resisted, especially after the really popular action of the Lords in throwing out the second Home Rule Bill. Knowing the shaky tenure of the Liberal Government, the Peers followed up their advantage by contemptuously rejecting bill after bill. As far as the immediate situation was concerned they, or the caucus, had calculated well; divided and discredited, the Liberals were driven to the country and defeated, the Conservatives commanding an overwhelming advantage over them and the Irish combined. But the House of Lords, most of whose members had qualified by birth and some by purchase, had now committed itself to the position that it could, and ought to, hold up the legislation of an elected majority with which it disagreed. It had also fatally compromised its independence and dignity, not only by its tacit acquiescence in its own corruption by purchase, but also by its open participation in the caucus war on the Unionist side.

However much Parliamentary government may have suffered from the causes we have outlined, the years of Unionist domination were not unfruitful of quiet legislative progress. Education, which had been made compulsory in 1880, was made free in 1891, and centralized in 1902 in the County Councils, though the miserable squabbles of rival sects, which had been throughout the curse of English education, entirely diverted attention from anything but

what was called the "religious" aspect of the last-named Act. The system of local representative government was completed and brought down, by the short-lived Liberal ministry, to the parishes. Some progress was made in such social reforms as concerned housing, compensation for accidents, and the provision of allotments for the landless. A genuine attempt was made to blend beneficence with firmness in the government of Ireland. Most significant of all, as a sign of the times, was the fact that in 1903 the Unionist government should itself have paved the way for Home Rule. It prudently withdrew the English garrison of landlords from Catholic Ireland by a system of State-aided purchase of the land for the tenants. Having once got the soil it could not be long before the Irish would demand and obtain the government of their country.

13

Daughter Nations

The last two decades of the nineteenth century saw the most astonishing extension of European sway that had ever taken place in so short a time. The development of steam transport, by land and sea, invited the exploitation of the continental hinterlands behind the coast strips to which colonial enterprise had hitherto clung. And just as capital, hungry for investment, had, in the eighteenth century, demanded and obtained inventors, so now, when the call was for explorers of genius, it was not unanswered. The spectacle was witnessed of a wild and none too scrupulous scramble for every inch of the globe that remained to be appropriated or exploited. This was only the logical application of principles of Realism and *Realpolitik* that were now everywhere dominant. It was in the eighties that France and Germany shed the last remnants of Cobdenite Free-Trade and pinned their faith to that form of extreme nationalism which sees even in trade not an exchange of benefits, but an unceasing struggle to vanquish and exclude all one's neighbours, the Darwinian anarchy backed by all the resources of science. In every civilized power capital was fiercely competing for dividends, and, whatever the form of government, it was capital that ruled the roost. If the process of bringing railways, rum, and other marketable benefits to backward countries, or of extracting metals from their soil, brought 5 per cent. where only 4 could be obtained from investment at home, that was sufficient reason for forcibly or guilefully appropriating the land of any aboriginal

potentate or chief who might be supposed to be incapable of resistance, and of pushing claims to such appropriated or some-day-to-be-appropriated property as near as possible to the verge of war with civilized competitors in the good work.

It is, in fact, some tribute to the fear in which the different competitors stood of one another, that crisis after crisis, which threatened to drown civilized Europe in its own blood, was somehow or other overcome. We ourselves were within a hairsbreadth of war with Russia over Afghanistan, and with France over Siam, the Niger, and the Upper Nile Valley. Even with Germany the affair of Jameson's Raid brought us nearer to the brink than most of us realized before the disclosure of the German Foreign Office records. And with the Dutch in the Transvaal, only a bloody and expensive conflict could bring about a settlement that might have been obtained long before by peaceful diplomacy.

There was, of course, a nobler aspect of imperial expansion than that of mere capitalist grab, the spirit that inspired the cult of the White Man's Burden. There was abundant patriotism in the breast of many an explorer and Empire Builder who braved forest and wilderness, death and disease, in the effort to plant the flag in some hitherto unclaimed territory. There was, mixed with more questionable motives, a real enthusiasm for bringing order and science into the chaos of primitive barbarism. It was something to put down the slave trade, to substitute the arts of the engineer and chemist for those of the witch-doctor, to establish the Pax Britannica over regions formerly given up to incessant and uncreative strife.

It must also be remembered that England, owing to her distinctive national character and her isolation from Continental influences, travelled less far and less decidedly along the path of *Realpolitik* than her neighbours. From first to last the voice of the nation was firm against any departure from the fiscal policy of which Cobden had been the apostle—Free Trade was maintained with a rigidity which its opponents were never tired of characterizing as pedantic, having regard to the very different circumstances of their own time. England, as represented at any rate by the industrial North, deliberately preferred to fight protective tariffs by free imports.

Again the old-fashioned, half-cosmopolitan Liberalism, to which liberty and goodwill were more important than power, though severely scotched, was by no means killed. There was always a powerful current of opinion setting against imperialism and so ready to take up any case of alleged injustice or oppression as to invite

Canning's old taunt about the friends of every country but their own. As a popular rhyme had it,

> " Pro-Boer, pro-Fenian,
> Pro-Greek, pro-Armenian. . . ."

Nor were even our most intransigent imperialists of the nineties quite of the same kidney as the hard and calculating men who directed the politics of Continental powers. Looking back in the perspective of some thirty years, one sees two figures emerge from the feverish unrest of the nineties, in whom British imperialism seems to embody itself. These, it is hardly necessary to say, are of Joseph Chamberlain and Cecil Rhodes.

From the recorded utterances of both these men unsympathetic critics can extract, and have extracted, abundant quotations which would, taken by themselves, appear to indicate minds set wholly in the pursuit of material gain—Rhodes's " philanthropy plus five per cent." is notorious. There are passages in Chamberlain's speeches from which it would appear that the Empire itself was, as Burke might have put it, " nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico and tobacco, or some other such low concern ", and that the supreme object of enlightened statesmanship was to put the Empire, in Chamberlain's words, " on a business footing."

And no doubt commercial considerations swayed Chamberlain's mind as powerfully—even as disproportionately—as they had Cobden's. The Birmingham screw-king was apt to think of everything in business terms. There is a cartoon of Max Beerbohm's which depicts him as a veritable Lord of the Philistines, catching Austin Dobson and Mr. Edmund Gosse, then at the Board of Trade, in the crime of composing poetry during office hours. But there was a streak of poetry running unmistakably through his own temperament, and of him, as of an earlier Joseph, it might have been said, " Here this dreamer cometh ! " Before everything else, however, he was a fighter. Like Gladstone and like Chatham, he was more of a force than an intellect, the aggressive nose, that proved so irresistible a temptation to the caricaturist, betrayed an energy of will that bore everything before it. And this will was not masked by the subtlety of mind that deceived contemporaries about Gladstone. Chamberlain's mind was as clear cut as his face. Once he had fixed on any goal as worthy of attainment, he went straight for it with the simplicity and ruthlessness of a Berserker, rejoicing greatly at any opposition that might present itself. It is by no

accident that his name is associated with the form of party machinery that is designed to crush individual thought and conscience in the sole interest of victory.

A ruthless will and an eye to the business aspect of everything might well be supposed to stamp their owner as the typical statesman of capitalist *Realpolitik*. And no doubt the time had given birth and scope to the man. But Chamberlain was not only a fighter and a hustler, but also something of a visionary. Spinoza was described as God-intoxicated, and so, in the latter part of his career, might Chamberlain have been described as Empire-intoxicated. The subject moved him to passionate eloquence. "You are destined," he said in Johannesburg shortly after the South African War, "to become a powerful element in that federation of free states shortly to be established, and then to constitute one in a group of free nations gathered round the motherland. I think that is an inspiring thought. The day of small kingdoms with their petty jealousies has passed. The future is with the great empires, and there is no greater empire than the British Empire."

That is the string on which he never wearied of harping, and there is no reason to doubt of his sincerity. The Empire appealed to him perhaps most of all as something of unprecedented vastness and opulence, something about which, in his own memorable phrase, one could think imperially. But the Empire was also, in his eyes, a beneficent organization. With regard to its non-British subjects, his view resembled that of an ancient Roman: England was conferring an inestimable benefit upon them and upon mankind at large by imposing her peace, her civilization. She was right fearlessly to extend her responsibilities, to compel these lesser breeds to come within the Law. He had nothing but contempt for those who espoused the cause of potentates, such as Prempeh and Lobengula, whom we found it necessary to dispossess by the argument of Maxim guns. "You cannot," he said, "make omelettes without breaking eggs; you cannot destroy the practices of barbarism, of slavery, of superstition . . . without the use of force." It was enough justification, in his eyes, to reflect that for every life lost a hundred had been gained. "We feel that our rule over these territories can only be justified if we can show that it adds to the happiness and prosperity of the people, and I maintain that our rule does, and has, brought security and peace and comparative prosperity to countries that never knew these blessings before."

British imperialism differed from that of Continental nations

in that it was not only concerned with peoples believed to be inferior to us in the scale of civilization. The daughter nations beyond the seas, to which there was nothing remotely corresponding in other empires, were now coming to maturity, and it was the prospect opened by this development that more than anything else caught and fired the imagination of Chamberlain. We had, he believed, reached the true conception of Empire in which the sense of possession had given place to the sentiment of kinship. He made himself the apostle of a new and broader patriotism that was not limited by the shores of one island or group of islands, but which would, he confidently believed, lead ultimately, and with the free will of all concerned, to a federation of the whole British race. United, this Empire, so vast in its extent and so diverse in its resources, could stand alone and safe against any possible combination. Speaking in 1903, he explicitly predicted that if ever we had our backs to the wall against a coalition of hostile nations, the whole resources of the colonies would be at our disposal. "That," he added, "is something which it is wonderful to have achieved, and which it is worth almost any sacrifice to maintain."

So tremendous was the driving force of Chamberlain's personality as to render it almost inevitable that his assumption of the Colonial Secretariat in Lord Salisbury's 1895 ministry should have opened what was, to all intents and purposes, a new chapter in Imperial history. The colonies themselves were thrust from their provincial obscurity into the full blaze of the limelight. They were treated with a respect and sympathy they had never known before. There was no question of separation, in however remote a future; the only concern of British statesmen was how far they could induce the colonies to travel in the direction of unity.

But Chamberlain himself was scarcely ready to accept all the implications of an Empire whose bond is not of the law but of the spirit, and whose service is perfect freedom. His business instincts were perpetually impelling him to look for formal and tangible evidences of union. One of his most cherished dreams was of a formal scheme of imperial federation, which was entirely repellent to the sensitive independence of nations just finding their feet. He would have put the Empire on a business footing by an elaborate system of fiscal preferences and on a war footing by a more or less centralized scheme of national defence. Though sympathizing with the colonial point of view to a greater extent than any previous statesman of the first rank, he was not fully prepared to fling the

reins on to the neck of colonial patriotism, in the faith that the spirit of love, and that alone, could freely unite these lesser loves into one imperial patriotism inspired by common principles and a common freedom. In an age that prided itself on a realism which, in practice, differed not much from cynicism, it was too much to expect that a faith, apparently so paradoxical, should find unreserved acceptance.

Whatever wisdom or folly might do to hasten or retard the advent of a world-wide Commonwealth, nothing could now arrest the advance of the new-born daughter nations in the realization of their own nationality. To write anything like an adequate account of the stage in colonial history in which the colonies cease to be colonies any longer and attain the status of dominions, would in itself demand many volumes. In all but South Africa the progress was the more rapid from being effected under conditions that allowed nearly the whole of each people's energy and resources to be devoted to the arts of peaceful industry. While Europe was staggering under the burden of armaments and distracted by the perpetual menace of war, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were working out their own destinies in a security almost idyllic, and safeguarded by the world-dominance of a navy to which it was only in the years immediately preceding the Great War that they thought of making any serious contribution.

The history of Canada was largely that of her system of railways, which now linked up her Pacific with her Atlantic coast, and enabled her to open up the great grain-lands of the West. The mere fact of this main artery of traffic running from East to West, tended to make still more remote the prospect of her ever amalgamating with her great Southern neighbour. Even those among the French Canadians who most resented any suspicion of British interference, were by no means minded to exchange King Log at London for President Stork at Washington. The main difference between the Conservative and Liberal parties, who alternated in the enjoyment of long terms of office, was that the Liberals were somewhat more inclined to push nationalist principles to their logical conclusion, and to oppose any effort to strengthen the formal bonds of Empire. They held that loyalty to the imperial connection would be only strengthened by the fact that they entered the partnership not as independents but as equals. But when, after a long term of office, they tried, in 1911, to effect a treaty of commercial reciprocity with the States, which some American politician was foolish or cunning enough to describe as a first step on the path to annexation, Canadian

feeling was aroused to the extent of hurling the Liberals from office by a decisive majority.

As for Australia and New Zealand, they were developing, though in separation, upon lines extremely interesting to students of advanced democracy in the older nations. By the close of the nineteenth century Australia had followed the example of Canada and united her separate states into one Commonwealth. As she was in no imminent fear of pressure from abroad, she was content with a federation of colonies, on the model of the United States, the central government only enjoying such powers as were expressly reserved to it in the Constitution. However, even thus early a menace was beginning to arise in the North that was destined to cast an ever deepening shadow over the peaceful prospects of this remote corner of the world. The warrior people of Japan who had been forced, by European cannon, to quit their age-long isolation, had decided that the West should have all, and more than all, that it wanted in the way of intercourse with them. Their overthrow of China in 1894–5 proclaimed them a force to be reckoned with; their triumph over Russia ten years later established their position as a military and naval power of the first rank.

Here was a position sufficiently disquieting for the European communities bordering the Pacific. Japan, with her commerce and manufactures enormously stimulated, was producing more people than she could feed, and it was inevitable that she should cast longing eyes towards the island continent whose population was yet sparse in relation to its resources. But Australia, as well as New Zealand, was jealously determined to remain a white man's country, and to keep out the Asiatic whose cheap labour would lower the standard of living which it was the first object of Australasian statesmanship to maintain at the highest possible level. Hence in both Dominions, strict immigration laws kept the Asiatic at a distance. It was, however, by no means impossible that the conquerors of Wei Hei Wei and Port Arthur might elect to take by force what was thus denied to them. As compared with any resistance that Australasia could offer on her own behalf, the numbers and armaments of Japan were overwhelming. In the early years of the twentieth century it had become more than probable that the cutting of the imperial connection, if such a thing were conceivable, by Australia or New Zealand, would amount to the signing of her own death warrant, unless, indeed, the United States could be induced to step into the place of the Mother Country. As the threat from the United States

contributed in no small degree to Canadian loyalty, so that from Japan was not without its influence on the loyalty of Australia and New Zealand. As early as 1909 Australia adopted the principle of compulsory service, though the most serious fighting she had ever witnessed within her own boundaries had been the police affair, too trumpery to be called a battle, of the Eureka stockade in 1854.

Meanwhile both Dominions (if we may apply the word without prejudice to Canada's special claim to be *the* Dominion) were showing to the world that the traditions of the British Constitution were capable of evolving orderly progress out of the most advanced experiments in social democracy. In both, the conditions were ideal for the control of the social organism by Labour and in the interests of Labour. There was no upper class tradition; the man at the top of the ladder did not differ so markedly in culture and tradition from him at the bottom. Again, the resources of Australasia had not yet, like those of the United States, permitted the formation of a powerful plutocracy. There was not that constant threat from abroad that turns men's thoughts from domestic concerns, and concentrates them on the supreme necessity for discipline and a united front. The working class were in the majority, and though they were slow to realize the power the vote had put into their hands, they were bound sooner or later to use it to the full. And it is the habit of the English mind to refrain from making an immoderate use of power by pushing class principles to their logical extreme, and when in a minority, to play the constitutional game by deferring peacefully to the will of the majority as expressed in Parliament.

In both Australia and New Zealand, then, the spectacle was witnessed of a series of experiments in State socialism that, until the coming of the Bolsheviks, put the most ambitious advances of older nations into the shade. Labour was in the saddle; it imposed its taxes on the capitalists and its laws on the community. The results went far to show that the spirit of British institutions can adapt itself as easily to working class rule as to that of a bewigged aristocracy or a frock-coated bourgeoisie. The results of the new regime were neither catastrophic nor sensational. There was no tendency to run to revolutionary extremes, nor to make a logical application of socialist or any other doctrines. Labour, on the whole, improved its conditions without driving capital away. The Australasian Dominions presented the aspect of intensely busy, reasonably prosperous, and rather Philistine communities on the make. Common to all of the daughter nations was a profound love of liberty, in the

time-honoured British sense of liberties, and for this, when the time came, most of their sons were ready to shed the last drop of their blood. And it was because, in their heart of hearts, they recognized the Mother Country as the champion of this ideal, that they remained loyal to her at the crisis of her fate.

At the same time, life in the Colonies was almost aggressively devoid of introspection or spirituality. It was no wonder that between the white Dominions and India there could be scant sympathy. To the Indian the external world was nothing, an illusion; to the typical colonial it was everything. Leisure, to him, was apt to signify a mere diversion of energy from work to sport. Almost as much excitement was caused by a match between England and Australia at Sydney as if the two nations had been really at war and a decisive battle was in progress. It is said that the congregation in one of the principal churches was thrilled to ecstasy by the minister, who had just received a telegram, announcing with enormous emphasis from the pulpit, "there is no peace for *the wicked*," signifying that the team then touring England had beaten the old country by three wickets. Racing, with its accompaniment of betting, was also enormously patronized. This cult of organized sport was most developed in Australia, where the large towns absorbed so large a proportion of the population, and least, largely owing to climatic conditions, in Canada.

But in none of the Dominions is the inner life developed to even its normal extent amongst peoples of European stock. Such an idea as that of a colonial mystic seems almost a contradiction in terms. Artists and poets have occasionally arisen from the colonies —Australia can boast the name of Mackinnell in sculpture, and South Africa that of Lutyens in architecture,—but these are isolated instances and they seem rather offshoots of an alien culture than representatives of a tradition or spirit native to their respective Dominions. Even the culture of the United States, such as it is and has been, has nothing to be compared with it in these Dominions overseas—there is nothing remotely corresponding to a colonial Boston. Naturally beauties of nature, unique of their kind, have found artists to interpret them, though more often than not men who have received their training in the schools of Europe and who see their native land through strange glasses. It is inevitable, too, that poetry, of a sort—a breezy and sedulously manly sort, as a rule—should be produced, even to the extent of filling an Oxford Book. But we look in vain for a colonial Masefield or Kipling, let alone a

Shelley. No doubt colonial art has a certain vigour, no doubt it has improved with the prosperity of the Dominions, but no candid citizen of these young nations will be found to deny and very few to regret that it is as yet a provincial and essentially second-rate product. Where there is little time for reflection, where life is one strenuous pursuit of this world's goods or pleasures, where things temporal, in the Gospel sense, are valued above things eternal, the seeds of art fall by the wayside or, at best, strike shallow roots.

14

Expansion in Africa

In Canada, in Australia and in New Zealand we have had to record a steady growth in peaceful prosperity. It has been their good fortune not to have stood conspicuously in the limelight of the world's history. The Englishman in the street, during these supremely important years of their adolescence, knew very little about them. He had a vague idea of their loyalty to the Empire, a loyalty whose spirit he somewhat patronizingly misunderstood; he commonly thought of them as in some vague way identified with the Conservative party at home; he visualized their inhabitants as leading a romantic and open air life the very opposite of his own. It was perhaps just as well that this should be so—a distant and largely imaginary view often blurs outlines that might seem harsh and ungenial when viewed at close quarters. But if the affairs of the rest of the Empire were a closed book to the ordinary Englishman, those of the African Continent, and particularly those of South Africa, were continually thrusting themselves on his attention. It was here that the Empire was being enlarged to an extent vaguely adumbrated by expanding daubs of red upon the map; it was here that crisis succeeded to crisis and war to war; it was here that fabulous fortunes might be built up in a few brief years; it was here, finally, that the mighty colossus of Empire, fitly named Rhodes, was realizing, for himself and for the Empire, his vast dreams.

To get the key to this complex drama of European expansion in Africa, we must keep in mind a geographical principle understood by nobody earlier than by Rhodes himself. It was the ambition of no less than four European powers to establish an empire right across the continent from sea to sea, but it was England alone who aspired to do this lengthwise from North to South. Rhodes, with his imperial vision, dreamed of an all-British railway from the Cape

to Cairo, with branches running to the coast, and gathering up the trade of the whole surrounding country. Of this line we had already acquired the termini, and it only remained—a by no means impossible task in his opinion—to secure the intervening few thousand miles. But to achieve this ambition would be to annihilate not only the claim of Portugal to join the hinterlands of her Eastern and Western possessions, but the more serious ambitions of France and Germany. And at the very outset of our advance from the South we should have on our flank, if not in our front, the formidable opposition of the Boer Republics, while in the North the Mahdi barred the gates of the Upper Nile.

It was the essence of Rhodes's genius that he saw these problems, stripped of all their complexities, in bold and simple outlines. He was the son of a country clergyman, who had sought and found his fortune in the newly discovered diamond fields on the Western borders of the Orange Free State, fields that, when once their worth was known, we had acquired for ourselves by the bogus patronage of a Griqua Chief or, to put it bluntly, by an unblushing piece of sharp practice. Such a fortune as that of Rhodes, amid such competition as a rush for diamonds inevitably produces, could not be, and indeed was not, acquired by too scrupulous methods. But herein lay the man's greatness, what distinguished him from such mere money-grubbers as his rival, the little Whitechapel Jew, Barney Barnato—that to Rhodes money was not an end in itself, but the means to ends that were neither petty nor egoistic. These millions, to accumulate which he did not hesitate to employ the muck rake, were the fulcrum by which he aspired to lever the world.

Among all the men of his time of hardness and realism, there is none who approaches quite so closely to the popular conception of the superman. Rhodes was one of those natural aristocrats for whom the restrictions of everyday morality have no meaning. He was the strong man of magazine fiction translated into real life. He was imbued with that cult of bigness that, in the nineties, was the equivalent of greatness. He dreamed in continents, he thought nothing of conquering a country equal in size (so it was frequently pointed out) to France and Spain and the German Empire put together, and having it baptized with his own name. He had far more of romance about him than the clear-cut Chamberlain, only the most romantic thing in the world was to him, as indeed it had been to Balzac, money. Money, in an age of capitalist expansion.

was power, and could Rhodes have formulated a gospel he would certainly have altered "God is love" to "God is power". It is characteristic that when Gordon told him how he had refused a room full of silver offered him by way of backsheesh in China, Rhodes replied that he would have taken it and as many more as they liked to offer him. "What," he added, "is the use of having ideas if you haven't the money to carry them out?"

Rhodes was an ardent imperialist, and it was a pardonable exaggeration for one of his contemporaries to have placed him on the roll of men "whose one thought has been the glory of their country". From the moment his financial operations had furnished him with the means of entering the political sphere, he was perfectly clear as to what he wanted, and equally clear that he would stick at nothing in its pursuit. By sheer force of personality, he came rapidly to dominate the politics of Cape Colony, and it is not the least of his feats that he was able to make even the cautious and unimaginative Dutch dance to his piping. Autocrat though he was by nature, his imperialism comprehended the fullest liberty for the daughter nations. Unlike Chamberlain, he went further than Gladstone himself in his support (and support with Rhodes was not only intellectual but also financial) of Irish Nationalism, only stipulating that Ireland, besides enjoying full Dominion status, should share in that representation at Westminster in which, he hoped, the other white Dominions would also—and the sooner the better—have their share. His ideal for South Africa was that Briton and Dutchman should unite to form one great nation, absolutely free within its own borders, but a loyal member of the Empire. "I have ever," he said, "held one view: the government of South Africa, with the Imperial flag for defence."

Rhodes's part in the great advance northwards towards Cairo began with his appointment in 1884 as Deputy Commissioner of Bechuanaland. Already from both flanks rivals were closing in to bar the first stages of the venture. Germany, whom Bismarck had at last consented to launch on a career of colonial expansion, had, not without unnecessary friction with Gladstone's vacillating government, established herself on the barren shores north of the Orange River, and was pressing purposefully inland. Meanwhile the Transvaal Boers, in parties of unauthorized trekkers, had thrust out beyond their borders right across the destined track of the Cape to Cairo railway. It was owing to Rhodes's perception that it was now or never for us to grasp the key of South Africa that

imperial forces brushed aside the intruders and the Queen's sway was formally advanced to the 22nd parallel.

But Rhodes was by no means minded to stop there; he was minded to stop nowhere short of the complete attainment of his imperial purpose. He saw that, as far at least as the shores of Lake Tanganyika, there were vast and potentially opulent territories waiting to be grabbed in what was now the European game of grab for Africa. These territories of course had owners, in the shape of savages, who were at any rate like enough to their white brothers in prizing their property and independence, but the morality of dispossessing, by fair means or foul, these out-dated heathens who were bound to fall victims to some other power if not to us, was a point that neither Rhodes nor any of his associates dreamed of debating. The means chosen for the next great advance was not that of government action, which was too slow and might be too scrupulous, but the time-honoured Elizabethan expedient of a Chartered Company, which indeed was, in this epoch of expansion, our characteristic method of pegging out ambitious and semi-official claims for the government to confirm at its leisure. But a private company, on the make for its shareholders, and very imperfectly controlled by the home authority, is perhaps better adapted to enhance the power than the credit of the Empire.

The greatest of all these was Rhodes's South African Chartered Company, financed, on terms very favourable to the promoters, by investors of various nations, and allowed by the Queen's government a practically free hand to realize the grandiose but sincerely patriotic ambitions of its Chairman. Never, since the days of Pizarro, was enterprise better organized or carried out with more pluck, energy and success than this of a handful of slouch-hatted conquistadores, who carried the flag into the very heart of Central Africa and added to the Empire the vast tract of country fittingly known as Rhodesia.

Unfortunately, as Chamberlain remarked, one cannot make omelettes without breaking eggs, nor, he might have added, can one break into Naboth's vineyard without breaking Naboth. The greater part of the country was already under the rule of the warlike Matabele, an offshoot of the Zulus, and of their King Lobengula. This by no means ignoble savage was pathetically anxious to keep on friendly terms with the white men, and had a naïve trust in the friendship and protection of the great white Queen. But it was not with the Queen he had to deal, but with rival concession hunters,

eager to possess themselves of the mineral wealth beneath the soil, and consequently of the soil itself. All over Africa it was now a regular part of the game of civilized grab to entangle illiterate potentates into putting their mark to treaties or concessions that they could neither read nor understand, and which had the effect of signing away the whole or most of their sovereign rights. Such a trick was played on Lobengula by an emissary of Rhodes. When the unhappy chief discovered what he had done, he instantly ordered the execution of his chief councillor who, by persuading him to sign, had allowed him to be entangled in a net from which there was no escape. It was in vain that he threw himself on the protection and advice of the Queen. She was far off, and the Company did not mean to let him go. A quarrel was picked, and Dr. Jameson, Rhodes's right hand man, proceeded to organize an expeditionary force against the Matabele by offering each trooper loot and gold-claims to the tune of several thousand pounds. The naked Matabele stood no chance against the rifles and machine guns of their extremely efficient invaders, and the business of slaughtering them would have been as safe as a picnic, had it not been for the fact that an advance patrol was cut off by a swollen river and annihilated, an episode that was soon realistically staged for the benefit of delighted audiences in London. It was a fitting conclusion that when Lobengula, who had scrupulously guarded the lives of those Englishmen who were in his power, sent a money present with a message of surrender, the two troopers to whom they were delivered stole the money and kept back the message. Desperate and forsaken, the King perished miserably.

The sequel to conquest, as in Bengal after Plassey, was exploitation. The expenses of the war had created a hunger for dividends, and the country was rich in gold. Settlers, fired with the hopes of speedy wealth, flocked into the colony. The Matabele were ground to the dust. By a legal ingenuity that recalls that of the first English settlers in Ireland, the whole of their cattle was treated as having belonged to the King, and therefore as now belonging to his conquerors. Their land too was declared to have been similarly forfeited by the strict legal interpretation of some document that Lobengula had been tricked into signing, though this modest claim was, in 1918, quashed by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The labour of their young men, which was very necessary for the profitable running of the concern, was conscripted under some politer name than slavery. It is, under these circumstances, not

surprising that, within three years of the conquest, the Matabele were up in a final desperate attempt to shake off the yoke, nor that they were joined by the peaceful Mashonas, to protect whom against Lobengula's tyranny had been the Company's ostensible pretext for destroying him. This second war was ended by Rhodes, who possessed an extraordinary influence over the natives, riding out, quite defenceless, to parley with the still embattled chiefs in their mountain fastnesses. After some hesitation between killing and trusting him, they decided on the latter. So strangely were the threads of heroism and commercial greed twined throughout this story of British expansion in Africa.

It would be superfluous to detail the stages by which Britain proceeded in her attempt to appropriate a continuous stretch of territory from the Cape to the Mediterranean. Besides her converging advance from each of the extreme points, she struck straight in, from the East coast, at the centre. Here the owner of most of the country to be exploited was the Sultan of Zanzibar, but as he was powerless to put up an effective fight against Europeans, the real rivalry was between England and Germany, or rather between the two State-backed capitalist companies which bore respectively, into the Dark Continent, the Union Jack and the black, white, and red flag. As England and Germany happened to be on comparatively friendly terms at the time, they managed to patch up an arrangement between themselves, portioning out the Sultan's territories, with the exception of a bit in the North for Italy and a strip ten miles broad along the coast for the Sultan, which of course he was neither intended nor allowed to keep. The next advance of the British East African Company was to take possession of the rich land of Uganda, giving access to the head-waters of the Nile. The ruler of this land seems to have been a less estimable personage than Lobengula, and his dismissal necessitated somewhat less blood-letting, but there was one end to the noble and to the ignoble savage who happened to stand in the path of an enterprising Chartered Company, and it was that of the cuckoo in August,

"Go he must."

Not the least remarkable feature of this episode of seizing Uganda was the proof it afforded that the foreign policy of the short-lived Liberal government of 1892–5 had, under Lord Rosebery, a connection of the Rothschilds, become almost as amenable to imperialist influences as that of its rivals.

It was now time to link up this central section of the Cape–Cairo

route with the two extremities. This, however, could only be accomplished by severing the equally sought-for East to West routes of our European rivals. Portugal, without the force to back her ambitions, was easily disposed of, and made to yield us a path between her Eastern and Western possessions. But the rivalry of Germany was a tougher proposition, and though we actually arranged with the Congo Free State for a strip of territory joining up Uganda with Rhodesia, Germany and France, who for once found it convenient to stand together, compelled us to abandon this part of the Cape-Cairo project until such time as a war with Germany should allow us to step into her colonies.

Meanwhile France was making a desperate bid to forestall us by getting astride of the Nile valley. Bismarck, when he encouraged French colonial adventure, had probably never dreamed of the vast and sinister access of military strength that might accrue from France's possession of a North-West African Empire. Already French territory had come to stretch in a solid block from the Mediterranean to the Congo. It now remained to extend the thrust Eastward, through the Sudan and Abyssinia to the Gulf of Aden, in which France had already acquired a strip of coast. Since the fall of Khartoum, England had resolved to stand on the defensive in Egypt and leave the Sudan to its Mahdist conquerors. The French took the position that since we had thus vacated the Sudan, it was open to anybody who could plant a flag there. For a time their advance was suspended by what amounted to a threat of war on the part of the Liberal Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey, in 1895. But the French, after what was for them a fatal delay, resolved that not even this should deter them, and converging expeditions set out for the Nile from West and East.

Now or never, therefore, was it time for the Conservative government, on the crest of the imperialist wave, to start the advance from the North. In 1896, with almost precipitate haste, the Anglo-Egyptian forces were set in motion Southwards. This time it was no forlorn hope across the desert, but a deliberate, scientific, inevitable advance, carrying the railway along with it. In 1898, after a tremendous slaughter of dervishes by magazine rifles, machine guns and modern artillery, the Khalifa's power was smashed for ever, and it merely remained to resume control, in the joint names, this time, of England and Egypt, of the Upper Nile valley. But the French were there already. Their expedition from the West had established itself at Fashoda; that from the East had been bungled

and had failed to eventuate. It was plainly a question of whether France would give way or fight, and for a few days the fate of Europe trembled in the balance. But our sea-power was overwhelming and our Mediterranean fleet off Bizerta. With bitter reluctance, France abandoned her claims on the Nile, and left us free to link up our Northern with our central gains.

CHAPTER IV

THE INCLINED PLANE

1

The Climax of Imperialism

British imperialism was at its zenith in the two years that intervened between the Diamond Jubilee and the South African War. This second Jubilee had been the excuse for a very orgy of self-congratulation on the part of the average British citizen. A reign of record length had culminated in the attainment of an Empire of record size and magnificence. An army of authors and journalists turned their pens to the exposition of the thesis that England had, in every way, since 1837, been getting better and better, more and more powerful, prosperous and happy. Maps were produced in which the anaemic appearance of the world in the thirties was contrasted with the apoplectic flush of *fin-de-siècle* red. The Queen herself had ceased to be a woman of human clay, and had become a sort of imperial mascot. Nothing, it was felt, could go wrong so long as she lived, and her life seemed as permanent a thing as the Empire itself. Only one voice, and that, strangely enough, of the man to whom the laureateship of Empire was universally conceded, struck a note of solemn warning, to the insistent, almost knell-like refrain :

"Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"

The tide of success continued at the flood throughout the next year. Gordon, the Christian hero, had been avenged, his enemy's tomb destroyed and corpse thrown to the fishes. France had been humiliated by us, and warned off the Nile in the face of the whole world. Our fleet was more than a match for any conceivable combination that could be brought against it. No doubt foreigners hated us, but that was because they were jealous—we rather appreciated the compliment. With our fleet, our colonies, our Empire of India, we could well afford to stand in what we deemed a splendid isolation. Imperialism had not yet begun to touch our pockets to any marked extent. Taxation was low and consols in

the hundreds. Nobody believed that in the event of a strong policy leading to war he would be compelled to fight—Britons might be patriots but it was unthinkable that they should be conscripts.

It was small wonder that under these circumstances the type of patriotism that is associated with the yellow press and the music-halls should have outrun all bounds of restraint and even of humour. There was no feat of military heroism that Englishmen were not capable of undertaking, in chorus:

> "They [foreigners] may build their ships
> And think they know the game,
> But they can't breed boys of the bulldog breed
> That have made old England's name!" [1]

In one tongue-doughty defiance of the armies of the world to take us on, there occurs a curious footnote to the line

> "The Uhlans of the Kaiser or the Cossacks of the Tsar." [2]

For the Uhlans it is explained, may now be substituted "The Dervish of the Mahdi". Sometimes the note becomes historical:

> "We've thrashed the Danes and Saxons too!"

was the discovery of one music-hall Homer. Most popular of all was *The Soldiers of the Queen*, a song no less remarkable for its grammatical construction than for its sentiments, in which all that was crudest and most ignoble in the spirit of this time found perfect expression:

> "Now we're roused we've buckled on our swords,
> We've done with diplomatic lingo!
> We'll do deeds to follow on our words,"

after which terrific announcement the patriot bard adds the consoling qualification that—

> "old England's laws do not her sons compel
> To military duties do." [*sic*!]

and finally accounts for the somewhat startling allegation of our having "always won", by "proudly pointing" to—

> "every one
> Of England's soldiers of the Queen,"

whom England's fire-eating civilians paid to fight their battles for them. Surely not even the epistolatory Rahabs of the Great War society weeklies descended to quite this level!

No wonder that survivors from the ranks of mid-century Liberalism witnessed this change with wonder and horror. There is an essay of the aged Herbert Spencer, written during the South

[1] Or perhaps "fame". Quoted from memory.

[2] I heard this sung at a village smoker the other day. It had become—
"The Germans of the Kaiser and we've shown them what we are."

African War, in which, with a penetration no doubt intensified by his own horror of anything military, he enumerates the signs of rebarbarization that he notes everywhere around him. In politics the semi-military discipline of the caucus has crushed out electoral and Parliamentary freedom; in the Church "There is a return towards that subjection to a priesthood characteristic of barbaric types of society"; there is the rampant militarism of the Salvation Army and its respectable understudy, the Church Army; there is the change of sentiment evinced by the fact that it was thought fit at the Mansion House to celebrate the jubilee of the Great Peace Exhibition of 1851 by a Naval and Military Exhibition; there is the universal cult of sport, the more brutal the better; there is finally the rebarbarization of literature, journalism and art, as evinced by enormous output of books and articles dealing with every aspect of war, real or imaginary; "the fiction filling our monthly magazines," observes Spencer, "has been mainly sanguinary. Tales of crimes and deeds of violence, drawings of men fighting, men overpowered, men escaping, of daggers raised, of pistols levelled."

In such a light did the new age appear to the old, synthetic philosopher, whose last days were embittered by this reversal of what to his mind was the normal course of evolution from the military to the commercial State. But England was not a military state in the sense of her Continental neighbours, and the mere fact that the majority of her citizens were in the habit of getting their fighting done by proxy had the effect of rendering such militarism as there was rather skin deep. There was no such blind cult of the army as that which was causing, in France, the terrible scandal of the Dreyfus case, or in Germany led to a regimentation of civilian life such as no one in England would have dreamed of tolerating. Even imperialism was by no means unchallenged; the Liberal party was still formidable and the largest section of it frankly leaned to Manchester or Gladstonian principles in foreign policy. Some of the weightiest organs of the Press made it a point of principle to espouse the cause of anyone who had a case to put forward against England or the Empire. And, up to the end of the century, Free Trade, which had been the central plank of the Manchester platform, and which our rivals, and even our colonies had finally abandoned, remained in England a dogma that nobody of the least influence seemed likely to challenge. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that British imperialism, with all its excesses and its froth of music

hall sentiment, was after all less cynical, more humane and more open to liberal influences than that of Continental nations, large and small.

It needed only a severe shock to produce a violent reaction against the swaggering and essentially un-English mood of the nineties, and, it may be, to purge what was really of value and permanence in the ideal of a free Commonwealth of Nations from this alloy. Even at the height of the tumult and shouting there were ominous signs of trouble brewing in South Africa. Rhodes's premiership of the Cape, which began in 1890, saw him at the climax of his career. His capable and energetic government seemed likely to unite Dutch and English in a common patriotism of South Africa under the flag. But the two Dutch Republics to the North, and particularly the Transvaal, stood obstinately in the way of such a consummation.

The effects, which Wolseley had long ago foreseen, of the discovery of gold and diamonds in the Transvaal, had raised that republic of farmers to an altogether new importance and had created a problem whose peaceful solution would require the utmost tact and goodwill. The new mining city of Johannesburg rapidly became the most populous and important in the country, and immigrants from all over the world, but preponderantly of British origin, flocked thither in the hope of making their fortunes. The coming of these strangers was regarded by the Boers with mixed feelings. It was no doubt all to their advantage to find so opulent a market for their produce and even a good deal of their land, as well as an almost unlimited source of revenue; but the strangers were many and the Boers, scattered over the veldt in their lonely farms, feared the coming of a time when their dearly won independence and their mastery over their own land would be swamped by sheer weight of numbers.

The direction of affairs in the Transvaal was in the hands of Paul Kruger, who belonged to the Doppers, or extreme set of Boer Calvinists, and who had all the shrewdness and dogged obstinacy of the typical farmer. This old patriot, whose memory ran back to the Great Trek, had a rooted dislike and distrust of the English which, since the experience of Majuba, had been reinforced by contempt. His method of dealing with the immigrants, or Uitlanders, as they were called, was to exclude them from any share in civil rights and at the same time to make them pay most of the expenses of government. This effort to hold a whole population in permanent subjection, however understandable its motives, was bound to fail in the end, especially under such unsympathetic and even corrupt

auspices as those of Kruger's government. The Uitlanders petitioned for redress, and Kruger's reply was to make their yoke heavier. But he was playing a dangerous game, more dangerous than he realized, for he was arousing the enmity not only of the mining community, among whom the agitation had originally started, but also of the immensely rich mineowners, or Randlords, whose business and profits he was hampering at every turn.

Nobody had a greater personal interest in the mines than Rhodes himself, who did not consider it inconsistent with his position as premier of the Cape to retain his headship of the Chartered Company and to continue his multifarious financial activities. And now his masterful and unscrupulous nature betrayed him into the great mistake of his life. Incomparably as Rhodes excelled Kruger in brain-power and imagination, he lacked altogether the old man's invincible patience. Profoundly impressed as he was with the shortness of human life, he could not wait for the course of nature to remove Kruger and give scope to the Liberal elements that were working against his rule even in the Transvaal. He determined to cut the knot, like a true superman. He did all he could to assist and arm the Uitlanders to rise against their Dutch masters, and at the same time brought Jameson, with the force that had conquered Lobengula, to the Transvaal border in order that he might ride to their help the moment the arsenal of Pretoria had been seized by the rebels. Jameson had even less patience than Rhodes. Taking the bit between his teeth, on December 29th, 1895, he with his troopers invaded the Transvaal, only to be rounded up and ignominiously captured within a short distance of Johannesburg.

This sudden invasion of a neighbouring state in time of peace produced a profound impression even on that not very squeamish age. In England a few brave efforts were made to make a hero of Jameson, the most notable taking the form of some painful doggerel by the poetaster Lord Salisbury had chosen to succeed Tennyson in the Laureateship. But the general impression was one of scandalized disapproval, and a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to investigate the matter, though the result of its proceedings was to afford a personal triumph for Rhodes, who escaped with nothing worse than a little harmless censure. In South Africa, however, the whole political work of Rhodes was shattered; the co-operation between Briton and Dutchman gave place to race antagonism; the Free State threw in her lot unreservedly with that of the Transvaal; Kruger's position was

established more firmly than ever, and the Transvaal began to use the money got from the Uitlanders to arm feverishly against the power that it suspected, not without some excuse, of harbouring designs upon its independence.

During the next three years matters were working up to a climax. The Uitlanders' agitation was sedulously stoked up by the millionaires who, following the example of Rhodes, had persuaded themselves that the Boers could be easily smashed and that a great boom in mining shares would be the result. Meanwhile Kruger was more than ever determined not to make any substantial concession and was perfectly willing to try the fortune of arms. Not only were the Boers convinced that they were capable of driving the English into the sea as easily as they had stormed Majuba, but they had some reason to hope for the support of Germany. For after the Jameson raid the erratic Kaiser had burst a bombshell on Europe by sending a telegram to Kruger congratulating him on having repulsed Jameson without appealing to the aid of friendly powers. This telegram, though as Bismarck truly remarked it might have been sent by the British Government itself, was taken by both British and Boers to imply a threat, or a promise, of German intervention in any armed conflict between the two. How near the neurotic Emperor, who was probably acting more from impulse than calculation, came to launching a virtual ultimatum to his amazed neighbour, and how this was averted by the tact of Lord Salisbury, has only recently come to light. A wave of fury swept through England, and a naval demonstration, which played right into the hands of the German big-navy party, was our reply. On the Boers the effect was to stiffen up their spirits for a conflict in which they fondly imagined they would not fight alone.

The crisis came in 1899. The British High Commissioner at the Cape was now Sir Alfred Milner, one of these strong and autocratic administrators who, like Cromer and Curzon, stood for the imperialistic spirit of the nineties with decidedly more stress on the "*imperium*" than the "*libertas*". He and Chamberlain were quite in accord in their determination to have the Uitlander question settled once and for all, and to stand no more nonsense from Kruger. A conference was held at Bloemfontein between the High Commissioner and the President, in which the younger man's incisiveness of argument and determination to carry his point failed to move the obstinate old farmer, with his farmer's determination to drive a hard bargain and not to yield anything essential. The

conference, which broke down, merely served to reveal, to anyone who had eyes to see, the impassable gulf that lay between the British and the Boer standpoints. The Uitlander question was merely part of the larger question whether the Boers should enjoy the complete independence to which they considered themselves entitled, or whether they should frankly acknowledge their subordination to the Empire and consent to revolve in the British orbit.

On this point neither Kruger nor Chamberlain was minded to yield an inch, and the Boer offer of submitting the disputed matters to arbitration was rejected on the ground that this would imply an equality between the disputants. As, throughout the summer, the President continued to haggle and temporize, the line taken by Chamberlain and Sir Alfred waxed stronger and stronger, and Chamberlain's public pronouncements took on an air of open menace. But, with that strange unreality that characterized the imperialism of this time, nobody in authority seems seriously to have contemplated the possibility of having, in the words of that time's most popular song, to "do deeds to follow on our words". While we practically threatened war, we continued to garrison South Africa with forces so miserably insufficient as positively to invite the Boers to sweep them into the sea. Their commandoes were already beginning to concentrate on the frontiers; it was evident that the Free State would stand in with the Transvaal; and Kruger, so far from meaning to climb down, determined to commit his cause to the Lord of Hosts.

On September 22nd the British Government, replying to a flat refusal of the Boers to accept our demands, intimated that they would reconsider the whole situation, and formulate their own proposals for a settlement. But it was useless to launch our final ultimatum without force to back it, and the Government, at last alive to the seriousness of the situation, resolved to keep these proposals in suspense until they could mobilize and land in South Africa what was then considered to be an overwhelming force of troops. This was the true decisive moment of the war. The Boers, fully armed and on the frontier, were not going to wait upon their adversary's convenience. They prepared an ultimatum of their own, and had they been able to strike at once, nothing could have prevented them from overrunning Natal, and the Cape Colony, and raising all the Dutch of South Africa to join them. But their staff and transport arrangements were not equal to the effort, and during the precious days that the ultimatum hung fire, a force of 6,000 regulars

from India, under Sir George White, was landed at Durban and rushed up to reinforce the few troops already collected in the salient of Northern Natal. On October 9th the ultimatum was launched and the commandoes were put in motion—just a week too late.

Most people at home imagined that the business of avenging Majuba was going through as smoothly and irresistibly as that of avenging Khartoum. One of the most distinguished military journalists was half afraid that all the fun would be over and White in Pretoria before the main English army could get out. As for Rhodes, such was his contempt of the Boers that, untaught by the Jameson raid, he had denied them even the capacity to shoot. For the first few days it seemed as if these estimates might be justified. News came of victories, of Boer positions stormed with the precision of an Aldershot field day, of lancers " pig-sticking " the fugitives . . . and then of an almost incredible change, of White's whole force soundly beaten and besieged in the little town of Ladysmith, of two British battalions laying down their arms with suspiciously few casualties. Even then the nation hardly realized that it was in for one of the most bloody and costly wars in its history.

Happily the Boer leadership was even more feeble than our own. Their commander-in-chief, the leader of the party opposed to Kruger, had only half his heart in the struggle, and allowed White's force to act as a magnet for his main army. Other Boer forces that might have been invading the Cape sat down quietly before the outpost towns, Kimberley and Mafeking. The Boer push had, in fact, come to a stop near the frontier, and the British army corps, when it arrived, found them already on the defensive covering their siege armies. The new English commander, Sir Redvers Buller, possessed the slowness without the science of the pre-Napoleonic Austrian generals, though it must be allowed that the force at his disposal was insufficient. However he weakened it still further by splitting it up, with the result that the British push was, in its turn, brought to a standstill, after three successive repulses, the last of them being inflicted on Buller himself, who had launched a blundering and half-hearted attack on the Boer lines in front of Ladysmith and broken it off with the loss of a thousand men and eleven guns, which reduced him to such a state of despondency that he actually suggested to the incredulous White that he should surrender Ladysmith.

The effect on the country of the " Black Week " in early December was stupendous. At the beginning of the war, the Jingo fever had risen to the pitch almost of delirium. To the frequenters of the

music-halls and the *clientèle* of the yellow press, the whole affair had appeared in the light of a glorious piece of fun, the master sensation of the age. Typical of the sort of spirit that was abroad was this song, a fair sample of innumerable others :

" We'll take the lion's muzzle off
And let him have a go ! . . .
Whisper to him Majuba Hill,
And at his chain he'll pull !
There's only room for one out there,
And—that's—JOHN—BULL ! " [1]

Perhaps the climax of cynicism was attained in these lines of another song,

" We don't know if the quarrel's right or wrong,
And hang it, we don't care ! "

Even the poets were not immune from the infection. Swinburne, the some-time bard of liberty, dashed off a furious sonnet, exhorting his countrymen :

" To scourge these dogs, agape with jaws afoam
Down out of life."

while Henley blossomed into a music-hall rhymster—and not a very successful one at that—with such strains as—

" Storm along, storm along, storm along, John ! "

To minds thus inflated, the repulse of Buller's army corps appeared in the light of a veritable catastrophe, though the actions themselves would have hardly risen above the level of " some liveliness " as judged by European standards. Our communications by sea were safe, and whatever might be said against our military leadership, the Admiralty provided for the transport by sea with its usual unobtrusive efficiency. So long as European intervention could be avoided, it was only a question of our spending enough money and hiring enough soldiers to make the issue ultimately certain. It was considered a proof of its iron resolution that the home public did not shrink from this sacrifice, though when the idea of conscription was broached in the halfpenny press it was soon evident that it was not likely to go down. The government acted promptly and energetically ; Lord Roberts, one of our few soldiers with a touch of imaginative genius, was sent out to take over the chief command from Buller ; additional divisions were formed ; volunteers were raised in considerable numbers.

In February the new forces were ready to take the field. Roberts, who had concentrated overwhelming numbers against the Boer army in front of Kimberley, succeeded in capturing it, and swept

[1] I quote this from memory.

on, only feebly opposed, to the Free State capital. Meanwhile Buller, after repeated failures, at last succeeded in finding the way to Ladysmith. After a prolonged halt, during which the army was decimated by an epidemic of typhoid, brought on by defective hygiene, the advance was resumed and Pretoria captured. With the subsequent flight of Kruger and the break up of the Boer field army it was assumed that the war was practically over and the country breathed a sigh of relief. Even the disasters of Black Week now seemed only like the thrilling incidents that lead up to the triumphant climax of a melodrama. The government took advantage of this illusion, in which, no doubt, they shared, to go to the country with the cry that every vote given to their opponents was a vote given to the Boers. They came back with their great majority substantially unimpaired.

But facts had already emerged of extreme importance to the Empire. The first was the not wholly disinterested hatred with which we were regarded by the other imperialist powers. That the slave-masters of Poland should find their hearts bleeding at the spectacle of little nations fighting for their independence may have been human, but it was not ingenuous, nor had France, with her own record in Tunis, in Madagascar, and in the French Congo, any particular right to pose as the censor of unscrupulous expansion. France was, in fact, sore from Fashoda and from the wave of honest indignation that had swept over England at what everybody held to be the fiendish injustice with which an innocent man, Captain Dreyfus, had been sacrificed to political expediency; Russia had been at daggers drawn with us ever since "peace with honour"; Germany was jealous of our start in the colonial race, and could not abide a command of the sea more unquestionable than her own command of the land. By a strange irony, our only friends in Europe, Italy and Greece, were those we had bound to us by that sympathy with freedom with which Gladstone's name was prominently associated.

On the other hand, the war revealed, for the first time, the strength of colonial loyalty to the Empire. The white Dominions were more whole-hearted in their support of England against the Transvaal than England herself. Contingents of splendid fighters, constantly reinforced, were supplied by Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, with an enthusiasm not to be damped even by the monumental fatuity of the War Office in intimating that unmounted men would be preferred. The colonial attitude was certainly not one of uncritical or sentimental admiration for the Mother Country or

Englishmen as such. It was based on the conviction that the civilization of which their free institutions were the expression was in conflict with something essentially inferior, that if the Dutchman was allowed to supplant the Briton in shaping the destinies of South Africa, they, and all that they stood for, would be in a mortal peril. In this organism of free nations, one member could not be allowed to perish.

The war was not over, nor half over, in the autumn of 1900. It had, in fact, entered on its most difficult phase with the breaking up of the Boer armies into small, mobile commandoes. It was also the phase most damaging to British prestige and self-complacency. The spectacle was presented to the world of a few devoted patriots holding at bay a gigantic adversary, evading his ponderous blows, and striking him again and again with telling effect. One of the Boer leaders, De Wet, proved a master of this kind of warfare, and scarcely inferior to him were Louis Botha and the chivalrous Delarey. It is doubtful whether, with such immense lines of communication to safeguard, and such enormous tracts to subdue, any other army would have done even as well as the British. But these things were hidden from the public at home, and our foreign rivals had not even the wish to judge our achievements fairly. To anyone but a military expert, England's failure to subdue the Boers placed her in the most humiliating light.

Lord Kitchener, who succeeded Roberts on the latter's return to England, had none of his predecessor's *flair* for imaginative strokes of generalship, and set himself to wear down the Boer resistance by a gradual process of attrition. If the war was not to go on forever, it was necessary to deprive the commandoes of the aid that they everywhere received from the farms scattered on the veldt, and, indeed, it was impossible to leave the women defenceless at the mercy of their Kaffir servants. Accordingly the civilian population was removed from the farms, many of which were burnt, into concentration camps. It was not to be expected that an administration which had failed so lamentably to provide for the health of our own troops, more of whom perished from bacilli than bullets, would show any greater sense or consideration in providing for the health of a populace whose insanitary habits aggravated the difficulties of the task. Whoever may have been to blame, the fact remains that the Boer children perished by thousands in the camps, and the non-imperialist section of the opposition was loud in its denunciation of "methods of barbarism" and "hecatombs of slaughtered

babes". When such language could be used by responsible English statesmen, it is no wonder that nothing was too foul or too improbable to be believed against us on the Continent.

In strange contrast to all this bitterness, was the remarkable good humour which was displayed by the combatants on both sides. The British had scrupulously refrained from the employment of native or even Indian auxiliaries, and between the "Tommy" and the Boer there was no real ill-feeling. Moreover it was evident that the hearts of our men were not engaged in this war as they would have been in a struggle in which our national existence was felt to be at stake. To surrender, and be relieved of one's breech-loader and perhaps of one's breeches before being turned loose to fight another day, must have struck many a British working lad as preferable to a Mauser bullet between the eyes in some unrecorded scrap. And as the contest wore on, troops of very doubtful fighting value were raised by the promise of high pay, and the hope of supplementing it by loot. A large force of these, in the Western Transvaal, disgraced themselves and their uniform by bolting in wild panic and leaving one of our most distinguished commanders to fall, wounded, into the hands of Delarey, who nobly refused to imperil his enemy's life by holding him prisoner.

For a year and a half, after the supposed end of the war, this guerilla phase continued, with its monotonous record of petty surrenders, regrettable incidents, and failure to corner the Boer leaders. The war was carried into the Cape Colony, and to our other difficulties was added that of a widespread rebellion. At last Kitchener hit upon the plan of dividing the country by lines of blockhouses, connected by barbed wire, and of a series of drives by which the Boers would be shepherded against these lines by mobile columns and forced to surrender. The method was only partially successful, but the Boers were becoming tired of a contest in which all hope of outside intervention had disappeared, and in which their surrender was only a question of time. The British, who were themselves heartily sick and tired of the war, were not disposed to press them too hard. Accordingly, in the spring of 1902, the Boer leaders met Lords Kitchener and Milner, to discuss terms of peace. The High Commissioner was still for a more or less complete surrender, but the soldier leaned to more generous counsels, and peace was finally arranged on surprisingly easy terms. The Boers were indeed to lay down their arms and swear allegiance to the British crown, but a substantial indemnity was to be paid, for perhaps the first

time on record, by the victors, to help the vanquished rebuild their farms, and rifles were to be allowed on registration. There was also an eventual promise of representative institutions. The Boers were thus enabled to settle down with the consciousness that though they had been beaten in a fair fight they were neither ruined nor humiliated. They were no sentimentalists and were, for the most part, content to let bygones be bygones and make the best of a by no means unpromising situation.

The Tide Turns

There is a story that Kitchener, talking in confidence with the Boer delegates, suggested that a Liberal government would soon come into power in England, which would certainly hasten to give them the fullest possible measure of freedom, treaty or no treaty. Be this as it may, no one who had the faintest understanding of English history and constitutional tradition could have imagined that we should, for long, under any circumstances, essay so uncongenial a task as that of holding down a white community by force. No sooner was peace signed than Lord Milner began to devote all his great administrative ability to healing the wounds and repairing the damage caused by the war. He was already known as an authority on British work in Egypt, and he set to work in South Africa with the energy and something more than the sympathy of a Cromer. The Boers found themselves treated with a respect and generosity that they could not but acknowledge, and with their practical farmers' instinct they could appreciate the benefits of a cleaner and more efficient government than they had enjoyed in the days of their independence. Unfortunately Lord Milner, in his desire to procure a revenue sufficient to finance his policy of a united and prosperous South Africa, tried to restore the shattered prosperity of the mines by allowing thousands of Chinese coolies to be imported on three years' indentures, and under conditions that were reputed at home to be little better than servile. This capitalist expedient of buying up coloured labour and transporting it wherever it was wanted, ran directly contrary to the deepest-seated instincts of the British as well as the colonial working man. An immense outcry, fomented no doubt for interested purposes, was raised in the home

country, and the last gleam of romance seemed to have faded from the memory of the war when it was believed that our unfortunate soldiers had given their lives in order that a few cosmopolitan money-bugs might add to their already enormous wealth by dealing in yellow flesh as they hoped, before long, to deal in white.

The Unionist Government was already tottering, but before it fell from power, Alfred Lyttelton, Chamberlain's successor in the Colonial Office, had drafted a provisional constitution for the annexed Republics, which, though under any but Anglo-Saxon auspices, would have appeared incredibly generous, stopped short of complete self-government, and threatened to create that separation between executive and legislature that the whole experience of British and colonial history has shown to be fraught with the seeds of discord. But this constitution never got to work, for the Liberal Government, which came into office at the end of 1905, resolved to put their principles into practice without counting the risks, and, with rare courage, made a grant of complete self-government, under the Crown, to our former enemies. The Boers were not slow to recognize a magnanimity that this time, at any rate, invited no taunt of weakness. In that same year, 1906, the success of the experiment was testified by the appearance of our doughtiest opponent, Louis Botha, at the Imperial Conference in loyal co-operation with his colleagues, the other Dominion Premiers. It was not without its piquancy that the man who had so recently defeated the British main army in two pitched battles, should now be chiefly interested in questions of imperial defence!

But the success of the experiment did not stop here. In spite of the fact that an anti-imperialist reaction had placed Dutch majorities in power not only in the Transvaal and Free State, but also in the Cape, no sooner were representative institutions conferred than a movement for that union of South Africa under the Crown, for which British statesmen had striven vainly in the past, began to gather irresistible momentum. The white South African, of either race, is beyond all things a practical man, and such inconveniences as conflicting tariff, railway and native policies were not to be borne. Lord Milner's successor, Lord Selbourne, worked with infinite tact and self-effacement to hasten the coming of this crowning mercy, and come it did. In 1908 a National Convention met to draft a constitution, and in 1910 the Cape, the Transvaal, the Free State, and Natal became provinces in the Union of South Africa, and voluntarily consented to a constitution in which provincial rights

were more rigidly subordinated to the authority of the central government even than in Canada. The spirit of Rhodes—he had passed away during the war—must have rejoiced to see the dream's fulfilment that his own criminal rashness had so nearly frustrated.

In so far as it cleared the path for a free union of South Africa, the war of 1899–1902 may have been a success, though it is by no means certain that the same end could not have been compassed by tact and patience without the firing of a shot. It also had the effect of stimulating at least a partial reform in our military system, a reform whose effects were first manifested when, at Mons and Le Cateau, it was our turn to teach a " bull-headed " opponent the lesson of Colenso. In every other respect, the war had been a scarcely qualified disaster. Even the mining magnates, who, in anticipation of an easy triumph, had pulled the strings for war, found their business hard hit, if not actually ruined. The nation, which had been almost gulled into believing that the war could be made to pay for itself, suffered bitter disillusionment. The ever mounting prosperity which had been the theme of countless Diamond Jubilee panegyrics was rudely checked. The National Debt, which had sunk to its lowest point since the Napoleonic wars, mounted, despite substantial increases of taxation, by over 160 millions, while consols declined about 20 per cent. Altogether the war had run us up a bill of over 200 millions.

Things were almost equally bad if regarded not from a business but a sentimental standpoint. The war had damaged our prestige even more than our credit. Our War Office, with its red tape, its chaotic organization, and its total failure either to understand or provide for the requirements of modern war, had become the laughing stock not only of England but of Europe. The Continental opinion of our leadership was fairly summed up in a cartoon of Caran D'Ache, which represented Buller as discovering a brick wall by butting against it with his head. To the no doubt prejudiced minds of our neighbours, and, it may be added, to not a few British " pro-Boers ", the spectacle presented was that of our soldiers constantly in conflict with hopelessly inferior numbers, requiring to be four or five to one even for a Pyrrhic victory, and disgracing their uniforms by what the leader of the opposition described as " methods of barbarism ". Holders of such opinions could no doubt be mobbed whenever they tried to express them, but what was to be done when the Laureate of Empire himself turned suddenly and furiously on the " sons of the blood " in the home country, branding them with the stigmata of the most contemptible degeneracy and anticipating the time,

not far distant, when a foreign invasion would humble their pride of empire in the dust of a deserved slavery? The war, in fact, had become a thoroughly unsatisfactory business, and even the periodical "mafficking" riots were voted a nuisance after the disgraceful scenes on the return of the City Imperial Volunteers late in 1900. The imperialism of the nineties, of which the war was the culmination, was now succeeded by a fast gathering reaction, and when the old Queen died, with the first dawning of a new century, it seemed as if the luck of the Empire had died with her, and as if the glad, confident light of the longest reign were already obscured by the first storm-clouds of the coming deluge.

This might have assumed a still more ominous significance had anyone, at the time, marked the beginning of a change more vital than the loss and dislocation incidental to the war. The Diamond Jubilee had come at the end of a time during which the prosperity of the wage earning class, if not much to boast of, had at any rate been on the increase. All candid statisticians could not but agree that the real value of wages had tended slowly, but none the less surely, to rise. In the year 1896 the money level of wages was approximately the same as it had been in 1875, but the level of wholesale prices (which is all we have to go by exactly) had fallen something like 37½ per cent. Making every allowance, then, we can confidently affirm that the average employed workman in 1896 was, as regards this world's goods, at least 30 per cent. better off than his father had been at about his age. But in the year of the Diamond Jubilee we see the first signs of a comparatively steep rise of prices, with which the money value of wages only kept pace up to the outbreak of the war. Between 1900 and 1903 the money value of wages fell some 3 per cent. while that of retail prices rose 4 per cent. Nor was this process arrested on the return of peace. In the first decade of the century prices had risen 10 per cent. while wages remained practically what they were. Moreover the average income of the propertied classes, as judged by the assessments to income tax, had increased, during this period, by 16 per cent.[1]

The supremely important fact of the period between the South African War and the Great War was, then, that whereas the prosperity of the capitalist continued, on the whole, to increase, that of the wage-earning class did so no longer, but probably to some extent declined. This must be considered in conjunction with the facts that the wage-earners were now armed with the vote, that they

[1] For these statistics see Sir Leo Money's *Things that Matter*, pp. 1–36.

were no longer illiterate, and that this new state of things appeared to confirm the revolutionary teaching that, for many years, had been sedulously propagated among them.

8

The *Realpolitik* of Class

In order to understand what forces were gathering for the overturn of the existing social order, it will be necessary to go back to the fountainhead of distinctively modern Socialism. It was in 1864 that the International Working Men's Association, or First International, was founded in London by Karl Marx, and it was three years later that the first volume appeared of his great treatise on Capital. This, which is now the Bible of Bolshevism, would hardly, in itself, seem calculated to exercise much influence on great masses of men, since it is highly improbable that more than a few exceptional human beings have ever completed the task of reading it. What accounts for Marx's influence is partly his disinterested and almost heroic personality, but most of all the completeness with which he embodies the spirit of his time. It was his life's work to translate the conceptions of Realism and *Realpolitik* from the international to the social sphere. Like Bismarck and Cavour, he banished sentiment from policy, and, with a more conscious purpose than theirs, devoted his genius to hastening the coming of an Armageddon, a war of extermination not of nation against nation, but of class against class.

If Marx's tomes are as tangled and impenetrable as the virgin jungle, the ideas underlying them are transparently simple. He is a complete and logical materialist. Man is the result of his material and social environment. Meat and raiment are not only more than the life, but they absolutely condition it. Religion and art are mere by-products of the social system. The rise of Christianity is accounted for neither by the personality of its Founder nor the excellence of its doctrine, but by economic forces that were at work in the Roman Empire.

To Marx, distinctions of race, nationality, and religion were of no particular importance. He looked out upon the world and saw two classes of people, those who lived on their wages and those who lived on the proceeds of capital (including land). The first class produced the whole of the wealth by their labour, the second exploited

the whole of the proceeds except what they doled out to keep the first class alive. It was the policy of the landowners and capitalists deliberately to keep the workers in a state of virtual slavery, by maintaining a large reserve army of unemployed labour. This, according to Marx, explained why, despite the immensely increased output of wealth resulting from the advance of science and technical skill, the condition of the workers tended to get not better, but rather worse. There could be no improvement till the workers, organized as they now were in the service of their taskmasters, succeeded in dispossessing the employing class of their ill-gotten gains, and in securing for themselves not only a pittance, but the whole product of their labour.

Much has been said, which it is not necessary to repeat, about the flaws in Marx's argument. Here we need notice only two things, first that he did, however crudely, endeavour to face the problem that had been staring mankind in the face since the Industrial Revolution, and to show how mankind could, by taking control of its own destinies, attain a sane and prosperous way of life. The second is that his doctrine is merely a translation of the realistic nationalism, of which Clausewitz and List were the prophets and Bismarck the high priest, into terms of class. The old Romantic Liberalism and philosophic Radicalism had envisaged a state of things in which nations, though independent, should seek and ensue each other's prosperity by a friendly interchange of services and studious non-aggression. All this was foolishness to the stern patriots who regarded even peace as a kind of modified war, in which battles were fought with tariffs and concessions instead of bullets, and in which every other nation was either an ally to be exploited or an enemy to be circumvented by any means, fair or foul. There was a similar transition from the kindly Socialism of men like Owen, to the ruthless dogma of Marx. To Owen the very idea of hatred or violent expropriation would have been unspeakably distressing, his idea was of a peaceful evolution of the new Utopia, which an enlightened Dives joins hands with a benevolent Lazarus in bringing to pass. But to Marx the opposition between the two classes neither could nor ought to be reconciled, and could only be ended by the absolute extinction of the capitalist class as a class, and the absorption of its survivors into the ranks of the workers. Any attempt to smooth the working of the existing system by conciliation, or social reform that left the investor in the possession of his dividends, was sheer treason to Labour. As early as 1847, Marx and his friend Engels had, in a celebrated

manifesto, appealed to the proletarians of the world to unite in wresting all capital from the bourgeoisie, concentrating it all in the hands of the State, and in creating an industrial army, based on the liability of all to labour. Not even the Junkers went to quite these lengths of regimentation.

It was not likely that such extreme doctrines as those of Marx would find much immediate favour with a being so conservative and addicted to compromise as the English working man. Even in the seventies the glamour of Victorian Liberalism, if a little tarnished, was still bright enough, and the name of Gladstone was one to conjure with for advanced democrats. The outburst of indignation caused by the Liberal crippling of Trades Union activities had died down when Disraeli's government redressed the immediate grievance. During the long depression of trade in the later seventies, Trades Unionism was at a low ebb and its forces sub-divided into innumerable jarring sections. The First International quietly flickered out, and Socialism was hardly enough thought of to provide a joke or a bogey.

It was after the Liberal triumph of Midlothian and Gladstone's second assumption of the premiership that some shaking began to be perceptible among the dry bones to which Marx had for so long vainly prophesied. The surrender of the government to capitalist ambition in Egypt, their total failure to accomplish anything worth speaking of in the way of social reform, and their policy of coercion in Ireland, went far towards convincing politically minded working men that they had as little to expect from the capitalists of the Liberal as from the squires of the Conservative party, and that unless they could make a better use of the vote than to present it to one or other of the rival caucuses, they might as well be without it altogether. A more plebeian type of representative was wanted than that of the frock-coated and prosperous M.P., and a new policy which should not be directed to maintaining the existing distribution of property but to replacing it by one more equitable.

It was in the early eighties that a book appeared which, though less comprehensive in its reasoning than that of Marx, had, through the greater attractiveness of its style, a more immediate influence. This was the *Progress and Poverty* of the American, Henry George, in which the author harks back to the conception, as old as the French physiocrats of the eighteenth century, of land as the prime source of wealth, and of the rent on land as being something essentially different from the surplus pocketed by the capitalists. Therefore

instead of adopting Marx's solution of confiscating impartially land and other forms of capital, George would make the land bear the whole burden of taxation, perhaps leaving the landlord just enough to induce him to stop on as manager. In a still largely unpeopled country, like the United States, such a scheme might at least have a greater veneer of plausibility than in agriculturally depressed England, where the landlords were hard enough put to it, as it was, to make ends meet. But the Englishmen to whom it appealed were largely town dwellers, and its influence on the democratic intellectuals was particularly marked.

It was in the early eighties that a number of these began to come together to form the nucleus of a Socialist party, inspired, more or less, by the principles of Marx and George. But it was not in the English temperament to render a very close allegiance to such sweeping doctrines as those of the old German Jew. Least of all was it in the nature of the most remarkable of these men, the poet and craftsman William Morris, who wrestled with Marx with more conscientiousness than comprehension, and attacked the existing social system not in the name of any abstract theory of value, but in that of art and beauty, in fact, of life itself. What was apparent to Morris, and that small but not unimportant band of artists and writers who thought like him, was that the state of things produced by capitalism was nothing less than damnable. Morris, with the Romantic bias of a Pre-Raphaelite, knew enough about the Middle Ages to understand that, by one means or another, they had managed to evolve a way of life more pleasant and human than that of the Victorian prosperity to which Tennyson prostituted his lyre. Perhaps the most telling of all Morris's essays is that in which he contrasts the squalid hideousness of the modern railway town of Peterborough, with the greatness of soul that had gone to the building of its cathedral.

Morris was, in fact, profoundly and reasonably unhappy in his modern environment, and dreamed, passionately, of a state of things in which mankind should return to an idyllic simplicity, in which all work should be a pleasure, in which competition should be replaced by loving generosity and universal kindliness, in which there should be no prisons nor marriage bonds and in which (it was a fellow poet, Mr. Alfred Noyes, who was the first to see this significant characteristic of Morris's Utopia) the sun should always be shining and no woman should ever grow old. It was a somewhat medievalized rendering of the state of things visioned in the last act of Shelley's

Prometheus Unbound, and expressed rather an aching of the heart, than any practicable scheme for the future.

When it came to bridging the transition from what was to what might be, Morris had less of an intelligible scheme than the comparatively unambitious, and yet sufficiently drastic programme of social reform advocated, largely through the inspiration of Carlyle, by Ruskin. In one way Morris had only too thoroughly accepted the teaching of Marx, for, if we are to judge from his *News from Nowhere*, he seems to imagine that Utopia is to be the result not of a change of heart but a change of system. After a general revolt of the workers and a massacre in Trafalgar Square, things somehow straighten themselves out, human nature changes as if by magic, and from a sordid tragedy human life is transformed into a pretty, if rather insipid, pastoral. "Rend your hearts (or perhaps your minds) and not your garments" was a text which Morris could hardly have appreciated, though his own experiences with his fellow Socialists might have convinced him of its relevancy. From the original Social Democratic Federation he was fain to part company after a violent quarrel with one of its leaders, and the new society to which he attached himself he soon discovered to be composed less of idealistic enthusiasts than of would-be bomb-throwing ruffians, who had no mind to be lectured into better courses by Comrade Morris.

The appeal of Socialism proved to be especially potent with men of intellect and creative genius, to whom any escape would prove welcome from a state of things which compelled them to prostitute their highest gifts. Even that decidedly snobbish dandy, Oscar Wilde, caught the infection, and produced an essay of *The Soul of Man under Socialism* which at least made it clear that the problem to be solved was essentially spiritual. To Wilde, any transformation of society by legislative coercion was simply horrible, Socialism in his eyes was a voluntary and spontaneous effort to achieve a more unqualified freedom for each man's individuality than had ever been achieved before. He took his inspiration not from Marx but from Christ.

The Social Democratic Federation had been recruited mainly from the working class, but the year 1884 saw the birth of another society, the Fabian, remarkable in being drawn from that suburban middle class which, one would have imagined, would have had most to lose from any attack directed against the bourgeoisie. That a minority of this class, trifling in numbers but distinguished by the intellectual gifts of many of its members, should have embraced a

policy which, to judge from their official manifesto, would have been one of wholesale confiscation, can only be accounted for by that extraordinary unrest and dissatisfaction with their conditions of life which impelled so many suburbans to seek compensation in the cruder enthusiasm excited by the idea of empire. Mr. Bernard Shaw, who early joined the society and became one of its most influential members, constituted himself a very high priest of middle-class culture, and his somewhat erratic genius was reinforced by the infinite capacity for taking, and inducing others to take, pains, possessed by his friend and colleague, Mr. Sidney Webb.

The type of Socialism affected by the Fabian society, was of a less alarming brand than a strict interpretation of their principles might have led one to suppose. Their very name implied caution, and if they dreamed of a social revolution it was a goal not to be rushed in a year or even a generation, but in the direction of which one must advance by deliberate sap and parallel, and in the comfortable assurance that no revolutionary change was likely to come, yet awhile, into the region of practical politics. This did not prevent the Fabians from doing invaluable work in their own chosen sphere, which, under the influence of Mr. and Mrs. Webb, came to be more and more that of systematic research into every kind of social problem, a turning aside from the sophistries and will-o'-the wisps of abstract economics to the facts themselves. Gradually the distinguishing principle of the Fabians came to be less the engineering of revolution than a disposition to seek the remedy for every evil in extending the functions of the State and its officials. Capitalists themselves came to see the advantage of a bureaucracy that might, with a very little modification, end in providing them with a well-fed, well-housed, and well-drilled body of workers. The social problem was in fact to the Fabians—and this in despite of one or two essays on its religious and moral aspect—primarily one of transforming not the heart or mind, but the machinery of government.

The formal Socialism of the eighties, though a powerful leaven, was as yet negligible as a political force. Such candidates as it put up at elections did not succeed in attracting more than a few odd votes. The most important practical advances towards the realization of a working class policy were made in the characteristically English way of getting ahead with the business without too much fuss about ultimate ends or abstract principles. The policy, once the workers could get into the saddle, would no doubt shape itself. And the workman was, in nine cases out of ten, almost exclusively concerned with

what affected him immediately; like the Englishman he was, he cared nothing at all about the rights of man, but he was invincibly obstinate about his own rights and grievances. It is noticeable throughout the British Labour movement that the revolutionary impulse comes almost invariably from the "Celtic fringe". To the Celt abstract ideas and logical extremes are as congenial as they are repellent to the Englishman.

The year 1886 saw the country at the lowest depths of trade depression and consequent unemployment. Some very sanguine or very nervous people began to wonder whether the revolution might not even then be at the door, and this fear was intensified when a mob of half-starved men, tramping through Pall Mall, were insulted by some ill-conditioned clubmen, and replied by ensuring employment at least for the neighbouring glaziers, subsequently breaking loose and looting some shops. Next year, Jubilee year, when trade was getting a little better, the authorities tried to prohibit meetings of unemployed, and this led to a "bloody Sunday" in Trafalgar Square, and what was perhaps the most moving lyric that Morris ever wrote, to the refrain,

> "Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
> But one and all if they would dusk the day!"

These attempts at revolt were pathetically feeble, and only served to show the weakness of revolutionary Socialism in England. The main progress in the Labour movement, during the eighties, was in the all-important department of Trades Union activity. The Trades Unions were at last beginning to feel their feet after the impotence and timidity of the late seventies, and a new and ambitious policy was beginning to be advocated by the younger leaders, in opposition to the stalwarts of the old school, who strongly disapproved of aggressive methods, and who kept the Parliamentary Committee tinkering inoffensively at comparatively petty reforms. The New Unionism as it was called, was much more in harmony with the militarism of the time. It aimed at developing the Unions first and foremost into fighting organizations. Sometimes, indeed, the war chest was allowed to absorb the whole of the cash, to the exclusion of a benefits fund. An atmosphere of bitterness and even violence was introduced into trade disputes, and harmony between employer and employee ceased to be regarded as an end desirable in itself—the trend of the New Unionism was to regard the capitalist and the wage-earner as beings of irreconcilable interests. At the same time a tendency was apparent towards embracing all members and branches

of each particular industry into one comprehensive Union, and also towards introducing militant Trades Unionism among those unskilled and badly paid masses of workers who had hitherto been impossible to organize.

It was in 1889 that a new era in Trades Unionism was inaugurated by a great strike of the London Dockers, whose poverty and uncertainty of employment rendered their conditions peculiarly hard. It is a proof of the British instinct of fair play that the grievances of these men attracted not only sympathy but even financial support from the well-to-do, and, what was even more remarkable, from fellow workers in Australia. A committee presided over by Cardinal Manning succeeded in obtaining peace on terms that granted the substance of the men's demands.

The revival of trade, which started in the Jubilee year, coincided with a great and enthusiastic revival in Trades Union activities. The victory of the Dockers not only put fresh heart into the workers, but greatly strengthened the hands of the New Unionists, who had been bitterly opposed to the cautious tactics of the old leaders. The New Unionism was by no means satisfied with a sectional and purely industrial policy, it aspired to reinforce industrial by political and even international action. The tendency of the older leaders had been thankfully to accept such crumbs of legislation as might fall from the Liberal table. But to the younger leaders the Liberal party itself was incurably capitalistic and the feeble compromise of the Liberal Newcastle programme they rejected with contempt. Labour must have a party and a policy of its own, not bound to any abstract theory like that of Marx, but seeking every opportunity to promote the distinctive interests of the wage-earning class, and keeping closely in touch with the Trades Unions. In 1892 such an organization, the Independent Labour Party, came into being, and in the election of 1895 it put up no less than 28 candidates. But it had entered the field at an unfortunate time; the imperialist ardour was at its height and every one of the candidates was defeated. It is not till eleven years later that Labour became a political force to be reckoned with seriously.

All through these years of obscurity and Conservative dominance, the Labour party was gathering strength for an advance that was sooner or later inevitable. With the vote in their hands, it was hardly credible that the manual workers would be forever content to have their policy dictated and their affairs managed by the members of another class. They were being constantly urged to take their

destinies into their own hands, and though their instinct was to look with distrust on any violent breach with accepted tradition, one step was bound to lead on to another. The real struggle would come when the great party organizations, financed by the capitalist class, pitted their utmost resources of wealth and propaganda against the crude power of the vote possessed by the wage-earners.

4

The Rigour of the Game

If there had been anything like a deliberate conspiracy on the part of the " haves " against the " have nots ", as some democratic enthusiasts have alleged, every consideration of party tactics, in the old sense, would have been subordinated to the necessity of combining, if only in secret, against the common enemy. But imagination was not the strongest point of orthodox politicians, and their actions are sufficient evidence that, in so far as they thought of Labour and its demands at all, it was in the light of a useful pawn in the old game of Conservative versus Liberal. The Liberals themselves, especially after the retirement of Gladstone, saw that the old individualist Radicalism was now hopelessly behind the times, and that Social Reform, by which was implied a cautious and unrevolutionary extension of State activities to better the lot of the workers, was the best card to play against imperialism, regardless of the fact that a Labour party, if it ever came into being, could always produce a higher card of the same suit, even if they did not trump it with Social Revolution. And the Unionists, largely under the influence of Chamberlain, had a social policy of their own, including the provision, which they never succeeded in materializing, of pensions for the aged poor.

The Khaki election of 1900, though it gave the Unionists a fresh lease of their overwhelming majority, marked the bankruptcy of their domestic policy. They had demanded and obtained a vote of confidence for having won a war which had yet the best of two years to run, and while they had a constructive foreign and imperial policy, in the domestic sphere they allowed themselves to slide into reactionary and merely conservative courses, against which Beaconsfield's, and to a lesser extent Chamberlain's, influence had been directed. But now Chamberlain was throwing the whole of his Titanic energy into the cause of the Empire, and imperialism, as

he understood it, had now lost its pre-war glamour and was steadily declining in popularity. The Colonial Conference that met in 1902 made it clear that the Dominions were not going to compromise their national independence by any visible tightening of the imperial connection; that bond must be unseen—not of the law but of the spirit. But this Chamberlain, with his ardour to put the Empire on a business footing, was ill fitted to understand.

On his return from South Africa, where he had done splendid work in forwarding the reconciliation between English and Dutch, he boldly launched out into the exposition of what he meant to be the crown of his policy. Admirer of Germany as he was, and deeply imbued with the conceptions of *Realpolitik*, it was almost inevitable that he should, sooner or later, challenge the Cobdenite dogma of Free Trade, which our rivals and Dominions had long since discarded, and which was a survival of that pacific Liberalism of which Chamberlain's later career was the direct negation. He had at first dreamed of an imperial Zollverein, of trade between England and the Dominions as free as that between England and Scotland. But as early as the Diamond Jubilee Conference it had been borne on him that under no circumstances would the Dominions expose their growing manufactures to the unrestricted competition of the mother country. Canada had, however, given the lead in conceding a preference to British products, and Chamberlain welcomed the idea of uniting the Empire, if not by Free Trade, at least by a system of mutual preferences. But as most of the important colonial and foreign products already entered our ports free, the only way to afford a *quid pro quo* to the Dominions was to put a duty on foreign imports, and particularly on corn and meat. But, despite a shilling duty on corn during the war, the very name of corn law was, after the "hungry forties", as much a bugbear to the English as the name of King to the Roman mind.

Nothing daunted by the prejudice he was certain to arouse, Chamberlain flung himself into the fray, and resigned his office in the ministry in order to free his hands for his campaign of propaganda, in which preference quickly yielded place to a modified revival of protection. To tax the foreigner and not to take his tariffs lying down was a programme congenial to Mr. Chamberlain's fighting instincts. The Unionist party was hopelessly split; the Duke of Devonshire and his Free Trade colleagues in the ministry also resigned, and only the rump of a Cabinet was left under the premiership of Lord Salisbury's nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, a master of debate and of

the minor tactics of party warfare, and a somewhat theistical sceptic, whose power of drawing fine metaphysical distinctions was better adapted to the lecture room than the public platform. Mr. Balfour showed a suicidal ingenuity in refusing to commit himself either to what Chamberlain understood by Tariff Reform or to what the Free-Traders among his followers understood by Free Trade. Conscious of centrifugal forces in his own party, he evaded even debate in the House, and allowed the opposition to pass what resolutions they liked. Such finesse was interpreted by the electorate as a declaration of political bankruptcy.

And bankrupt of a domestic policy the Unionists in fact were. An Education Act was passed which, though it made a notable advance in unifying the old voluntary and board-schools under the control of the County Councils, was scarcely regarded as educational at all by Press and public, who saw in it an excuse for reviving that everlasting competition in envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness between the professed followers of Christ, which had proved the curse of our education for a century. After the passing of this Act, a strange lethargy descended on the once powerful and confident Unionists. They acted, or rather avoided action, as if they were conscious of having lost not only the confidence of the electorate but even confidence in themselves. Their aspirations after Social Reform grew faint and cold, and, untaught by experience and blind to the signs of the times, they committed the supreme blunder of mortally offending Labour

This they did on the old question of picketing during strikes, the neglect of which by Gladstone had given Disraeli a winning advantage in 1874, and which his government had, as everybody believed, settled on a satisfactory basis once and for all. This, however, was reckoning without the power of English judges to refashion the law by interpreting it and—as every trades unionist would have said—without the natural bias of these prosperous old gentlemen in favour of their own cause. Towards the end of the century, some disposition had been manifested to whittle down the privileges of the Unions, but not until the Taff Vale Decision, in 1902, was it established, to the consternation of the workers, that Trades Unions were liable in damages for actions done by their individual members in the furtherance of industrial disputes. Whatever the rights and wrongs may have been, the effect of this decision was nothing short of catastrophic, so much so that few employers had the hardihood to take advantage of it. Every Union in the country saw its funds

threatened. On the other hand, the decision was greeted with undisguised satisfaction by the reactionaries who now dominated the Unionist caucus. The Cabinet tacitly endorsed the decision by doing nothing, and organized Labour had now got an electioneering cry far more potent with the British working man than any amount of appeals to Socialist doctrines and class hatred.

By all the laws of party warfare, this unpopularity of the Unionist government, sedulously fanned by the Liberal Press and caucus, ought to have redounded to the advantage of the alternative party. This expectation was in a large measure fulfilled when, Mr. Balfour's finesse having failed to keep even his own supporters together, the discredited and disheartened Unionists came back from the country early in 1906 with no more than a beggarly 157 members. If no other consideration had weighed in the balance, the industrial districts of the North were invincibly biassed in favour of Free Trade, and had been moved only to opposition by Chamberlain's proposals. But there was also a general feeling throughout the country that things were not well with the wage-earner; already he was beginning to feel the pinch of diminishing wage values, and not only the very real threat of his unions, but the flood of opposition rhetoric about Chinese slavery and the government's apparent indifference to social reform made him demand, with increasing insistence, a bold and constructive policy of redress for his many grievances, some plan for at least mitigating the disparity of wealth and opportunity between Jack and his master.

But however vehemently he might inveigh against the Conservative party, there was no more conservatively minded person in England than the worker. Now that he was thoroughly aroused, his first instinct was to turn to what had hitherto been the only alternative source of government, the great Liberal party, which had proclaimed from a thousand platforms the gospel of progress and reform, and could even rise to such almost Marxian slogans as,

"Why should we be beggars with the ballot in our hands?"

Accordingly the Liberals were returned with a majority the like of which had not been seen since the morrow of the First Reform Bill. But this majority, huge as it was, was not the most sensational feature of the election. The continuous and often disheartening efforts of independent Labour were rewarded by the election of no less than 53 members pledged to its principles. A new party had come into being definitely anti-capitalist in its policy. At present it could only serve as an auxiliary of the all-powerful Liberals—but what if

Liberalism should fail to realize the expectations it had aroused? Would the workers swing back to Tariff Reform? That was the Unionist calculation. Or might they not be inclined to give their own class an innings where the gentry had failed?

A ceaseless work of preparation and propaganda had led up to this first appearance of organized Labour as a serious factor in the political situation. Since the days of Morris, Labour questions had begun to attract more and more attention. The great work of Charles Booth, himself a rich employer, on *Life and Labour in London*, had laid bare, street by street, the appalling squalor and destitution on which the fabric of Victorian prosperity was built. The Fabian Society continued its work of detailed research; the influence of the Webbs was very potent in the newly formed London School of Economics. Mr. Shaw started a school of drama, largely under the influence of Ibsen, in which social problems were boldly ventilated on the stage, and Mr. H. G. Wells, a Fabian who eventually broke loose from the society, made sociological dialogue a leading feature of his novels. These gentlemen made their appeal primarily to the bourgeoisie, but Robert Blatchford, of the true spiritual lineage of Cobbett, spoke straight to the heart of the masses, pleading in good muscular English the cause of Britain for the British, and contrasting the Dismal England of capitalism with the Merry England she had been and might yet be made. The social question was, in fact, everywhere being discussed; people were familiarizing themselves with the most advanced and even revolutionary proposals.

The triumph of the Liberals in 1905 was as deceptive as that of their rivals five years earlier. They were, indeed, prepared to go considerably further in the way of social reform than any previous government, and they even provided a pittance of 5*s*. a week for such of the septuagenarian populace whose incomes did not exceed £31 10*s*. and who were not in receipt of other than medical poor relief. They passed a number of acts on such varied subjects as Labour Exchanges, town planning, sweated industries, an eight hours' day for miners, small holdings, the protection of children, and the feeding of necessitous school-children. Such measures fell far short of the expectations which the Liberals had aroused by their democratic professions, and there were not a few among the wage-earners who began to suspect the new Liberal was old Whig writ in red ink. These suspicions seemed to be confirmed by the conspicuous failure of the government to deal with the most important question of all, that of the reform of the Poor Law, and this in spite of the fact that

a Royal Commission, after years of patient inquiry, produced in 1909 a famous report which gave the Socialist minority an opportunity of formulating, under the auspices of Mrs. Sidney Webb, a highly bureaucratic programme which was, in fact, the quintessence of Fabianism, and included proposals for dealing with the able-bodied unemployed which seemed, to unfriendly critics, to smack too strongly of a modified slave system.

The Liberals were hardly more conscious than their opponents of the extent to which the new conditions threatened to make the old party game a battle of frogs and mice, with Labour in the role of the owls. That they meant to play the game with the utmost rigour was evidenced by the way in which they continued to pack the House of Lords, even while they denounced it, with men distinguished for nothing except their riches, and by their cynical procrastination in honouring their promise to purge the Rand of the Chinese. The Unionist caucus was not a whit behindhand in factiousness, and it had a great if perilous advantage in the fact that the House of Lords was to all intents and purposes its mouthpiece. True to the principles of *Realpolitik*, its leaders, or bosses, decided to throw constitutional moderation to the winds, and use this advantage for all it was worth. The plan was to let through all measures of ostensible Social Reform, as well as that which reversed the Taff Vale judgment, and to throw out those which were either aimed at some distinctively party advantage, or at placating one or other section of the government's supporters. Accordingly a so-called Education Bill, which was the leading measure of the government's first year of office, and was merely another move in the everlasting sectarian controversy, was amended to death, and other bills, in spite of the immense majorities with which they passed the Commons, obtained short shrift in "another place". Two years later a grossly unpopular Licensing Bill was flung out by the Lords, and the government did not dare to appeal to the country. The Unionists had so far played their dangerous game with masterly finesse.

But it was a game in which the country was ceasing to take much interest. Among working men there was little indignation to be worked up over the failure of their social superiors to cure them of their intemperate habits, or even at the spectacle of some comfortably off Nonconformist having to part with a piece of furniture in default of paying his school rate. The politicians were perpetually promising the worker a new heaven and a new earth as the price of his vote, but the goods never seemed to be delivered. The new

Labour party was quick to assimilate the atmosphere and traditions of the House, even to the extent of tacitly acquiescing in the unwritten law which protected the shady side of caucus activities from investigation or discussion. This alone sufficed to cast an atmosphere of unreality over the proceedings of Parliament; more and more it began to be suspected that what got on to the hoardings or into the papers was mere camouflage, and that the real decisions were taken in secret where money talked with an all-compelling persuasiveness. And many of the workers suspected that their leaders, once they had entered the portals of St. Stephen's, were not wholly unresponsive to these siren pleadings. They even suspected them, in more than one industrial dispute, of a conciliatoriness that amounted to treachery.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the bolder spirits among the workers were influenced to a greater or less degree by the French doctrine of syndicalism, which carried the class war to more extreme lengths than had been envisaged even by Marx. This theory repudiated the State altogether, as representing the interests of consumers and as being incurably biassed towards capitalism, and sought to concentrate all power in self-governing associations of producers, exalting the Trades Unions into glorified soviets. The out and out syndicalists were prepared to stick at nothing in the attainment of their ends; sabotage, "ca'canny," and violence were regular parts of their programme. Majority rule they repudiated —if a minority of workers could seize power by force and hold it by terror, so much the better. They were, in fact, applying in an intensified form to the industrial sphere those principles of militarism that were destined, ere long, to turn Europe into a shambles. So extreme a doctrine was not likely to find acceptance undiluted, in this country; it rather acted as a spirit which embittered and intensified industrial disputes, made the men revolt from their leaders and repudiate official agreements, and inspired a great deal of extremist propaganda, especially among the young and in the Celtic fringe. A Bowdlerized and somewhat bourgeois rendering was the theory of national gilds, an arrangement by which power should be balanced between the producers, as organized in a few gigantic monopolies, and the State, as representing the consumers, the two to worry out their differences after some more or less ingenious plan. This doctrine, another of the many that have sought social salvation not by a change of heart or mind, but by a change of machinery, bears about the same relation to Syndicalism as Fabianism to the teaching of Marx.

The suspicions of the syndicalists and of that apostle in England of French anti-Semitism, Mr. Hilaire Belloc, with regard to the corruption and falsity of our political system, were at least understandable. That the pressing of certain charges and the investigation of certain activities were sedulously boycotted, that there was a good deal of collusion on the lines of " you keep a blind eye on my dirty work and I'll keep one on yours ", was past a doubt, and the extent to which the caucus system had lowered our standards of political honour was revealed in 1918, by the notorious Marconi scandal, which, if it failed to reveal naked corruption, at least suggested a lack of delicacy and candour in high places which, if it would have been fatal to Victorian, could provide no more than a piquant advertisement to Georgian public men. Indirectly, also, the same lesson was taught by a group of women who, weary of continual polite evasions of the now growing demand for a bi-sexual franchise, resolved to get by foul means what they could not obtain by fair, and advertising their contempt for man-made law and male legislators, began to browbeat the King's ministers with physical arguments to which they might presumably be more susceptible than those of justice and reason. The fact that ministers did not feel a sufficient force of public opinion behind them to defend effectively themselves or the law, by allowing that law to take its normal course against repeated outrages, is sufficiently indicative of the contempt with which the ordinary citizen had come to regard his elected rulers.

But when Mr. Belloc went on to imply that party warfare had become a deliberately arranged sham fight, he was palpably overshooting the mark. Had the politicians been fully conscious of the menace created by the spread of socialistic doctrine, and secretly united in combating it, they would hardly have gone out of their way to excite class antagonism to fever pitch. The fact is that, since the Unionists had resolved to use the Second Chamber to paralyse the Liberal Majority, both sides were playing the skin game against each other with an entire recklessness of consequences. The Liberals had hitherto had all the worst of a game in which they had only been able to chalk up " No veto " on the door of the Lords and run away. Now, however, they bethought them of a card in their hand that might yet prove a winner. A convention, older than that which prevented the King from using his veto, had hitherto restrained the Lords from interfering with the financial proposals of the Commons as embodied in the Budget. What could be simpler than to compel the Lords to swallow, under the guise of finance,

what they would have rejected as legislation, and thus give them their turn of public humiliation? The opportunity brought forth the man, in the shape of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Lloyd George, a Welsh solicitor with all the abounding vital energy and quickness of mind characteristic of the Celt, and the Celt's characteristic lack of gravity, in the old Roman sense.

This Chancellor found himself, in 1909, confronted with a heavy deficit caused by the granting of Old Age Pensions and the expenses of strengthening the navy against Germany. He met this by a series of proposals palpably designed to exasperate his opponents as much as possible. The Unionist cause being notoriously bound up with those of the landed interest and the brewing trade, he introduced a harassing and ultimately unworkable system of land taxation, and what one of his colleagues described as "swingeing duties" on licences. At the same time, he made mild but significant concessions to the principle of Socialism by the introduction of a super-tax, by large increases in the form of capital levy known as the death duties, and by emphasizing the favour shown to earned, as against saved or inherited, wealth. The Unionists might have been wary enough to see the trap, but with the recklessness so characteristic of those feverish pre-war years, they played straight into their opponents' hands. They furiously assailed the Budget, and Mr. Lloyd George, addressing an East End audience and carried away by its enthusiasm, launched out—impromptu, if rumour speaks truly, nd to the consternation of some of his colleagues on the platform—nto a magnificent emotional piece of oratory, which was plainly a call to the poor to rise and mutiny against the existing distribution of wealth. Infuriated by these tactics, and perhaps egged on by those Tariff Reformers who were by no means minded to see any practicable substitute for their own proposals, the Lords, in the autumn, flung the last shreds of discretion to the winds and took the revolutionary step of throwing out the Budget.

The horror and indignation with which the Liberals expected this step to be greeted, and which were typified by the sending up of rockets, were certainly not reflected in the electorate. The confident trust of 1906 had long evaporated, and not even Mr. Lloyd George's philippics could excite the man in the street to anything like enthusiasm for a continuance in office of his existing rulers. At the same time, the industrial North had not budged an inch from its determination to have no goverment which would tamper with Free Trade, and though there was no great disposition to

execrate the Lords for accepting a challenge so plainly offered, the prestige of their order had steadily declined since they had, for so many years, allowed it, without protest, to be swamped and corrupted by the direct and indirect purchase of what could only ironically be characterized as "honours". As for the Labour party, the experiment of trying it in office was not only too sensational an innovation to capture the somewhat sluggish imagination of the Englishman, but so far that party had not given evidence of possessing any distinctive policy, nor of constituting anything more formidable than the detached left wing of the Liberal caucus. The results of the election reflected both the uncertainty of the electorate and its boredom with the whole ostensible business of party warfare. The Unionists were returned with a trifling majority over the Liberals, the Labour party showed a slight diminution but substantially maintained its astonishing gains of 1906 and—most important and ominous of all—the Irish Nationalists now, once again, held the balance between parties. They had their own reasons for disliking the Budget, but they were prepared to sell their vote at a price, a price which, as it included not only Home Rule for themselves but the subjugation of the Protestant North East, must, in all human probability, involve civil war. But so embittered was the party controversy grown, and so completely had constitutional restraint been abandoned, that it was safe to calculate on the price being paid—or at least pledged.

5

Dominion Nationalism

The tendency of mankind to coalesce into huge Empires or racial entities dignified by the prefix "pan" was by no means unchallenged in the early years of the twentieth century. The old sentiment of nationality was not only alive, but becoming increasingly active, and was no respecter of Empires. Poles and Finns, Serbs and Czechs, the unredeemed children of France and Italy, ceased not to cherish aspirations that were, to the high imperialist way of thinking, not only treasonable but half a century out of date. And nowhere was this tendency more active than in that strange and heterogeneous union of peoples known as the British Empire. While Englishmen at home were being exhorted to think imperially, their fellow subjects overseas were thinking in a number of intense and jealous

patriotisms, and it remained to be seen whether the Empire could achieve the miracle of fostering these patriotisms and blending them into one supreme and all-inclusive love, to designate which the word imperialism would be not only inadequate but misleading.

In the years preceding the Great War, the self-conscious independence of these daughter nations was becoming ever more pronounced. Any idea of inducing them to enter into a scheme of formal federation was obviously hopeless. Even the harmless proposal of the British Colonial Secretary in 1905 that the Imperial Conference should rename itself the Imperial Council, and should appoint an advisory commission to preserve continuity during the four years' interval between its meetings, was turned down by Canada, who scented a possible encroachment on her sovereign rights. When, at the Imperial Conference of 1911, the Premier of New Zealand formulated a definite project of imperial federation, its reception merely showed how far was such a scheme from coming within the realm of practical politics.

It was no wonder that under these circumstances foreign and even British critics, whose minds were bound by formal conceptions of sovereignty, should have derided the notion of so centrifugal an association ever being able to function in unison in such a crisis as that of a world war. Such exponents of militarism as General Von Bernhardi confidently anticipated that so far from helping the Mother Country, the Dominions would add to her difficulties in time of war by becoming centres of revolt. And when it came to talk of Canada's right of deciding for herself whether to join in a war declared by the Mother Country, there were not wanting Englishmen to point out that an imperial bond, so conceived of, would not even have the value of an alliance between independent states. Nor would it, had formal ties been the only ones that bound.

The situation was certainly not without its drawbacks. The cloud of the German menace was beginning to darken the sky, and though all the Dominions were agreed as to the necessity of sharing the burden of imperial defence with the Mother Country, their intense and jealous particularism made it extraordinarily difficult either to secure that unity of organization and command so necessary in war, or to pilot any scheme at all through the shoals of party politics. When the question of naval defence came up in the Canadian Lower House, the whole House rose to sing the National Anthem, and yet the differences between the Liberals, who favoured a separate Dominion navy, and the Conservatives,

who were for a contribution to the Imperial fleet, led to the whole scheme proposed by the newly elected Conservative government being wrecked in the Senate.

Nevertheless, and despite the anti-imperial influences emanating from the presence of French reactionaries in Canada, Boer irreconcilables in South Africa, and Irish nationalists in Australia, at no time was the invisible bond more firmly drawn between the Mother Country and the Dominions. Canada had, by rejecting the commercial advances of the United States in 1911, given overwhelming proof of her desire to remain within the Empire in defiance of geography; a Labour government in Australia was prompt to show that in loyalty it meant to fall no whit behind its predecessors; in the new-born Union of South Africa the great-hearted Premier Botha, so recently the doughtiest of our enemies, now hastened to approve our generosity by showing himself the staunchest of our friends; as for New Zealand, her patriotism was the most ardent of all, and small as she was, she was the first in the gift of a Dreadnought to the Imperial navy. How this unique and almost paradoxical loyalty would answer to the supreme test, was all too soon to be demonstrated.

6

"BANDE MATERAM"

It was not only in the white Dominions that the consciousness of nationality was awake. There were, by the beginning of the twentieth century, unmistakable signs that India, so long divided against herself and passive in her subjection to alien rule, was astir with a new patriotism. That this should have been so, that India should at last claim the birthright of her ancient civilization and become proudly intolerant of any rule but her own, may prove to be the most splendid achievement of the British Raj. To impose one's sway may be glorious, but to supersede the necessity for that sway has in it something that may not extravagantly be characterized as divine.

It was, however, only a few Englishmen who consciously pursued such an ideal. Macaulay, with his Whig cult of liberty, had proclaimed it in memorable terms, and so long as the old Radical individualism remained a force in British politics, men were bound to arise to whom the liberties of Indians were no less sacred than those of Englishmen, and in whose opinions representative institutions did

not cease to be a panacea from being applied East of Suez. Such beliefs were, through the medium of European education, sedulously propagated among Indians themselves. With the rise of the Imperialist spirit, the enthusiasm for efficient government more and more tended to cool that for liberty in the breasts of India's rulers. Not so in those of Indians! Those teachings of Macaulay and Mill, which were every year falling more and more behind the times in the West, were, to many a young Hindu and Moslem, living and burning realities.

Meanwhile the English bureaucracy continued to function after its competent, but aloof and unimaginative fashion. After the terrible lesson of the Mutiny, it would be many years before there could be any dream of resistance to British power. It was the heyday of the Anglo-Indian, of that light-hearted, unintellectual, and not too chaste society in the cantonments which Mr. Kipling described with so obvious a sympathy. Few of the ruling race had the least idea of entering into any social or spiritual communion with what they were pleased to describe as the "natives". Many Englishmen, in fact, expected any Indian who met them in the street to lower his umbrella in passing as a sign of respect, and instances were not unknown of offending umbrellas being knocked down.[1] According to its lights, however, the bureaucracy was upright, active and benevolent. Invaluable work was done in the way of irrigation, of famine relief, of education of a sort, and of evenhanded justice, though the drain on India's resources continued, and the interests of Lancashire made the Home Government set its face with the utmost sternness against the slightest protection of Indian against British industries, and thus helped to create the very poverty against which its agents strove.

It was on the accession to power of Gladstone's ill-starred ministry of 1880, that English Liberalism got its chance of showing what it could do for India. That flamboyant imperialist, Lord Lytton, was succeeded in the viceroyalty by Lord Ripon, whose object it was to apply, with due caution, those principles of generous trust in the people with which the name of Gladstone was identified. This he did by a comprehensive scheme of local self-government, fashioned on the English model, and by repealing a law, passed under his predecessor's auspices, for muzzling the Press. But in 1883 he allowed the Legal Member of his Council to bring in a Bill which placed Indian on the same footing as British magistrates, and thus made

[1] By the time of the war, this particular form of offensiveness had been so severely frowned upon by authority as to be practically extinct.

Englishmen and—what was even more resented—Englishwomen, amenable to their jurisdiction. The introduction of this measure was the signal for an unrestrained outburst of racial passion on the part of the Anglo-Indian community. The Viceroy was vilified in the Press and insulted in the streets; the English volunteers were urged to resign in a body, and the opponents of the measure did not hesitate to express themselves in terms of open contempt and hostility for Indians, who on the whole displayed restraint and dignity under provocation. One somewhat unclassical patriot signing himself "Britannicus" was allowed to express himself repeatedly in the columns of the Calcutta *Englishman* in such terms as: "The only people who have any right to India are the British. . . . Privileges the so-called Indians have which we do not begrudge them and for which they ought to be grateful instead of clamouring for more."[1] That the Bill was replaced by one maintaining its principles in a considerably modified form, is a fact of comparatively minor importance. What did matter was that the Anglo-Indian community had, in so conspicuous a manner, proclaimed its resolve to admit the people of the country to no sort of equality with its white rulers. And the Queen-Empress's government had, at least ostensibly, given way to them. Moreover, as Sir Valentine Chirol points out, the Anglo-Indian had taught the Indian the uses of agitation.

After Lord Ripon, at the end of 1884, had resigned the viceroyalty, Liberalism was in official India, as it was in England, a spent force. But it had sowed a seed on Indian soil that was destined to bear fruit. It had been the deliberate policy of Lord Ripon to strengthen his hands by encouraging those Indian reformers whose principles were similar to his own, and there was still left in India a sprinkling of old-fashioned British Radicals whose initiative was invaluable in giving shape and direction to Indian aspirations after self-government. It was one of these men, Allan Hume, who, believing that the salvation of India could only come from Indians themselves, played a leading part in the foundation of an annual assembly of notables calling itself the Indian National Congress, and designed to unite reformers from all parts of the country and to enable Indian educated opinion to make its voice heard on India's destinies. At first the attitude of the Viceroy's government, and of the Viceroy himself, Lord Dufferin, was not only benevolent but encouraging, but when the first Congress began to adumbrate

[1] *The Life of the First Marquis of Ripon* by Lucien Wolf, vol. ii, p. 129.

reforms based on the principle of no taxation without consent, the authorities took fright, and his Lordship proclaimed an official boycott of subsequent Congresses by forbidding any government servant to take part in them. Though this decision had the effect of still further widening the gulf between rulers and ruled, the Congress, for the first twenty years of its existence, amply fulfilled its purpose of focussing Liberal opinion throughout India, and preparing the way for representative institutions. The goal that the typical "Congresswallah" came to envisage, was that India should as soon as practicable, though not necessarily at once, be granted the same rights of self-government within the Empire as had been conceded to the Dominions. At first there was no widespread or vocal desire for complete separation.

The situation, however, created by an all-powerful alien bureaucracy out of touch and sympathy with educated opinion in the country, could not fail to become intolerably difficult in face of any widespread sentiment of Indian patriotism. And, thanks very largely to the peace that we had imposed, the common language we had provided, and the liberal ideas we had introduced, educated Indians were everywhere awakening to an intense pride in their ancient civilization, and a consequent determination to rest content with no arrangement that implied the least political or social inferiority to their very distant cousins of the Western isles. To such a way of thinking, "India for the Empire" might perhaps still be a desirable aspiration, but only in so far as it was compatible with "India for the Indians".

In tracing the spiritual influences that are all-important in the development of India, we must be on our guard against too facile generalization. The reformers, of whom she was so prolific, could not, unless they were reactionary to the point of obtuseness, be solely concerned with the deliverance of India from foreign rule. They had first to deliver her from herself, from the superstition that had cankered and the formalism that had overlaid the pure philosophy of the Upanishads and the social insight of Manu. Those reactionary Brahmans who made a complicated tyranny of caste and consecrated lechery under the name of religion, those "sanctified wretches" as we once heard a distinguished pundit characterize them, furnished an excuse for the enemies of Indian freedom to denounce every step on the path of reform as a base betrayal of the Indian masses to a twice-born tyrant whose little finger would be thicker than the Englishman's loins. Exactly the same argument, with the priest

substituted for the Brahman, was constantly employed by the opponents of Irish self-government. As a matter of fact, this power of reactionary Brahmanism had been enormously weakened during the nineteenth century, not only by the efforts of the enlightened reformers of whom Ram Mohun Rai was the pioneer, but by the corrosive influence of Western science and rationalism. When the Brahman was fain to avail himself of a third-class carriage, packed like a sardine tin, it was hardly possible to stand on points of untouchability. Nor would it be by any means fair to lump all Brahmans together as reactionaries. Many of them lived, in spirit as in letter, up to the high ideal of an intellectual aristocracy, and some of the boldest and most enlightened reformers were drawn from their ranks. On the other hand, it is an easily demonstrable fallacy that the Indian patriotic movement was either exclusively or even mainly Brahman in its aims or leadership.

Had there been any real effort of the ruling race to understand Indian aspirations and to meet them half way, it is possible that the spiritual partnership dreamed of by Ram Mohun Rai and Keshab Chandra Sen might have become an accomplished fact. But aloofness on one side was bound to produce an equal and opposite reaction on the other, and accordingly, in the last quarter of the century, we find the spirit of all-comprehensive impartiality, embodied in the original Brahma Somaj, distinctly losing ground, and a tendency on the part of Hindus to exalt the principles of their own faith and civilization as definitely superior to all others. It was in 1875 that a new prophet, called Dyananda Saraswati, founded the Arya Somaj, which eventually came to number a quarter of a million members, and whose principal centres were the Punjab and the Bombay Presidency. Dyananda has not inaptly been compared with Luther in his desire to sweep away the whole superstructure of Brahman "over-belief", and to rest on the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture in the shape of the Vedas. So obnoxious did he become to the defenders of the old order, that he was constantly persecuted, and even the manner of his death is not above the suspicion of poison. His ideal was a noble one, and resembled that of the Brahma Somaj in its desire to benefit all mankind, its foundation of the purest monotheism, and its guiding principles of love and justice. But it differed from Keshab's society in its aggressive patriotic bias and its militant desire to proselytize from other faiths, particularly from Christianity. It was his desire to raise up a virile population for the Motherland that betrayed Dyananda into sanctioning the

practice of Niyoga, in other words of licensed concubinage, under certain circumstances.

It was in Bengal that there arose the spiritual revival connected with the name of Ramakrishna. He was a Brahman of rustic origin and little book-learning, but he combined a shrewd peasant wisdom with a saintly and wholly lovable disposition, and he taught his disciples the essential sameness of all gods and religious beliefs. "Different creeds," he said, "are but different paths to attain God." He personally preferred to approach God in his native, Bengali way, by the worship of Kali, the terrible goddess of destruction, whom his devotion transfigured into a sweet and tender mother, a Madonna. His work was continued by his favourite disciple, the Swami Vivekananda, a less human and lovable personality, but perhaps the most remarkable intellect that modern India has produced. With him, Ramakrishna's genial tolerance was transformed into a proud and passionate assertion of the mission of Hindu faith and civilization to conquer the world, not by force, but in the might of the spirit. "Let foreigners come," he cried, "and conquer the world with their armies, never mind. Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality! Aye . . . love must conquer hatred, hatred cannot conquer itself." It would no doubt have surprised Vivekananda had he known that he was only echoing the cry of the old Puritan "Diggers", on St. George's Hill,

"To conquer them by love, come in now! come in now!"

Vivekananda, with his profound philosophical insight, was able to discern in just what, from the Hindu standpoint, Western civilization had gone wrong and was driving headlong to ruin. In its mad striving for material accumulation, the perpetual outward turning of its mind's eye, it had cast away the better part and lost its own soul. Vivekananda was an adept in the art of Yoga, the ancient mind and soul training of the Hindus, and he held that to conquer one's own spirit, deliberately, scientifically, and to the point of absolute non-attachment, was the only thing on earth worth striving for. No doubt he carried this cult of the inner man to as unqualified an extreme as in the West materialism had carried its own will to power over matter. But at least the issue was fairly joined between the West as the home of materialism and India as the fount of spirituality. And Vivekananda was as vehement as Dyananda himself in his denunciation of the abuses of Hinduism and the rigours of caste exclusiveness. He did not wish to abolish caste, but his teaching on the subject may be best expressed by the

transposition of a homely English proverb into "Brahman is as Brahman does."

Despite his doctrine of non-attachment, the master passion of Vivekananda's soul was patriotism. "He was born," says his English disciple, Sister Nivedita, "a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland." He was not without a certain admiration for the manliness that he perceived in Englishmen, but he believed English civilization, such as it was, to be derived from Indian sources, and to be a very inferior product at that. The subjection of his country to a foreign domination was, in his eyes—as is quite evident when we read between the lines of his writings—a tragedy. His object as regarded India, as he admitted in private, was to make Hinduism aggressive. He had seen how 40 millions of Englishmen held down 300 millions of Indians because the Englishmen were united and the Indians were not, and he pointed the moral that Indians must sink all their differences and bring their ideas and wills into the same focus.

We have selected the Ayra Somaj and the Ramakrishna Mission as the most powerful of the many new spiritual influences that were at work among educated Indians at this time, and were introducing a new element into the relations between the English bureaucracy and the people they governed. But it was not only to the religious and philosophic sphere that the revival extended. In both art and literature that peculiar quality of spirituality for which India had ever been distinguished was inspiring work which had nothing to fear by comparison with the most exacting European standards. The Tagore family, now in the third generation of genius, produced the two great brothers, Rabindranath, a poet whose fame became world-wide, and Abanindranath, who bore a leading part in a revival of Indian painting which was fruitful almost in direct proportion to its continuity with Indian tradition.

In art, in fact, as in every other branch of life, the vital question was whether India could keep her identity unsubmerged by the encroaching flood of Western influence. It would be of little use to attain political freedom at the price of spiritual death or slavery. Before the awakening of Indian national feeling this had been a very real danger. And a particular value attaches to the work of men like Mr. E. B. Havell, who have revealed to Indians the glories of their own culture, and combated the all too prevalent idea that their only resource is to cut loose from their old moorings and trim their sails to every Western breeze. But the Indian artistic revival had

a hard battle to fight against the itch for the cheap products of Western commercial enterprise, as instanced by the hideous daubs that, sold everywhere in the bazaars, played havoc with the taste of the people, and the official obtuseness that was instanced by the refusal to entrust the building of the new capital, at Delhi, to those Indian architects who might even now rival the glories of the work their fathers did for the Moguls. How closely connected is the revival of Indian art with the growth of Indian patriotism needs no demonstration.

The whole question of Indian Nationalist aspirations was one that bristled with difficulties, and the average Anglo-Indian could certainly raise a number of objections that were not to be despised. In a country so vast, one that had never at any time before been united under one government, it is hard to admit the possibility of anything that could properly be called a general will of the nation. There were not only the social barriers of caste, but the deep religious cleavage between Hindus and Mahommedans, who were far more often at each others' throats than either of them were actively opposed to the English. It was, in fact, the policy of the government to divide and rule, relying particularly upon Mahommedan loyalty against Hindu unrest. But the old conquerors of India had little real affection for their infidel supplanters, and there was the ominous precedent of the Mutiny to show that Hindu and Moslem were capable of fighting shoulder to shoulder against the Sahibs. With her unavowed seizure of Egypt and her abandonment of Palmerston's and Disraeli's pro-Turk policy, England was making herself far from popular in the world of Islam. There was also the added complication of the nominally allied Indian Princes, whose realms could not be made the subject of democratic innovations, however desirable. It was also the policy of those who advocated a benevolent English despotism to lay special stress on the interests of the illiterate though by no means uncultured majority of peasants, who, it was maintained, would be the first victims of emancipated Brahmanism. And perhaps deeper than all, though only spoken of in the privacy of club or bungalow, was the conviction that what had happened in the Mutiny—and the Mutiny meant Cawnpore—might happen again to the English women and children isolated in the cantonments, if there were the slightest relaxation of our vigilance or slackening of the reins of power.

The bureaucracy attained its zenith under the Viceroyalty of

Lord Curzon, who was sent out by Lord Salisbury's government at the end of 1898, and was the first of the Crown's representatives to rival the stature of old John Company's greatest Governors-General, of a Hastings, a Wellesley, a Dalhousie. He was the third of that proconsular trio who represent the imperialist spirit of the nineties at its brightest and most successful, and his work in India is worthy to bear comparison with that of Cromer in Egypt and Milner in South Africa. A finished scholar and a traveller who knew the East as few Europeans had the chance to know it, he entered on his office with a profound sense of its dignity and opportunities, and a determination, as he himself expressed it, to love righteousness and hate iniquity. His administration was not only marked by that uncompromising efficiency at which the best imperialists never ceased to aim, but also by a real endeavour to deal with the Indians in something of the spirit that had animated the most beneficent despots of their own race. He made a fine and even impassioned plea for preserving the continuity of Indian art; he did magnificent service in rescuing from Western Vandalism and repairing such monuments of the past as the Fort at Delhi and the tomb of Akbar near Agra; so determined was he to maintain justice between Indian and Englishman that, in the true Oriental spirit, he insisted on cases of assaults by white officers on Indians being reported to him personally.

One trait Lord Curzon lacked, which an imperialist of his school could hardly have been expected to possess. While he loved righteousness and achieved efficiency, he had not the least belief in the magic of freedom; he desired to rule in the spirit of one of Carlyle's hero-kings, not to prepare and encourage the people to seek their own salvation. The rising tide of Indian patriotism he simply ignored, and hence it is not surprising that in his zeal for bureaucratic reform he should have contrived to wound such hyper-sensitive susceptibilities as those of the nationalists, particularly in Bengal. A reform of the universities, designed to put an end to the scandal of degrees being granted for a cram-fed smattering of knowledge, was suspected of being a conspiracy to nip in the bud the growth of an educated class. The feeling aroused over thiswas, however, mild in comparison with the storm of Hindu indignation excited over the separation from Bengal, by administrative decree, of the Eastern or predominantly Mahommedan portion of that unwieldy and by no means homogeneous province. In theory, this arrangement had much to be said for it, but the time and manner

of its accomplishment gave it the effect of a spark in the powder magazine of Indian nationalism.

A revolutionary movement, very different from the friendly Liberalism of the first Congresses, had, in fact, been astir for some years before Lord Curzon's viceroyalty. The first centre of this had been, as might have been expected, in the country of those Mahrattas who had, in the seventeenth century, effected so notable a revival of Hindu power against the Moslem, and in the eighteenth had made an almost successful bid for the Empire of India. The memory of the hero Sivaji was revived, and significant stress was laid on Sivaji's unscrupulous but selfless methods of ridding the country of the hated foreigner. An able but reactionary Brahman called Tilak helped to foster a patriotism that had much in common with the Bismarckian realism of the West. A propaganda of hate led inevitably to murder. The plague broke out in Poona, the Mahratta capital, and the authorities, who had not yet come to understand the connection between the plague and the rat flea, adopted a series of preventative measures that were not only futile medically, but involved what to a Hindu constituted outrageous interference with his family life. On the very day of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, a couple of Brahmans, who had some time previously tarred a statue of the Queen, shot dead the police officer whose duty it was to enforce these measures, together with a colleague. The government displayed no lack of firmness in dealing with the situation, but this murder was only the first of a series committed, usually, by young enthusiasts fired by a propaganda ceaselessly conducted both in India and by Indians in Europe, having for its object the deliverance of their country from the alleged tyranny of its rulers.

The other great centre of revolutionary nationalism was Bengal. The Bengali is less warlike, less a man of action than the Mahratta, but he is possessed of a vivid imagination and impulsive emotions. It was from Bengal that Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and the Tagores sprang, and its patriotism centred not so much round the idea of a human hero as in the mystical cult of Kali, goddess of destruction, but also the gracious and benignant mother who merges imperceptibly into the idea of the Motherland, India, and who claims the worship and self-immolation of all her sons. This idea inspired the famous hymn "*Bande Materam*" or "Hail to the Mother", which had originally been part of a patriotic novel:

"My motherland I sing; Thou art my head,
Thou art my heart . . .
Before thy feet I bow!"

The partition of the province, whatever may have been the arguments for or against it, was exactly calculated to inflame the quick, emotional temperament of the Bengali, and just at this time, in 1904–5, a fresh hope was added to his enthusiasm by an event that profoundly affected the whole of the East, the overthrow of the most gigantic of European powers by the arms of Japan. The news spread rapidly from bazaar to bazaar, from village to village, that the white man was not invincible, that what Japan had done to-day...

Lord Curzon's viceroyalty, which in 1905 came to an abrupt end owing to a clash of wills with an even stronger man than himself, the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Kitchener, closed with the gloomiest forebodings. The revolutionary element among the nationalist forces was rapidly gaining ground, and was leavening the Congress, until, in 1907, the antagonism between the two factions culminated in an undignified row, which led to the secession of the extremists and the break up of that year's Congress. Meanwhile a movement had been started to fight the economic dominance of Great Britain by an organized boycott of British goods and a resolution to use none but Indian products. This too often took the form, not of a revival, under scientific auspices, of the indigenous arts and crafts, but of an attempt to set up the factory system, after the most approved Western models, on Indian soil, and to foster the cheap mass production of shoddy by Indians instead of Europeans.

Such was the state of things when the imperialist government collapsed, and a Liberal ministry at last stepped into its place. The hopes of all moderate reformers ran high when it became known that John Morley, an uncompromising Radical and consistent champion of freedom, had accepted the Secretaryship of State for India. Morley's genuine desire was to conciliate Indian sentiment by a liberal grant of reform, but he was handicapped by his ignorance of India, and his temperamental disability to appreciate a national spirit so far removed from his own somewhat colourless rationalism. This betrayed him into the serious blunder of applying to Indians what they held to be the offensively discourteous term "native". Like some other Radicals, he proved, when in power, to be an administrative autocrat; he was determined at all costs to maintain unimpaired the strength of the paramount power and the supremacy of the British Parliament; he was convinced of the unfitness of

Indians for Parliamentary government, and would sooner have resigned than introduced any reforms calculated to lead up to it. Unfortunately educated Indians themselves, even the moderates, aimed at nothing less, and did not admit the notion that institutions that had succeeded so well in England were "a kind of thing that don't agree with"—Orientals.

Within these limitations, the reforms introduced, after three years' consideration, by the Secretary of State, supported by the Viceroy, Lord Minto, represented a distinct advance, and one that was received with gratitude by no less a patriot than Mr. Gokhale, the leader of the moderate party in the Congress and founder of a brotherhood, the Servants of India, pledged to lives of poverty and service to the Motherland, but loyal to the British connection. The effect of the reforms was, briefly, to allow a small minority of Indians to be nominated to the executive, to enlarge the Provincial Legislative Councils, to make a somewhat complicated and indirect application of the elective principle, and to transform these bodies into fairly effective debating societies. This was all very well as an instalment, but it is strange that a statesman so experienced as Morley should not have perceived that it could only have had the effect of whetting the appetite of Indians for genuine Parliamentary institutions. An executive owning no responsibility to the legislature, and a legislature with no power except that of criticism, could hardly be regarded as a final solution of the Constitutional problem by Indians brought up in the traditions of British Liberalism.

Nevertheless, the reforms worked quite well to start with. Lord Morley, to give him the title he had most unwillingly consented to assume, had placed his trust in the spirit if not in the form of British institutions, and it was by virtue of that spirit that the Councils were permitted to exercise a power, in practice, which the letter of the law by no means conferred on them. Lord Hardinge, who succeeded Lord Minto in the Viceroyalty, was a sincere and trusting friend of the people over whom he ruled. In 1911 the new King, George V, and his Consort, performed an act of great physical and moral courage in coming out in person to see and be seen by their Indian subjects. Loyalty, despite the unrest, at once flamed up to an extraordinary pitch; the partition of Bengal, which Lord Morley had coldly characterized as irrevocable, was reversed, not without considerable Mahommedan heartburnings, and by a stroke of real imaginative genius, India was given her ancient capital of Delhi instead of the mushroom, commercial centre of Calcutta. The

campaign of hate and murder was gradually got in hand by the police, the seasons were favourable, and India, just before the storm that was to break over her, with the rest of the world, seemed prosperous and reasonably contented. Appearance was no doubt deceptive. Aspirations were astir that the reforms could stimulate but could not satisfy, and a democratic patriotism was leavening the educated classes and from thence spreading to the mass of the population. The citadel of bureaucracy stood fast—it was, in fact, a grievance that the higher posts in the civil and military service were practically closed to Indians—but its foundations were undermined.

Meanwhile the very freedom accorded to the different parts of the Empire had provided another bitter grievance for Indians, one with which it was peculiarly hard for the central government to deal. It was the practically invariable policy of Britons overseas to reserve the lands they occupied as much as possible for the white man. The Indian, who was invited to be loyal to the Empire, found himself not only considered unfit to govern his own land, but rigidly excluded from other parts of the King's Dominions. When Ranjitsinhji, one of the proudest Indian Princes and most popular men in the Empire, went out with an England team to Australia, it was only after some time and considerable difficulty that he was allowed to pass the gangway shorewards, so rigid was the exclusion of the brown man from "God's own country". But matters were worse in South Africa, where the Indian was not excluded, but allowed in under the most humiliating and repressive conditions. To the heads of the South African Union, even otherwise liberal minded Boers like Generals Botha and Smuts, the Indian was on a level with the Kaffir and to be treated accordingly. And Indians could not but note that whereas England had been ready to go to war rather than see the white Uitlanders treated as helots, she did not lift a finger to end this much worse helotage of the King's own subjects in the King's dominions. But Lord Hardinge, at least, threw official discretion to the winds by protesting vigorously, as ruler of India, against the wrongs suffered by Indians overseas.

The importance of this Indian question in South Africa is to be reckoned, not so much on its own merits, as by the fact that it brought to the front one who, whatever may be said for or against his methods, is certainly among the most remarkable figures that India has ever produced. This was a Gujerati lawyer of the Bania, or trading caste, named Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, a man who was, even by the admission of his opponents, disinterested to the

point of saintliness, and who burned to sacrifice everything that ordinary folk hold dear to the service of his country and his fellow men. He started, not as a philosopher trying to enforce some abstract theory, but as one profoundly moved by the spectacle of intolerable wrong and determined to right it or perish in the attempt. He first went out to Natal in 1893, and for the next twenty years he was engaged in a seemingly hopeless campaign on behalf of his fellow countrymen, in the prosecution of which he threw up a lucrative practice of some £6,000 a year.

It was only gradually that Mr. Gandhi evolved what was less a philosophy—for as a thinker he was curiously vague and never very consistent—than a mode of action. This, which was in direct continuity with the purest stream of Indian thought, from Gautama Buddha to Vivekananda, was the exact negation of the spirit of egoistic realism that was, at the close of the nineteenth century, all powerful in the West, and, incidentally, of the revolutionary violence favoured by Bengali and Mahratta extremists. Mr. Gandhi believed, like Vivekananda, that it was the mission of India to conquer the world by her spirituality. To answer hatred with hatred and force with force was worse than useless. Accordingly he met persecution on the part of Christ's professed worshippers by the exact methods that the early Christians had pursued in the days of Nero and Diocletian. To oppressive laws, to unjust impositions, he and his followers meekly refused to conform. They courted persecution, they gloried in the martyr's crown. Only when real suffering would be caused to their persecutors by a continuance of this heroic passivity did Mr. Gandhi, even when on the eve of victory, order it to be suspended. Meanwhile, when opportunity offered of service to his white fellow-citizens, it was faithfully and loyally rendered. Mr. Gandhi organized an Indian ambulance corps in the South African War, and again during a Zulu rising in Natal, and performed service that was gratefully acknowledged. But these were only interludes in the extraordinary contest between force and non-resistance, not the least of whose effects was a union between Hindus and Mahommedans in South Africa that might conceivably pave the way for one in India.

In 1914 Mr. Gandhi's principles were still not fully developed, and he had no idea at the time of breaking loose from the Empire or of refusing to co-operate with the government. But the more far-sighted among his countrymen were already beginning to suspect that in him India had found the patriotic leader for whom she had

so long been waiting, not, perhaps, a thinker worthy to be classed with Vivekananda, or a politician as astute as Gokhale and Naoroji, but a personality of compelling force and a patriot capable of carrying Indian spirituality to victory against Western force and materialism, not by bombs and bullets, but by the sword of the spirit. But if the full scope of Mr. Gandhi's faith was as yet unrealized, neither yet were its weaknesses apparent, the confusion of thought that never seemed quite able to define its own ends, the grotesque provincialism, and the readiness to work hand in glove with the exponents of that very violence and unscrupulousness against which Mr. Gandhi set his own face. For, as with so many other compelling personalities, the Mahatma's intellect was too plainly the slave of his will.

7

The Awakening of Egypt

As in India so in Egypt, the early years of the century saw an awakening of a nationalist spirit under British rule. The work of Lord Cromer had no doubt been a miracle of administrative talent in face of the most difficult circumstances, but any hope of permanently reconciling the Egyptians to British rule was too plainly a mirage. They took what we had to offer them, but the only effect of the benefits we conferred was to stimulate their desire for independence. Patriotism had been astir before the occupation, and had not been crushed with Arabi. Moreover, patriotism in Egypt was intimately connected with devotion to Islam, and the Mahommedan world was beginning to seethe with unrest. In the decade before the Great War, a series of crushing blows fell upon Islam. There was the absorption of Morocco by France, the rape of Tripoli by Italy, the Russian penetration of Northern Persia, and the overthrow of Turkey by the Balkan League. And yet while the arms of Islam were everywhere defeated, its spirit was merely inflamed by adversity and its invisible empire was actively enlarging its boundaries.

The end of Lord Cromer's long period of office was clouded by an incident that revealed, in a flash, how little chance there was of real sympathy between rulers and ruled in Egypt. A party of English officers provoked a riot in the village of Denshawai by shooting some pigeons belonging to the villagers, and one of them succumbed to the heat on the way to fetch help for the rest. The punishment meted out for this regrettable but not wholly

unintelligible outrage was of a barbaric and theatrical severity, which inspired even more hatred than terror in the breasts of the Egyptian peasantry. But the new Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, was firm in his support of the men on the spot, and though a certain amount of indignation was aroused even in England, the approval of the average elector was fairly well expressed by *Punch's* cartoon, " The Grey Knight rides on."

Lord Cromer was succeeded, in 1907, by the Liberal Government's nominee, Sir Eldon Gorst, who wore himself into the grave in an unavailing effort to reconcile the maintenance of British rule with sympathy for Egyptian aspirations. But Egypt had set him the time-honoured task of making bricks without straw. The people had never wanted us and did not want us now. The English bureaucracy was steadily losing touch with them, tending to isolate itself in the same sort of frivolous and sport-loving society as already existed in the Indian cantonments. The educated Egyptians found themselves more and more coldly received in this society, and the gulf between the two communities widened instead of narrowing.

Meanwhile, in what much more nearly corresponded to Parliament in Egypt than any similar body in India, the demand for independence and an end of the British occupation became vocal. The Khedive Abbas, a thorough Turk in sentiment, was an irreconcilable and cunning enemy of the British, and his formidable influence was used for no other end than to make trouble between us and his people. The years of friction and intrigue between the retirement of Lord Cromer and the War are ennobled by none of those creative ideas and outstanding personalities (if we except that of Lord Kitchener), that lend such a fascination to the story of modern India. Little positive fault can be found with our rulers. Sir Eldon Gorst did his best to conciliate Egyptian feeling, particularly by a large concession of local self-government. But his efforts were in vain, and before he retired he was forced to admit the impossibility of the task which he had been set.

His successor, Lord Kitchener, dealt with the problem as a plain and competent soldier, fired by a genuine love of Egyptians, and particularly of the peasantry, for whose interests and protection he was solicitous to provide. But though he could do much towards developing the resources of the country, he could do nothing to check the rise of an aggressive patriotism of Egypt for the Egyptians, and at every turn he found himself thwarted by the Khedive. A spirit of anarchical unrest was abroad. In 1910 a Christian Prime

Minister, Boutros Pasha, had been assassinated, and plots afterwards came to light to do the same to Lord Kitchener and even the Khedive. A political Press, of almost unbelievable scurrility, helped to diffuse an atmosphere of hatred and detraction. The most compelling personality in Egyptian politics, Zaghlul Pasha, was converted from a potential friend to an active enemy of the occupation. So far, at any rate, there seemed no prospect of our being dislodged by force, but our position in Egypt had rather too much resemblance to that of a man who tries to master a wasp's nest by sitting down on the hole.

8

Gathering Clouds

Even before the close of the nineteenth century, it was becoming apparent to those who had eyes to see, that the final catastrophe could not be long delayed of the world tragedy whose fourth act had opened with the Peace of Frankfurt in 1871. This act, whose dominant note is one of materialistic realism, and whose setting is the Armed Peace, is divided in the middle by the fall, in 1890, of the master realist, Bismarck.

There were three ways in which Germany could have dealt with the French menace, and Bismarck had failed in two of them. He had failed to crush France; he had failed to conciliate her by casting a benevolent eye on her African expansion, and had, in fact, helped to provide her with the reinforcement of a black army. But while he held power he could at least keep her isolated. This last safeguard the young Emperor and his advisers had wantonly thrown away. What call had they to play for safety? Germany, secure in her own strength, secure in her headship of the Triple Alliance, had only to think of securing a power commensurate with the superiority of Teutonic culture, science, moral earnestness, to those of lesser breeds without her particular law. She was, emphatically, a power on the make, not as Bismarck had modestly envisaged her, a "saturated power".

> "In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
> Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
> Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
> That, hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey."

But the prime cause of the catastrophe, that which rendered it inevitable, must be sought for deeper than in the insufficiency of Germany's rulers. To isolate a foe by diplomatic finesse is at best

a temporary expedient. The forces that were driving Western civilization to the abyss were hidden even from a Bismarck. The gradual transvaluation of values that had begun at the Renaissance, the mad pursuit of power over the outer world to the neglect of the inner man, the consequent inability of man to meet the challenge of a man-changed environment, were now turning the very resources of science into the means of suicide. In default of any collective attempt of the human race to take charge of its own destinies, was witnessed an anarchy of individual and national egotisms. Religion was rapidly losing what little power it still possessed, and even the veneer of romantic sentiment had gone out of fashion among educated people. Untrained minds and characters stunted in egotism cannot be saved against the consequences of their defects even by the subtlest diplomacy.

It was Germany that was setting the pace to the rest of Europe, not only on account of the uncompromising thoroughness of her realism, but because she was able to back it with greater resources of science and organization than her neighbours. It was the consciousness of her superiority to a Russia known to be half civilized and a France believed to be decadent that made Germany underrate the menace to herself of the Dual Alliance. And no doubt her diplomatists were justified in believing that so long as these two stood alone against the Triplice, they were powerless. Even Bismarck did not anticipate the coming of the general war during his own lifetime. But how long could Germany count on so artificial a combination as the Triple Alliance? Austria, so long as she held together under the Hapsburg, was no doubt safe enough, but Italy, a Latin power, had stronger affinities with the Gaul than with the Teuton, and her pique about French sharp practice in Tunis would wait longer than her hatred of the Austrian, who had not even yet relaxed his clutch on Italian-inhabited soil. Besides, Italy, with her exposed seaboard and lack of coal, would hardly, under any circumstances, court the hostility of England, and if England were once to throw her weight into the scales against Germany—what then?

To men capable of forming a dispassionate judgment of the European situation, it should have been obvious that once France and Russia had drawn together against the Triplice, the vital thing for either side was to secure the support of England. Bismarck had no love for the English, but he had never been so foolish as to provoke their serious hostility. Indeed there was, for at least a

generation after the Franco-German war, a tendency in England to regard the Germans as our friends, and even as possible allies against French and Russian hostility. There was even a fashion for emphasizing the Teutonic element in our very mixed descent, an emotional bias which, more than evidence and probabilities, was responsible for the theory, favoured by historians like Freeman and Green, that the Anglo-Saxons had actually exterminated the British population in the lands they conquered. There was also a literary movement for purging the language of its Latin accretions, for calling omnibuses " folk-wains ", and so forth. In Low Church circles, voices were heard solemnly acclaiming the victories of Protestant Germany over Catholic France and Austria as the fulfilment of prophecy, and the end of the Time, Times, and Half a Time of the power of His Holiness the Beast in Revelation.

More important than these straws in the wind was the definite orientation of our policy in favour of Germany. Lord Salisbury, who combined the office of Premier with that of Foreign Secretary, brought, somewhat incongruously, to the game of *Realpolitik*, the spirit of a great English gentleman. Cautious and profoundly cynical, he aimed at keeping Britain out of entangling alliances, and at the same time pushing her interests wherever the opportunity presented itself. His attitude was one of friendly sympathy with Germany, and distrust of France. In 1887 it seemed as if a new Franco-German War was on the point of breaking out, owing to the frothy heroics of the popular idol of the moment, General Boulanger. There is reason to believe that in the event of a rupture, Salisbury would have done nothing to stop a German invasion of France by way of neutral Belgium. Mr. Stead, the imperialist editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, went to the trouble of explaining that the afterwards famous " scrap of paper " bound us to no military action, and *The Morning Post* said that we must protest and nothing more.[1] The cloud passed away and long before the violation of Belgian neutrality had become an accomplished fact, our Press and statesmen had found reason for a somewhat greater insistency of conscience.

There is no doubt that at this time a little tactful persuasion might have drawn England from her isolation into the orbit of the Triple Alliance. But England wanted to be sure that her adhesion would be a guarantee for the peace of Europe and not the signal for Germany to settle accounts once and for all with France. Above all, English statesmen, and Lord Salisbury in particular, were by no

[1] *History of Modern Europe* by C. P. Gooch, pp. 134–5.

means to be hustled or driven into a hard bargain. Unfortunately the new ruler of Germany was wholly incapable of appreciating this trait in the English character. Though half English by birth he had, even as early as 1884, written to the Tsar Alexander III in the most venomous terms of England, and tried to make all the mischief he could between her and Russia. Perhaps, however, it would be rash to attribute to so neurotic a mind any steady sentiments of love or hatred, and it is certain that for the first six years of his reign the Kaiser succeeded in maintaining the happiest relations with England. But in 1894, Caprivi, who succeeded Bismarck as Chancellor, and was a cool-headed, peace-loving statesman, was sacrificed to interested Junker hostility on account of his efforts to conciliate Russia by fiscal reciprocity. The Kaiser now had begun to feel his feet sufficiently to make his own will, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say his impulses, supreme in matters of foreign policy.

It was in the same year that Tsar Alexander III, a strong and bigoted reactionary, was succeeded by the cold-blooded and feeble-minded Nicholas II. With the two mightiest Empires on the Continent at the mercy of these amateurs, the last and most fatal phase of *Realpolitik*, when unscrupulousness was no longer restrained by commonsense, had set in.

The Kaiser had enough shrewdness to see the advantage of keeping on good terms with England, but he thought that by taking a sufficiently strong line he could coerce her into an alliance which would bind her to a war with France. England, he said to Colonel Swaine in 1895, must choose definitely for the Triple Alliance or against it. But already he had, by his overbearing tactlessness, not only alienated his uncle, the Prince of Wales, but succeeded in falling foul of Lord Salisbury. At the end of the year he undid all his previous work of conciliation, and insulted British feelings in a way that was never wholly forgiven him, by his telegram to Kruger. We next find him toying with the idea of an anti-English coalition with France and Russia, less apparently with the idea of realizing it than of frightening England into joining the Triple Alliance.

The depth to which European civilization was capable of sinking was now to be revealed in the revival of the Near Eastern question caused by the wholesale massacres of Christian Armenians perpetrated under the auspices of Sultan Abdul Hamid. These devilries went on with perfect impunity, because the Powers, bent on their own sordid interests, stood by without lifting a finger. Only in England was there any real disposition to intervene, and Gladstone,

a survivor of the old Romantic Liberalism, emerged from his retirement, despite his 87 years, to hurl his last Philippic at the "Great Assassin". Salisbury, who confessed that we had put our money on the wrong horse in backing Turkey, did what he could to bring pressure to bear on the Porte, but the result of his efforts was merely to forfeit our influence at Constantinople without benefiting the Armenians. Russia, who had flown to the aid of the Christian Bulgarians twenty years before, showed how utterly lost were her rulers to any such unpractical idealism, by not only refusing any sort of aid, but by throwing all her weight into the scale to keep the ring clear for the butchers. Her mild Tsar confessed himself tired of the Armenian question. And it has since transpired that the Tsar and his advisers were meditating at this time no less an act of criminal insanity than the sudden and unprovoked seizure of both shores of the Bosphorus.

As for Germany, her policy was equally immoral, but less harebrained. The Kaiser had enough sentiment to sympathize with the poor Armenians—"shame on us all!" was his comment on the inaction of the Powers. But sentiment is one thing and business another. England's efforts, such as they were, on behalf of the Armenians, had put her out of favour with Abdul Hamid, and here was a splendid opportunity for Germany to step into the vacant place at Constantinople. The advantages, both political and commercial, to be derived from such a friendship, were expounded by the ablest of all Germany's diplomatists, Marschall von Bieberstein. From this time forth the Kaiser began a strenuous courtship not only of the Great Assassin, but of the Islamic world. Naturally, there could be no nonsense about restraining the Caliph's proclivity for disembarrassing himself of the Christian dogs within his borders. Or if the Turk must be punished, it was better to do so by exploiting him by means of concessions to Christian capitalists at extortionate rates of usury. The whole story of the dealings of the Powers with the Near East during the concluding years of the century is one of unspeakable sordidness.

An alliance between England and Germany seemed, from 1898 to 1901, a distinct probability. It would have created a combination of overwhelming strength, and enabled Germany to regain the security she had lost by driving Russia into the arms of France. That she should double the blunder by doing exactly the same to England might have seemed incredible. But in the close and poisonous atmosphere of the German court, petty intrigue had taken the place

of statesmanship. Somewhere behind the scenes, pulling incessant wires, was the arch mischief-maker, Baron Holstein, a man incapable of straightness either in vision or action. The idea of a fair bargain was alien to such a mentality; with a little patience and finesse England could be drawn into the German orbit on Germany's terms, as a humble satellite of the Triple Alliance.

Accordingly when Chamberlain, who, like Rhodes, was temperamentally drawn towards the great imperialist power of the Continent, frankly broached the idea of an alliance in 1898, his frankness was mistaken by the German Foreign Minister for the clumsiness of an amateur, and the opportunity was allowed to slide. But even the South African War, and the wave of Anglophobia that swept over Germany, did not stop the Kaiser and his Chancellor, Bülow, from toying with the idea of an alliance. Towards the end of 1900, Chamberlain, who had been privately encouraged by Bülow to put out a public feeler towards an Anglo-German-American Entente, got well snubbed by that elusive statesman for his pains. The matter did not end here, for next year a treaty was actually drafted by the German Foreign Office for the inclusion of England in the Triple Alliance. But Lord Salisbury, who had in mind Prussia's record of diplomatic bad faith, was not to be drawn into a bargain whose dangers seemed to him to outweigh its advantages, and which the British people might refuse to honour. Germany, in endeavouring to overreach Britain, had fatally overreached herself, and was to experience the truth of Chamberlain's warning to Bülow, that if we could not find friends in one of the two camps into which Europe was divided, we should have to seek them in the other.

Forces were now at work to put an Anglo-German Alliance definitely beyond the bounds of possibility. No sooner had the Kaiser got fairly into the saddle than he had started to develop *Realpolitik* into *Weltpolitik*; his ambitions ceased to be merely Continental and became world-wide. A necessary part of this policy was to provide Germany not only with an overwhelming army, but with a fleet to match. In the Kaiser's phraseology, which often rivalled that of Ancient Pistol, her hand must grasp the Trident. He had some difficulty in reconciling his subjects to the financing of this new and expensive whim, but circumstances played into his hands, and those of the true creator of the modern German navy, Admiral Von Tirpitz. The ostentatious commissioning of a British flying squadron as a counter-demonstration to the Kruger telegram had only served to strengthen the hands of the German big-navy

faction, and the tactless seizure, during the South African War, of a German ship suspected of carrying contraband, had aroused a fury in Germany that confirmed her determination not to be at the mercy of British arrogance on the High Seas. But once Germany began to bid for the command of the seas, or once her statesmen began to use language implying such a challenge, England could not but feel her very existence threatened, and a deadly rivalry, with its accompaniment of hatred, was the inevitable sequel. But before this could be translated into terms of European politics, England had a card to play that showed at least the extraordinary astuteness with which her foreign policy was conducted.

The Far East, at which we must now take a retrospective glance, had provided almost as promising a field for the practice of *Realpolitik* as the Near East. The ancient civilization of China, with her incompetent Manchu dynasty and the capitalist leeches who continued to bleed her white, was sinking to lower and lower depths of degradation. On the other hand, the island people of Japan had now succeeded, almost miraculously, in adapting the methods of their would-be exploiters, and in transforming themselves into a young and vigorous power on the Western model. The game of *Realpolitik* was one to which Japan took with a zest, and her first experiment was to fall, in 1894–5, upon her huge but inert Chinese neighbour, and trounce her with scientific thoroughness, taking, amongst other spoils, the great harbour fortress of Port Arthur. This was too much for Holy Russia, who was already, in the euphemistic language of the time, peacefully penetrating the Chinese province of Manchuria, and had designed to filch this very harbour for the warm-water terminus of her Siberian railway. So Russia, in a virtuous access of indignation for Chinese rights, warned Japan off her new conquest, and her ally, France, naturally stood in with her. Germany, with that blundering indifference to making enemies that distinguished her policy under the Kaiser's auspices, consented to make a third. With unruffled suavity, the Japanese gave up their dearly-won fortress, registering a determination to settle the account in due course. Germany, who had not entered this honourable partnership for nothing, made the murder of a couple of missionaries, in 1897, the pretext for seizing the harbour of Kiao-Chau and the surrounding territory, and Russia quickly followed this up by appropriating Port Arthur, under what she humorously described as a lease. England, righteously indignant at an act of brigandage so contrary to her own interests, nevertheless did not feel herself

strong enough to dislodge the intruders by force of arms, and accordingly made the best of a bad business by appropriating, or leasing, the very inferior harbour of Wei-Hei-Wei, as her share of the pickings.

The next few years were marked by considerable fluidity in the relationships of the competing powers, each playing for her own hand and in entire disregard of her victim's rights or feelings. In 1900 Chinese reactionaries, as patriots are called when they fail to possess white skins, broke into desperate revolt against their exploiters, and besieged the legations at Pekin. These were safely relieved—after the chief organ of the English halfpenny Press had effected a rare scoop by certifying, in luscious detail, the massacre of all their inmates—by a heterogeneous force of Europeans, Americans, and Japanese, of whom the Germans and Russians, especially, disgraced their uniforms by fiendish and filthy outrages. After this there was some talk of actually partitioning China, but as this could hardly have been effected without a general war, nothing in particular was done beyond looting some of the priceless treasures of art at Pekin. England and Germany patched up an arrangement for combining to keep the open door for European trade and exploitation, but as it was evident that Germany was not prepared to keep faith to the extent of acting as a brake on Russia, we had to look elsewhere for support.

This we found in accepting the proffered hand of Japan. Calculating and unforgiving, the island Kingdom was only biding the time when she would be able to deal with first one and then the other of the powers who, after warning her off the shores of the Yellow Sea, had gone there themselves. Russia threatened the most immediate danger, and Japan, confident in her newborn efficiency wedded to her ancient patriotism, only asked for a fair field in the contest that she foresaw with her giant antagonist. England, for her part, was only less troubled than Japan by the seizure of Port Arthur and Russia's expansion in the Far East, and desired nothing better than that Japan should pull the chestnuts, which she had found too hot to grasp with her own fingers, out of the fire for her. Accordingly an alliance was concluded, the practical effect of which was that England should keep the ring in any contest in which Japan might be engaged. In two years' time the foreseen happened; the Tsar's courtiers had pushed their country into war to forward their own speculations in Korea, and next year Russia, in danger of revolution, and bluffed into believing herself beaten, conceded to

an exhausted Japan the objects, including Port Arthur, for which she had gone to war.

1903 witnessed the last attempt of England to act in friendly co-operation with Germany, the two combining to blockade Venezuela for the purpose of dunning a rascally President for some long-outstanding debts. The experiment was not particularly successful, as it brought us into bad odour with the United States, and served rather to heighten suspicion than to promote friendship between England and Germany. It provided the excuse for one of the worst poems that Mr. Kipling ever wrote, a violent anti-German tirade in which occurs the expression "barbarous Hun". Already, by this time, England was fairly embarked on a policy that would range her at the council board, and ultimately in the field, among Germany's opponents.

The Flight from Victorianism

Whatever constitutional historians may have to say about the vanishing power of the throne, there is no doubt that the death of Queen Victoria marked as definitely as that of Elizabeth the end of an epoch. The revolt against Victorianism and all its works was the result of forces that had been continuously at work for many years, but the prestige of the great Queen's name, and the social influence that emanated from her court, had sufficed to hold them partially in check. Now, however, her place was filled by a sovereign who, owing to the awful parental repression, of which he had during his adolescence, and, to a lesser extent, ever since, been the victim, naturally tended to react against anything sanctioned by his mother's authority. A man of the world, a sportsman and a humorist, he was the very antithesis of Victorian respectability, and on that account in singular harmony with the less strait-laced age in which his lot was now cast. He had no use for the invisible barriers with which his mother had fenced her court; under his auspices money began to talk, and not always in the purest English. But King Edward possessed, to a degree unapproached in any English King since the Merry Monarch, that supreme gift which cannot be defined otherwise than as personality. He may not, after the fashion of his ancestors, have exercised power, but he more than made up for it by influence. What exact part he had in determining British foreign policy during the few critical years of his reign is a question that will

probably never admit of an undisputed answer—it is exceedingly doubtful whether he could have answered it himself. But the Kaiser was not without reason for his despairing outburst on the breaking of the peace in 1914: "Edward VII after his death is stronger than I who am alive."

The reaction against everything Victorian now set in in full flood. It is possible that innumerable children of frock-coated papas were moved by a similar anti-parental bias to that of their sovereign. The exaggerated homage that had been paid to the great Victorians was succeeded by an equally exaggerated depreciation. It was now quite in the fashion to write, as one rhymster did, of "the drivel and belch and stink of Tennyson"; to take seriously Spencer as a philosopher or Ruskin as an art critic would have been classed as hopelessly *démodé*; the universal homage paid to a dead Queen was succeeded by a tendency to treat her memory as a butt for irreverent witticisms.

The strenuously cultivated moral earnestness of the Victorians gave place to an equally strenuous cynicism and flippancy. To hitch one's waggon to a star of any sort was an eccentricity that few had the courage to avow. Even the enthusiasms of the nineties had grown cold; the gospel of aestheticism had been fatally discredited by the end of Oscar Wilde, and the flamboyant imperialism that had culminated in the South African War had only survived it in a very chastened form. In the upper and middle classes, at any rate, there was a distinct reaction from anything demanding serious concentration, except sports and games, the cult of which was pursued with an abandonment that was really, in a social sense, pathological, since it represented a desire to provide a world of make-believe for the energy that could find no congenial outlet in that of reality. There was also a veritable cult or, as its devotees would have expressed it, a craze for dancing, and the Viennese gaiety or English sentimentality of the valse was more and more interspersed with the neurotic stimulus of negroid rhythms, brutally direct in their expression of sex

And yet these hectic and frivolous years that elasped between the Queen's death and the outbreak of the Great War cannot be classed as merely barren or decadent. They were a time, if not of great achievement, at least of extraordinary ferment. New movements of every kind were being started and dropped, the only guiding principle of which seemed to be that they should be as defiant as possible of the old traditions, a tendency, it must be confessed, which by no means distinguished England from other Western

nations. The Victorians had exaggerated prettiness, the Edwardians and Georgians made a perfect fetish of ugliness; an artist or sculptor could hardly pass for anything but a back number unless he were capable of making a beautiful woman into an eyesore; poets were encouraged to make their words grate and shriek as they were jammed into the lines, to write sonnets about being sick, or to interlard their idylls with the vernacular of Billingsgate.

It is significant that the most valuable achievement was effected in arts in which the Victorians had been admittedly weak, and in which consequently there was no authority of tradition weighty enough to be worth defying. This was most of all true of architecture, in which there was no violent break with Victorian precedent, but rather a continuous and creative evolution from imitative and consequently lifeless Gothic and Renaissance Classic, to a style in which something of the aspiring spirit of Gothic was wedded to classical dignity and design. This was fairly effected in the, as yet, unfinished Cathedral of Liverpool, designed by a grandson of the architect who designed the Albert Memorial. It was inspired, though in a Low Church stronghold, by that Anglo-Catholic impulse that was perhaps the most vital element in the not very fervent religious life of the time. It was this period, too, that saw the rise of one of the supreme geniuses of our architecture, in Sir Edwin Lutyens, a master of all Western styles without being the slave of any of them, and capable, as it proved, of expressing at will the whole gamut of architectural moods, from the opulent light-heartedness of a rich man's week-end cottage to the solemn pride of an Empire mourning its glorious dead. For this last triumph, however, Sir Edwin's supreme craftsmanship had to wait upon a unanimity and depth of national feeling that did not exist in pre-war days.

His name was only the chief in what was a veritable architectural renaissance. The sense of civic pride arising from the steadily increasing activities and scope of local self-government found expression in a number of imposing and yet simple public buildings, of which those at Cardiff, and the London County Hall (designed though not completed before the war) are among the most distinguished examples. Country houses seemed to gain in refinement and sincerity with every increase in the vulgarity and pretentiousness of those who could afford to pay for them. In a humbler sphere, new streets of suburban villas discarded the fussy adornments of Jubilee Road and Mafeking Avenue, and cottage architecture at last shook itself free from the skinflint, utilitarian ugliness of Victorian tradition, and

often expressed itself in forms worthy of comparison with the still surviving Gothic of Stuart times.

But perhaps the most striking, if not the most pleasing feature of this revival was the clamant architecture of commerce, in which the builders were at least sincere in expressing the spirit for which they catered. Taken as a whole, it may be described as the architecture of advertisement, the assimilation of the shop or hotel to the hoarding, the art of putting all the showiest goods into the front window. The dignified and self-respecting merchandise of Regent Street was broken asunder by the irruption of a building from which desire of money seemed to be perpetually appealing through a megaphone to pride of money; in Oxford Street arose another building so overlarded with ornament as to suggest a recently ennobled Hebrew money-lender displaying to the world the rings on his fingers and the diamonds in his shirt-front; further up stood an Ionic translation into stone of the type of printed advertisement that begins with a picture of Plato and a quotation from Carlyle, and ends with a panegyric of somebody's patent medicine.[1] But perhaps, for historical monuments, these buildings are more worthy of preservation even than the churches and municipal halls. For they express, as truly as Lincoln Cathedral or the Parthenon, the age that produced them.

In music, another art in which the Victorian had had no pretensions to excel, the new century saw a revival which, if it did not recall the days when England gave the lead to Europe, produced a number of English composers not perhaps in the same class as a Strauss or a Debussy, but at least capable of raising English music to a consideration which it had not deserved since the seventeenth century. It is another instance of Nietzsche's law that music expresses the spirit of a previous age, that at a time when everything else Victorian was absolutely taboo, Sir Edward Elgar should be translating the spirit of Tennyson and Watts into the prettiest of melody, while Mr. Cyril Scott continued to harmonize the exotic aestheticism of the nineties long after it had become *démodé* in literature.

In painting, English art was content to take its lead from France, where the hitherto neglected pioneers of that extremely subjective craft of mood painting known as post-impressionism were at last coming into their own. This form of art was so exactly in consonance with the spirit of the age, which hankered after violent colouring

[1] Contrast the squalor and shabbiness of any part of such buildings that happens not to be for show.

and vivid though unsustained emotions, and shrank from the labour of concentration, that it was bound sooner or later to prevail over such laborious, not to say dull methods, as those inculcated by the Pre-Raphaelites and the more conservative academicians. But England, with her shrinking from logical extremes, was bound to adopt a more cautious and eclectic attitude than that of the Parisian salons. There were certainly attempts to go one better on the post-impressionists by carrying subjectivity to the point of bathos, but these were never regarded in much more than the light of a joke. It was more characteristic of English art to produce such a genius as that of Mr. Augustus John, who, while he was capable of assimilating all that was best in post-impressionism, made up for what he may have lacked in that definition of personality which is of the essence of the Parisian *flair*, by a greater scope and universality. Of even more unquestioned supremacy in his own branch of art was the sculptor, Mr. Epstein, who, however, was only English by adoption, and in consequence carried the distinctive principles of the new art, with its fierce hostility to anything, in the popular sense, beautiful, to an uncompromising and essentially un-English extreme.

It was in literature that the breach of continuity was most pronounced, and that the revolution against Victorianism had the most levelling effect. There was an extraordinary incompleteness about the achievement of these years, which can best be realized by comparing their leading names with those of the same number of years in the middle of the nineteenth century. Indeed in perhaps the most representative writer of this time, Mr. H. G. Wells, we find a veritable complex against the very idea of a great man. In his satire, Boon, published during the first year of the war, he rejoices to think that there is no place in modern life for the great man, and implies that the reputations of former times are built on a basis of humbug. Still later, in what he calls an Outline of History, he surpasses Quixote and all other dons by demolishing his own puppet show of labelled celebrities. Popular dislike of any sort of intellectual distinction crystallized itself in the pre-war "*brainy*", as in the post-war "*high-brow*".

Perhaps the solemn self-consciousness of men like Tennyson and Gladstone was responsible for a tone of half-humorous self-depreciation in a generation to which they and their like were anathema. The fact remains that the Victorians were capable of achievement that could be characterized as great with more plausibility than that of their Edwardian and Georgian successors, and this because, with

all their defects of taste and humour, the Victorians excelled in the essential faculty of concentration.

The itch for obtaining quick intellectual returns was more than ever prevalent in the opening years of the twentieth century. A trick of flashy epigram or paradox was enough to create a reputation at which not even the severest critic would trouble seriously to cavil. The entire absence of any authority or accepted standards in criticism produced something not far short of literary anarchy. Critics, like authors, were expected to be snappy, to catch and titillate and continually revive the attention by stimulants. The moral earnestness, that had inspired a man like Sainte-Beuve to devote a week's concentrated hard labour to the production of every article, would have been suicidal in twentieth-century journalism, and journalism was coming more and more to dominate literature. It was marvellous, under the circumstances, that so much good work got into print with the rest, that a master of rhymed narrative should have arisen, in Mr. Masefield, not unworthy, at his inconstant best, of comparison with Chaucer, and that the brief career of James Elroy Flecker should have produced one or two lyrics of an Oriental colour and sensuousness unique of their kind in English.

What was most conspicuous in the thought of these pre-war years was its void of anything that could be described as faith. The old creeds hardly maintained the semblance of their authority among educated people; nobody who mattered would have dreamed of citing scriptural authority in philosophic or scientific discussion, and in fact there were Anglican churchmen, often in distinguished posts, who would cheerfully reduce to folklore not only Genesis but the Resurrection. Perhaps what came nearest to religion was the compassionate and somewhat backboneless humanitarianism of Mr. Masefield and Mr. Galsworthy, and the conviction of Mr. Wells that mankind was capable of fashioning for itself a new order of society as rational and satisfying as its present condition was muddled and miserable, and that the way to this Utopia was through the education of the next generation. For the time, at any rate, in culture and philosophy, in social and international affairs, organized Christianity had practically ceased to count, nor had anything come into its place capable of restraining the tendencies that were now palpably driving mankind to the alternative forms of suicide represented by an international and a class war of annihilation.

So far we have dwelt upon tendencies mainly effective among what Communists lump together as the bourgeoisie. Beyond that

pale, sentimentality, of the crudest description, reigned as supreme as in the sixties. It was, in fact, enormously stimulated by compulsory education, which created a demand for the mass production of the cheap and standardized trash which in bulk far exceeded any other form of literature. The melodrama maintained its grip on popular affections, and the newly invented cinema, with all its immense possibilities, was devoted to the exploitation of a form of melodrama more monstrously divorced from sense and reality than that of the traditional Surrey-side theatre.

Outside melodrama, the chief motives of proletarian literature were crime and sport. By the cheap Sunday weeklies, through whose distorted glass immense masses of the population looked out upon life, crime and indecency were muck-raked into one festering mass, and made blacker and more noisome in the process. As for sport, that too was commercialized on an ever-increasing scale, and more and more corrupted by gambling. On the other hand, a real enthusiasm for knowledge was evidenced by an unprecedented output of reprints of the classics and cheap scientific summaries.

And yet, amid all the crudeness and cupidity, that seemed inseparable from the herding of the population into great cities, there were signs that the heart, at least, was sound, that the majority of Englishmen were on the side of virtue, as they understood it, against villainy, of society against the criminal, of fair play and sportsmanship against whatever was "not cricket". It remained to be seen how far soundness of heart could compensate for a lack of knowledge and training, that placed the mind practically at the disposal of those whose interest it was to exploit it. And such minds were by no means a working class monopoly. The type of magazine that catered for the snobbishness of villa dwellers by snapshots of and gossip about rich people, the time-killing short story and novel that were standardized almost as rigidly as the melodrama, merely represented a slightly less crude form of mental parasitism.

The question was now presenting itself more and more insistently whether, at this eleventh hour, it was possible for mankind to level up its mental capacities to the demands of the environment that its own conquest of matter had created. Was there any chance of our improving our minds in proportion to the improvement in our machines? The prospect was certainly not rosy, but there were signs of hope, though often of dubious and equivocal import. For

one thing, the demand for mind training had become sufficiently insistent to make it a paying proposition to meet it by the preposterous method of secret courses. Then, again, literature and the intellectual drama were showing an intense and minute interest in problems of psychology. Finally psychology itself was showing a belated tendency to escape from the academic and metaphysical grooves in which it had stuck unprofitably for so many years. Already before the war the science of understanding the emotions by psycho-analysis and the art of controlling them by suggestion were being studied on the Continent, and even discussed in England. All this may not have been much to build upon, but at least it showed that men were beginning to wake from the self-complacent apathy of the nineteenth century, and to face, once again, though in a new spirit, the old medieval problem of human salvation.

If the time was one of tentative beginnings in the all important science of mind, in other departments of science the record was one of steady, if unostentatious, progress. Science had shared in the reaction against the ideals of the nineteenth century. Its leading exponents seldom ventured outside the bounds of the severely limited fields that they marked out for their activities. Men like Huxley, who were not only scientists but also philosophers and something of prophets into the bargain, no longer stood in the public eye; the very names of the scientific leaders were seldom known to the man in the street. This was all to the good, in so far as it allowed scientists to devote themselves to their business of research in which they were now perfectly free, without being distracted by controversy or the necessity of playing to the gallery. But there was another side to the shield in the necessarily limited outlook and lack of co-ordination that comes from excessive specialism, an evil that profoundly affected every department of intellectual and artistic activity. More and more it was becoming the rule that a man must have his distinctive label, whether this bound him for life to elucidating the Baltic policy of George I or to unravelling the psychic complexes of mercantile seamen East of the 90th meridian from Greenwich. The ideal of the complete man, of one who should be not in name but in very truth a Master of the Arts and a Doctor of Science, was as dead as Leonardo da Vinci. Thus culminated the long process, which had started at the Renaissance, of sacrificing everything, the dignity and even the soul of man, to power over matter. The supreme achievement of a mechanical age was to make man a cog in a machine over which neither he, nor anyone else, had the least control. A machine that,

with its wheels racing madly and its bearings red hot, might at any moment be blown or smashed to smithereens.

10

" Ourselves Alone "

The most notable, as well as the most positive, of all the literary movements of this time was the Celtic Revival in Ireland, which was already in full swing by the beginning of the century, and should have been sufficient proof of the wrong-headedness of that school of political thought which imagined that twenty years of firm government would suffice to extinguish the sentiment of Irish patriotism and, by satisfying the material needs of a people as emotional and unforgetting as any in Europe, make them contented members of the United Kingdom. In the last quarter of the century, a movement was afoot to give back to Irishmen the lost heritage of civilization bequeathed them by their ancestors. Not by romantic intuition, but by laborious and patient research, the treasures of Gaelic literature were recovered, reprinted, interpreted with an understanding born of love. The task was even assayed, though with necessarily imperfect success, of reviving that Gaelic language which had received its death blow at the time of the Black Famine, and was now only spoken by a minority of the people in three or four counties. It was, however, in the English language, which was now the living tongue, that the Celtic Revival achieved its most enduring successes. The Romantic impulse died harder in Ireland than in any other part of Europe, and it was very congenial to the dreamy and imaginative Celtic temperament. Mr. W. B. Yeats, whose personality came to dominate the whole movement, was at least as much a product of English Pre-Raphaelite medievalism as of his native Gaelic civilization. The most moving, as well as the most patriotic of all his plays, in which Ireland, in the form of a poor old woman, comes exhorting her sons to take part in a hopeless revolt for her sake, and then changes into a young girl with the walk of a Queen, is of the kind that would have moved young ladies, and perhaps the Prince Consort himself, to tears in the fifties, and the very names of the Shadowy Waters and the Land of Heart's Desire seem as if they came straight out of a Victorian song book or album.

Much more in harmony with the new spirit in Ireland was the work

of that bitter and melancholy genius, J. M. Synge. It was he who pointed the would-be revivers of Gaelic to a better way by re-creating not the Irish but the English language, and importing into literature the lovely and picturesque phraseology he had assimilated among peasants and fishermen. But Synge, though he could express perfectly the sad mysticism that is native to the very soil of Ireland, was at heart a realist of a realist age, and the Ireland he saw was peopled by folk very different from the kindly and wistful creations of Mr. Yeats's romantic imagination. He saw a people into whose soul the iron of centuries had entered, in whom suffering had begotten bitterness and oppression cruelty. The finest of all his plays depicted an Irish village in which a lad is made a hero of by the men and adored by the women for the sufficient reason that he is believed to have killed his own father. Superior critics, who could see that the play was a beautiful work of art, could not understand the feelings of hostility that this holding up by an Irishman of a mirror to Ireland not unnaturally aroused. There was the conventional talk about the separation of art from morals, and Synge himself, in a somewhat confused defensive, tried to pass off the whole thing as an extravaganza—as if such a *jeu d'esprit* would have had any point or even intelligibility as applied, say, to an English village! The time was at hand when Ireland was to give proof, if the days of the Land League had not already given it, that the state of things depicted by Synge fell, if anything, short of the naked reality, and that the Catholic faith itself had not such a hold on Irish villages as the gospel of "Killing no murder".

We have, then, to distinguish in the Celtic Revival two main tendencies, the one of a wistful and romantic melancholy, the other[1] of a grim and bitter realism that refused, even from patriotic motives, to sentimentalize about such an Ireland as centuries of English rule had left it, and saw in that most distressful country what Mr. Shaw's visionary priest had seen—Hell. And the patriotism that sprang, logically enough, from this vision of Ireland, took the form of an unyielding and ruthless hatred of the country that had, so it was deemed, brought to such a pass the land of the saints and dreamers. It took for its motto the words, which might indeed have served equally for the hard and bitter realism that had infected Western civilization—Sinn Fein—Ourselves alone.

[1] That attained its incoherent and insanitary culmination in Mr. James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

11

The Triple Entente

Those last years, before the now plainly foreshadowed catastrophe of a world war, may be likened to nothing so aptly as those last days before the breaking of the Indian monsoon, when the clouds are packed and glooming and yet refuse to break, when the whole air is charged with electricity, and men strong enough to have endured the months of cloudless heat go mad or die from the intolerable strain.

In 1904 occurred the event which the whole of German policy should have been directed to avoid, and which in fact determined the grouping of forces for the final conflict. With the measureless growth of German ambitions, and the feverish haste to push on the construction of a navy which, whatever plausible reasons might be alleged, was, as everybody knew, a direct challenge to the English command of the seas, it became overwhelmingly the interest of both England and France to sink their differences in the presence of a common danger. What held the two nations apart was not so much policy as sentiment, which had been embittered on one side by the humiliation of Fashoda and on the other by incessant pinpricks and unfriendly opposition. It was here that the personality of Edward VII proved a priceless asset to our foreign policy. In 1903 he paid a visit to a frigidly hostile Paris, and before he left he had taken it by storm with his tactful geniality and sheer *joie de vivre*. The path was now clear for the diplomats. Most of the questions that had caused friction and even threatened war proved perfectly susceptible to the operations of a friendly deal. The two great outstanding difficulties were those presented by the British occupation of Egypt and the Eastern Gate of the Mediterranean, and France's threat to the Western Gate by her thinly concealed ambition to absorb Morocco. This was settled, with the addition of a certain amount of pious verbiage about native rights, by Britain saying in effect to France, "if you give me a free hand in Egypt, I will do the same to you in Morocco, only please remember to keep away from the neighbourhood of Gibraltar."

To all outward appearance nothing could have been of better augury to the cause of peace than this agreement of two great and hitherto far from friendly powers thus to remove every possible excuse for strife or friction between them. But so roseate a view was almost too good to be the whole truth in an age of *Realpolitik*.

Was it only a desire for peace on earth and goodwill to men that had induced these neighbours to join hands? Or might it not perhaps be that the Entente contained the germs of an alliance, and would never have been arrived at unless on an unwritten, and perhaps even unspoken, understanding to that effect? Not until all the archives are revealed, perhaps not even then, shall we know what inducements were offered, what possibilities were suggested, in the course of negotiations. It is certain, at any rate, that as regards Morocco the open agreement was reinforced by a secret one which frankly contemplated a state of things in which France should be compelled, as it was euphemistically phrased, by force of circumstances, to modify her unexceptionable and avowed policy of respecting Moroccan independence. In that case, it was stipulated, France should leave to Spain the strip of North Western coast in which England was so vitally interested. This amiable division of the Sultan's dominions, in a future which French policy was capable of rendering by no means distant, was confirmed and still further defined by an agreement with Spain a few months later.

The Entente was concluded not a moment too soon. For already France's ally, Russia, had blundered into war with England's ally, Japan, and a situation of the utmost delicacy was created, one that might have turned to the decisive advantage of Germany, either by plunging Britain and Russia into war, or by giving the Kaiser an opportunity of reversing his first fatal blunder in alienating Russia, and perhaps of again buttressing the cause of Divine Right by a renewal of the Three Emperors' Alliance. The attitude of France as a friend of both England and Russia was invaluable during a time when partisanship with Japan and consequently against Russia was rife throughout England. When the Russian Baltic fleet, passing the Dogger Bank, opened fire on torpedo boats that in default of proof to the contrary must be presumed imaginary, and sunk some British fishing boats, war was perilously near, but reason and arbitration prevailed.

It was when the Tsar was smarting under a sense of this and other grievances against the English, that the Kaiser played what he evidently thought a winning card. He had, for years, kept up an extraordinary private correspondence with Nicholas II, whom he plainly imagined he could twist round his finger. In July, 1905, he managed to arrange a meeting of their two imperial yachts, and having, for a time, got the Tsar completely under his influence, induced him to sign a treaty of defensive alliance which was flatly

in contradiction of the already existing treaty of alliance between France and Russia. But the Kaiser had overreached himself. When the Tsar got home, his ministers and the ablest of his family, the Grand Duke Nicholas, lost no time in opening his eyes to what he had done. The treaty was never ratified, and the only effect of the Kaiser's masterstroke was to estrange Germany from Russia more decisively than ever, and to pave the way for the now inevitable expansion of the Dual into the Triple Entente.

While these manoeuvres were taking place behind the scenes, public interest was focussed on Morocco. Whatever may have been the intentions of the British Foreign Office in framing the Entente, we certainly acted as if that agreement had bound us not only to countenance, but to support with our whole forces whatever action the French might take. For good or evil, we were fairly committed to the game of *Realpolitik* that was now being played with a keener intensity than ever. Previously to the Entente, our policy in Morocco had been precisely the same as that of Germany, to keep the French out and the door open to trade. Now, however, France had bought off our opposition by allowing us a free hand in Egypt. She bought off Italy by letting it be understood that she might, so far as France was concerned, lay violent hands on Tripoli, to which she had no shadow of right. Germany she ostentatiously refused to buy off, and her Foreign Minister, Delcassé, had on the conclusion of the Entente agreement omitted the civility of notifying Germany even of its public provisions in regard to Morocco.

Germany's shrewdest policy would undoubtedly have been either to have crushed France out of hand, when Russia was powerless to help her, or else to have pressed strongly but diplomatically for a deal such as France had already concluded with the other powers interested in Morocco. Instead she acted with the provocative clumsiness that characterized the whole of her foreign policy at this time. On the last day of March, 1905, the Kaiser landed for a couple of hours at Tangier, and delivered himself of a rhetorical outburst which was a plain challenge to the Entente, and by recalling the never forgiven insult of the Kruger telegram served instantly to rally England to France's support. Conscious of her overwhelming military strength, Germany went on to insist on the Moroccan question being taken out of the hands of France and submitted to a European conference. The wildest rumours circulated—that England had promised to land 100,000 men in Schleswig in the event of war, that Delcassé, who had resigned owing to his policy of refusing

a conference being unacceptable to his colleagues, had been driven from office by a German ultimatum. The upshot was that the conference was accepted and met in due course at Algeciras, an arrangement being patched up that apparently safeguarded the independence of Morocco. At the conference board, Italy gave her support, not to her ally Germany, but to France, a plain sign that the Entente was drawing into its orbit the Latin partner in the Triple Alliance, for though that compact continued to be punctually renewed when it came up for signature, nobody, who understood the ethics of European diplomacy, imagined that a treaty more or less would weigh in the balance against more practical considerations.

The Morocco crisis was the first of a series of violent shocks to European tranquillity, each of which left the atmosphere more charged with hatred and suspicion and brought the nations more plainly in sight of the war which all dreaded, but none knew how to avoid. England, in spite of her now having a Liberal government pledged to peace and friendship with all nations, and in spite of the repeatedly avowed resolve of the Cabinet to remain unentangled by any formal alliance, was borne along as helplessly as the rest. The impression left on the public mind by the Morocco crisis of 1905 was that England had stood by France in resisting the pretensions of a bully, and that Germany, which was credited with a fiendish and far-sighted ingenuity, was plotting and arming for nothing less than the subjugation of the world. This impression was steadily propagated by the imperialist organs of the Press, which, now that there was no longer any chance of the alliance dreamed of by Rhodes and Chamberlain, lost no opportunity of stimulating the hatred and still more the fear of Germany.

When the Liberal government came into office, it was too much of a temptation to use the German peril as a stick to beat them with, to talk of a Potsdam party in the Cabinet and to insinuate that every vote given at a by-election to a Liberal was a vote for the Kaiser. Besides, there was an impression, that seemed to obtain some countenance from the diminished programmes of shipbuilding, that the Government were, for political ends, ready to imperil our naval supremacy. This impression was strengthened when it leaked out, in March, 1908, that the Kaiser had been in secret correspondence with our First Lord of the Admiralty with the object of lulling any suspicions he might harbour on the subject of Germany's naval preparations, and thus, it was at once assumed, trying to take an

infamous advantage of us by keeping down our naval programme. In October of the same year, *The Daily Telegraph* published an almost hysterical interview in which the Kaiser, who in private had never lost an opportunity of setting the Tsar against England, protested, not without a hint of menace, the sincerity of his friendship for England and his irritation at the way his advances were received. Naturally this only added fresh fuel to the fire of suspicion.

It is needless to detail the sordid and pitiful story of how, in two great and kindred powers that might have co-operated in the work of civilized progress, business motives begat misrepresentation, and misrepresentation fear, and fear hatred, and hatred, at last, war. There is no need to doubt the sincerity of those who were chiefly responsible, even when, like one great newspaper proprietor, they succeeded in exactly reversing the attitude they had held a few years before. Nor is there any need to look for a villain or even a liar in the piece. No doubt there was a danger, one that every hectoring article or alarmist rumour made more imminent. The peril from the German navy was a real peril; the ambitions of swashbuckling generals, of dividend-hunting concessionaires and armament bosses, of a swollen-headed public unacquainted with the miseries of war, were, in very truth, a menace to the peace of Europe and the security of every peaceful citizen. But at such a time the one conceivable chance of averting a catastrophe whose horror no one as yet could realize, lay in a great and sincerely peace-loving nation keeping her head, taking, without fuss or panic, every reasonable precaution for her own security, but preserving a magnanimous determination to live in courtesy and charity even with the most aggressive neighbours, and to hope for peace until events compelled her to despair. Unfortunately this would have required an enlightenment and moral elevation quite inconceivable in any of the European nations at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Germany, for her part, was as much the victim of fears, real and imaginary, as England. Edward VII became in her eyes a person like the English version of the Kaiser, of fiendish ingenuity, who could not go near a brother monarch without the object of drawing a circle of flame and steel round the devoted Germany. Every Anti-German tirade of an English leader-writer, driving a fountain-pen in the most precarious of all trades, was liable to be quoted in Germany as a serious expression of national opinion, and, what was much worse, the Under Secretary of the Admiralty, in 1905, was credited with using language which implied that we might, at a chosen moment,

send the German fleet to the bottom without even a declaration of war. This was not unnaturally hailed as a godsend by every German supporter of a big navy, and quoted as the deliberate pronouncement of a responsible statesman on British policy. Curiously enough, the not wholly unreasonable fear of being set upon on all sides by a coalition of enemies proved not by any means inconsistent with a grotesque national megalomania, a cult of violence and Machiavellianism, and a supreme trust in the might of German arms. At the second Peace Conference, held at the Hague in 1907, it was Germany who truculently vetoed any attempt to mitigate the suicidal competition in armaments.

One of the effects of the crisis of 1905 was to induce the British War Minister, with the knowledge of the Premier but not of the Cabinet, to initiate military conversations between the British and French staffs, with the view to a possible war with Germany. These conversations, which were followed by others with the Belgian staff, implied no formally binding obligation on either party, but it was impossible thus to make common preparation for the event of English armed support of France against Germany, without creating an atmosphere in which it would be extremely difficult to refuse with honour that co-operation when the expected day dawned. When, subsequently, France was allowed to concentrate her fleet in the Mediterranean, leaving her Northern shores defenceless, while we effected a similar concentration in the North Sea, we could hardly, for very shame, stand by while a German fleet swept up the Channel to bombard the French ports or to convoy an invading force. And yet such was the almost universal blindness to reality that ministers could go on, to the last, asserting our complete freedom of choice in all contingencies.

It now only remained to round off the Entente by the addition of France's ally, Russia, and to end the long mutual animosity which Disraeli's policy had begun. After the fiasco of the unratified German alliance, Russian statesmanship was ripe for such a move. But in England reports of the successful efforts of the Tsardom to strangle the new-born liberties of Russia had made an understanding with that blind and corrupt tyranny a bitter pill for Englishmen to swallow, even for the most cogent considerations of high politics. Swallowed it was, however, not without considerable murmurings from Labour and the advanced wing of the Liberal party, and on August 31st, 1907, a new Entente agreement was signed, on the lines of that with France, which settled all outstanding differences between

England and Russia in the Middle East, where alone, since the Japanese war, their interests clashed.

The place of Morocco in this new Entente was supplied by the almost helpless kingdom of Persia, on which, since her rebuff in Manchuria, Russia had fixed greedy eyes. It was arranged that Russia should take the Northern part, including the capital, as her sphere of influence, that England should do the same to an area in the South East, and that the intervening strip should constitute a common hunting ground for concessions. It was Russia's deliberate object to absorb as much of Persia as she could, and her statesmen not vainly calculated on the fact that Britain's interest in maintaining the Entente would induce her to turn a blind eye to the strangling of Persian liberties as far as Russia's own sphere was concerned. It was the usual story of a spendthrift Oriental despot mortgaging his own and his people's resources to Western usurers, and of the bailiffs being put in in the shape of armed men. The deposition of the Shah and the triumph of a constitutional party made no difference to the Russian policy, and when an American Treasurer General showed some signs of restoring Persian finances to order, Russia actually obtained England's support in compelling his dismissal. The Russians went about their work of absorption with a barbaric crudity that moved our Liberal Foreign Secretary to repeated and, on one occasion, grave remonstrance, but not even when they proceed to such unprovoked ruffianism as the bombardment, in 1912, of the holy places at Meshed, did we put any effective brake on their proceedings. If we could not be loyal to our principles and the Entente at the same time, who could blame us for consulting our interests in making the choice ?

It must not be imagined, however, that even under these circumstances British policy was committed to the deliberate and Machiavellian realism that found favour with our more logical neighbours. Sir Edward Grey, who was, by general admission, a very Aristides among politicians, had inherited, with his name, the generous and at the same time patriotic principles of the last Whigs. Among the ranks of all parties in Parliament, and particularly among the more advanced democratic element, was to be found a genuine and sincere philanthropy, though perhaps, under the now rigid discipline of the caucus, it did not matter much one way or the other what Members of Parliament chose to believe. Where the supreme necessity of maintaining the Entente against Germany was not in question, Great Britain was always to be found taking the generous part.

This was particularly the case as regards the persistent efforts, both of our Conservative and Liberal Foreign Ministers, to combat the tyranny of the Belgian King Leopold's government, or rather organized plunder of the Congo, and our endeavours to mitigate the evils of Turkish misrule in Macedonia. Nor can there be any reasonable doubt that, so far as our interests did not commit us to the support of our friends in the Entente, every effort was made to conciliate and pacify Germany, even to the extent of letting our naval construction drop below what many people thought to be the margin of safety, during the first three years of Liberal rule.

12

The Storm Breaks

The very year after the Triple Entente had taken form, another crisis came within an ace of precipitating the European War for which the lists were now set, and which, as Bismarck had foreseen, would begin in the East. In 1908 there were ominous signs that the Balkan volcano was becoming active, and the comparatively harmonious Concert of the Powers, in pressing for never-accomplished reforms in Macedonia, was liable to be broken up by the never extinguished rivalry between Austrian and Russian ambitions. Austria started the trouble early in 1908, procuring the concession for a railway through the Sanjak of Novi Bazar, in which Russia detected a move forward towards the goal of Salonika, and in which Italy also felt her interests slighted. In July, while nerves were still on edge from this unpleasantness, the Turkish nationalist party rose and forced a constitution, and their own government, on the Pan-Islamite party as represented by the Sultan.

What followed showed the utter contempt into which the public law of Europe had fallen. In October, with an obviously concerted synchronization, Bulgaria proclaimed her independence of Turkey, and Austria her annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which she had been allowed to administer under the Treaty of Berlin. This annexation, though Russia had just previously suggested it as part of a deal with her rival, was not only a cynical defiance of a treaty solemnly agreed to by all the Powers, but roused the utmost indignation in Servia, whose nationalist ambition of uniting the whole of the Southern Slavs received a rude set-back. Russia's Pan-Slavist sentiment was thoroughly roused to the support of her kin, and for

some time it seemed as though a war was about to break out between Austria and Servia, into which the rest of Europe would be dragged. The plain fact, however, was that Russia, exhausted by foreign and domestic strife, was in no condition to fight, and when Germany, suddenly intervening, presented what was practically an ultimatum at St. Petersburg, she gave in unconditionally. The Kaiser, characteristically, rubbed in her humiliation by talking of his appearance in shining armour at his ally's side, and the effect of the incident was to set Russia at work re-organizing her military system, so that next time such a threat was offered her, she might answer it in a very different spirit.

The Morocco crisis, which the Conference of 1906 had only postponed, came to a head two years later. France had not for a moment abandoned her designs on the Sultanate, and indeed there was no chance of anything like a stable native government being attained, once the usual type of spendthrift Oriental potentate, as represented by the Sultan Abdul Aziz, had got himself and his country into the toils of the moneylenders. It is needless to detail the successive turns France gave to the screw, how Abdul Aziz, bankrupt and helpless, disappeared from the scene, and how his supplanter, Muley Hafid, unable even to pay soldiers to defend him, failed in his turn to curb the now chronic anarchy, and how, finally, a French expeditionary force of overwhelming strength, that chanced to be handy, marched to Fez to take care of the European inhabitants —and stopped there. Still less need we unravel the complicated negotiations that had been afoot between combinations of French and German capitalists for the exploitation of the unhappy country.

Suffice it to say that when it became evident that the Act of Algeciras was waste paper, and that France meant to plead force of circumstances for an occupation of Morocco, the German government, now thoroughly aroused, determined at all costs at least to have a *quid pro quo* from France. Accordingly in the summer of 1911 she dispatched a gunboat to the Moorish harbour of Agadir. This move, which not only foreboded the seizure of a slice of Morocco, but of a naval base on the Atlantic from which she, Germany, could threaten English commerce, at once landed Europe in a crisis more dangerous than any that had gone before. As the summer waned and negotiations dragged on behind closed doors, it became evident that at any moment England might find herself in the throes of a war about a quarrel in which both our honour and our vital interests

were supposed to be somehow involved. Mr. Lloyd George, speaking in the name of the Government on July 21, plainly intimated to all whom it might concern that if there was a war, Britain meant to be in it. The glove, thus publicly thrown down, was, however, not taken up. This time it was Germany who proved unready for a fight. So she continued to bargain, and after a prolonged and dangerous haggle consented to withdraw from Agadir and leave France a free hand in Morocco in return for a large strip of French Congolese territory. Again Europe had avoided the catastrophe by the skin of her teeth, but this time Germany, thanks to England's appearance in shining armour, felt aggrieved and humiliated, and like Russia, determined to arm to the teeth in order that there should be no question of refusing any subsequent challenge.

The Moroccan danger was thus shelved, but that in the Balkans was as acute as ever. Taking advantage of the Agadir disturbance, Italy now proceeded to realize a long-cherished ambition by falling, without the shadow of provocation, on Tripoli and embarking on an unexpectedly troublesome war for its subjugation. English public opinion was horrified, especially when reports came of a massacre perpetrated by the Italian troops, but the Government, conscious of the priceless value of Italian support for the Entente, acted the part of Gallio. Italy's example was not thrown away on the Christian peoples of the Balkans who, with the exception of Roumania, managed to suspend their mutual hatreds for long enough to enable them to make a sudden attack upon the " sick man ", and deprive him of the whole of his European possessions except the corner of territory covering Constantinople and the Straits. In the partition of the conquered territories Servia, baulked of her access to the Adriatic by Austrian hostility, demanded a revision of the arrangements. This led to a swift war, in August, 1913, in which Bulgaria, who launched a sudden and treacherous attack on her allies, was promptly crushed with the assistance of Roumania.

By what seemed almost a miracle, the peace of Europe was preserved throughout this prolonged crisis during which Austria and Russia stood glaring at each other, and England and Germany joined, with unexpected goodwill, in keeping the peace. The fact was that in 1913 none of the Powers was quite ready for the supreme contest. Germany was pushing on her military, naval and financial preparations with feverish haste, and France replied by extending the term of military service from two years to three; Russia was constructing a network of strategic railways on her Western frontier;

in England Mr. Winston Churchill was pushing on with the multiplication of dreadnoughts, and an expeditionary force was ready at a few days' notice to take its place on the left of the French line. In the opening months of 1914 it was evident that the least spark would be enough to fire the European powder magazine. A furious campaign of threats and insults between the German and Russian Presses testified to the neurotic tension which might at any moment result in words being exchanged for blows. And yet, at this time, British and German official relations were more cordial than they had been for years, and there seemed a real chance of the two governments working together in comparative harmony. Unfortunately it was now no longer a question of Britain against Germany, but of an Entente, that included Britain, against Central Europe.

Meanwhile there seemed every chance that before the European War could break out, the United Kingdom would be in the throes of civil war. The Liberal Party had come back from a second election in 1910, again in practical equality with the Unionists, and in the bitter constitutional struggle that had resulted from the rejection of the 1909 Budget the Irish still held the balance. It was a disastrous situation, as it left the Government with no alternative between the humiliating fiasco of seeing their policy defeated, or of purchasing Irish support by granting Home Rule on the only terms on which it would be accepted, namely the subjection of the Protestant North East to a Dublin Parliament in which their representatives could be outvoted on every issue. After the bitter feelings that had been aroused by the two previous Home Rule Bills, it should have been obvious that the dour and intolerant Protestants would sooner die than be put under the heel, as they believed, of the Papishes and Molly Maguires. The problem of giving liberty to Catholic Ireland and at the same time preserving it to the Protestant community was perhaps the most difficult that had ever confronted British statesmanship, and demanded the utmost caution and impartiality. Unfortunately the Government was not free to be cautious, and the inflamed state of caucus rivalry did not conduce to impartiality on either side.

The Liberal Irish Entente, so similar in principle to the Egyptian-Moroccan compact between England and France, was duly honoured by the passing of the Budget and a Parliament Act, in which the veto of the Lords was restricted to a power of holding up, for two years, all except financial legislation. It was now the turn of the Irish, and the Government, in 1912, brought in a Home Rule Bill which,

despite a good many general safeguards, gave neither exemption nor differential treatment to the North East. The Protestants, who for their part were determined not only to have the government of their choice, but if possible to deny Home Rule to the Catholics, promptly began to organize resistance, and the Parliament Act had given them the certainty of over two years' grace to complete their preparations.

The story of these two years is one which an English historian must wish to hurry over as quickly as possible. The factiousness of party was displayed in its worst form. On the one side the cue was to insult, ridicule and hector at the Protestants, who bound themselves in a Solemn League and Covenant never to submit to Home Rule, and in whose breasts every fresh challenge engendered a more unyielding determination. On the other side the friends of the Protestants, instead of enjoining patience in a crisis that imperilled the whole Empire, did not hesitate to stimulate open rebellion, or even to supply arms, made in Germany, for not improbable use against British troops. Tories seemed to have shed their patriotism and reverence for the authority of the State, Liberals to have pinned their faith to the doctrine of George III that rebels must be made to obey the law whether they agreed with it or not. And all the while, in England, an atmosphere of unreality invested the whole proceedings, arising from a fixed belief that this was all in the party game, that the thing would be compromised somehow, and that nothing really serious would happen. Unfortunately in Ireland both sides were in deadly earnest, and neither understood the English instinct of compromise. The God to whom the Covenanters had appealed may have been an Old Testament Jehovah, but to them He was at least a living God, and a Man of War.

Nor was this the only danger that threatened England from within. The fall in the real value of wages, and the growing disbelief of the workers in the politicians, produced a serious unrest in the years immediately preceding the War, and an outbreak of strikes on a larger scale, and involving greater inconvenience and loss to the nation at large, than had ever been known before. On the whole, these disputes were conducted with surprising good temper, though the results were, from the workers' point of view, so meagre, that there was an increasing tendency to suspect the leaders of being " got at ", and, in consequence, to repudiate agreements and adopt the uncompromising tactics of syndicalism. The respect for constitutional methods was ominously on the wane, and the example of the

suffragettes and Ulster volunteers was not unmarked by proletarian extremists.

In 1914, which was the year for the final passing of the Home Rule Bill, there seemed, and perhaps, barring what actually occurred, was, no chance of averting the threatened civil war. The Covenanters had formed themselves into a numerous and disciplined army, and the Catholics were beginning to follow suit. and organize a volunteer force of their own. A new order of Irish patriots, the Sinn Feiners, who desired nothing less than independence of England, were already beginning to gain ground on the more moderate Nationalists. If these latter showed any signs of compromise, they might easily lose Ireland in gaining England. So they continued to press for an undivided Ireland, and their leader, John Redmond, openly boasted of his ability to make Mr. Asquith " toe the line ".

But the politicians had now taken fright. An attempt to nip the threatened rebellion in the bud by the use of troops showed plainly that the army was not to be relied on to fight against the Covenanters. In April a large consignment of arms and ammunition was landed in Ulster and transferred to the Covenanters without the least effort to stop them. It was evident that, bargain or no bargain, some way must be found of saving the Government's face and at the same time avoiding the necessity of coercing the North East. In July a conference was called at Buckingham Palace in which the leaders of both English and both Irish parties met in the desperate endeavour to arrange a compromise by leaving the Protestant counties out of the Bill. Unfortunately the two counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh, where Protestants and Catholics were almost inextricably mixed, were claimed by both sides, and neither the Covenanting nor Nationalist leaders dared give way an inch, or could have induced their followers to do anything but lynch them if they had. The Conference broke up in despair, and the end of the month saw bloodshed in the streets of Dublin, where a force of British troops, detailed to intercept a landing of arms for the Catholics, were compelled to fire on a crowd which mobbed them on their way back to barracks.

But this bloodshed, which might have been the first of a civil war, was soon forgotten in the presence of the catastrophe that was even now beginning to break over Europe. The exact manner of its coming will probably be a theme for research and controversy as long as history continues to be written. From our point of view it is comparatively unimportant. In the state of intellect and morals at which Europe had arrived in these opening years of the twentieth

century it is perhaps strange that it had been delayed so long, certainly impossible that it could have been delayed for many months longer.

Austria, whose position in the Balkans had been compromised by the double triumph of her rival Servia, and whose rickety Empire was seriously menaced by the Jugo-Slav nationalism that was itself an offshoot of Pan-Slavism, was determined to end the nuisance once and for all. She had sounded Italy in 1913, without encouragement. In 1914 she had a golden opportunity to act for herself. The heir to the throne, who paid a deliberately provocative visit to the Bosnian capital on the anniversary of Kossovo, was murdered by an Austrian subject, a Serb. After waiting for nearly a month, Austria suddenly launched an ultimatum to Servia which was equivalent to a declaration of war. No doubt she gambled on the prospect that Russia would act in 1914 as she had acted in 1908.

This time, however, there was to be no drawing back at St. Petersburg, where indeed the signs of impending revolution were so manifest as to make a national war perhaps the best chance for the Tsardom. Once Russia had determined not to permit the crushing of Servia, Europe was sliding down an inclined plane to the abyss. In vain did Sir Edward Grey endeavour to get the matter submitted to a European Conference—Germany vetoed the proposal. The Kaiser seems to have been still under the delusion that by appearing once more in shining armour he could get Russia to stop. Perhaps if it had rested with the Tsar he might have calculated rightly, for that ill-fated autocrat allowed himself to be frightened, at the last moment, into countermanding the general mobilization of his armies. But the vast military machine, once set in motion, could not be stopped without throwing it completely out of gear, and the mobilization went on. In the extraordinary state of international anarchy then prevailing, such a step was tantamount to a declaration of war on both Germany and Austria, since if they failed to strike at Russia the moment her mobilization started, they would be throwing away the important strategical advantage of more rapid concentration—a thing unthinkable to minds steeped in the tradition of Clausewitz. Germany therefore instantly mobilized in her turn, and declared war on Russia, with its logical sequel of war with France.

England, whose government and people desired nothing more than peace, was too deeply committed to her colleagues in the Entente to keep out of the struggle. Germany, which was, as everybody had long expected in such an event, preparing to add another to the recent defiances of European law by dashing at France

through Belgium, was as little minded to add England to her foes as England was to fight Germany. It is just conceivable that she might have refrained from what was not only a crime but a strategic blunder, could England have given her a clear pledge of her own neutrality on the understanding that Belgian neutrality should be respected by Germany. But Sir Edward Grey could give no such pledge, and, besides, England had already been compelled by honour to give notice that she would use her fleet to prevent the perfectly legitimate German act of sending her own to attack the French Northern coasts, thus practically declaring a naval blockade. Germany's characteristically clumsy failure to seize this opportunity of putting herself in the right, or perhaps a desperate belief that Britain after all might draw back at the last moment, gave us the opportunity of consulting at the same time our honour and the vital interests of centuries, by taking our stand on the time-honoured ground that under no circumstances could we allow Flanders to be crushed or conquered by one of the Continental powers.

So, in those first August days of 1914, from the remotest wastes of Siberia to the Atlantic seaboard, amid scenes of hectic enthusiasm and stifled apprehension, millions of men left their peaceful employments to take part in the universal suicide. For more than four years, while victory, hardly less ruinous than defeat, hung in the balance, the contending nations were employed in one vast, co-operative effort to waste and destroy the civilization by which they lived, moved and had their being. Science, once a beneficent angel, became a fiend, destroying at an incalculably faster rate than she had ever been able to construct. More important by far than the success or failure of this or that combatant was the supreme fact that as days lengthened to months and months to years, the flower of the world's manhood was being mowed down, lands wasted, railroads torn up, bridges destroyed, towns bombarded, ships sunk, factories wrecked or diverted to ends of destruction, children starved, the religion of hate propagated with more success than had ever attended that of love, epidemic disease allowed to sweep the world, a weight of debt accumulated that threatened, and still threatens, to bring to bankruptcy and chaos the most prosperous communities.

This aspect of the situation, though seemingly the most obvious of all, was ignored in those early heroic days, when the cause of little Belgium was turning a nation of civilians into one of soldiers, and the historic soil of Flanders resounded to the tramp of khaki-clad regiments whose songs, like those of their Anglo-Saxon fathers, impressed strangers most of all with their note of melancholy.

EPILOGUE

HISTORY is a story that always leaves off in the middle, though it is the temptation of every historian to discover an end. And, seeing that story-books, if not stories, have got to end somewhere, we can hardly write " finis " more appropriately than on the eve of a catastrophe that threatened the fall, and may conceivably portend the decline, not only of British, but of human civilization. Conceivably—but assuredly not inevitably !

And yet, unless we have been altogether wrong in our reading of the facts, the Great War, like the Reformation and the French Revolution, was the product of forces that had long been at work, and continued to work after it. Through the mad horror of those years, it was good that we should have had visions of a mental and spiritual rebirth that would have made the sacrifice worth while. It would have been too much to have faced the prospect of mankind, so terribly enfeebled, learning nothing and forgetting nothing, harking complacently back to the collective egotisms, the *Real-politik* of class and race and nationality, the bankruptcy of faith and ideals, that culminated in civilization's all but complete suicide.

But we have studied history in vain, unless it has taught us to reinforce hope by patience. We must not look for revolutionary change except as the result of a process as gradual and unhurried as that of growth. One fine morning may suffice to burst the bud, but it takes months to develop the seed into flower. On the soil, enriched by that red rain, the seeds may have been well and truly planted. We can at least water and prepare the ground, waging sharp war upon all things rank and gross in nature, weeds of cupidity and untruth and all uncharitableness.

The question whose answer spells life or death for civilized man is being put with ever more menacing insistence—are the human mind and spirit capable of being adapted to the requirements of a Machine Age ? With blind precipitancy, we have revolutionized our environment ; it has yet to be seen whether we can effect a corresponding revolution in ourselves. If the old platitude about human nature being unchangeable is really true, there is nothing for it but to resign ourselves to the doom that has overtaken every

species whose circumstances have changed more rapidly than its powers of adaptation. The next experiment in suicide need not lack for completeness.

To face facts is not to counsel pessimism. We know that human nature can be changed because history shows us that it is constantly changing. We have faith that it must and shall be changed, in time to save the bright adventure of our civilization from ruin. God's image must not be allowed to go the way of the giant lizards, its predecessors.

Instead of talking of the decline of civilization or the West as if it were something outside ourselves and beyond our control, let us, in words applied to a crisis far less momentous, continue to hope until events compel us to despair. Even a forlorn hope is better than none.

In spite of all the guilt and imperfection, which there is no attempt in these pages to cloak or extenuate, it may well be that on British civilization as expressed in a free Commonwealth of Nations,[1] the fairest hopes of mankind are destined more and more to centre. The discovery that spiritual bonds are more potent than those of force or interest, is one of untold possibilities for the healing of nations. The very League is but an attempt to apply British principles on a world-wide scale.

If this be our high calling, now, more than ever, it behoves us to shape our future in the light and understanding of our past. Only thus can we hope to attain the patriotism of Britain true to herself because loyal to mankind, a patriotism purged of every selfish and ignoble taint, founded on great principles, supported by great virtues, the love of our country because she is lovable.

In that sense alone may we be permitted to say—Patriotism is enough!

[1] On the limits of whose possible extension I do not presume to speculate here.

THE END.

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