Social idealism / by R. Dimsdale Stocker.

SOCIAL IDEALISM

STOCKER

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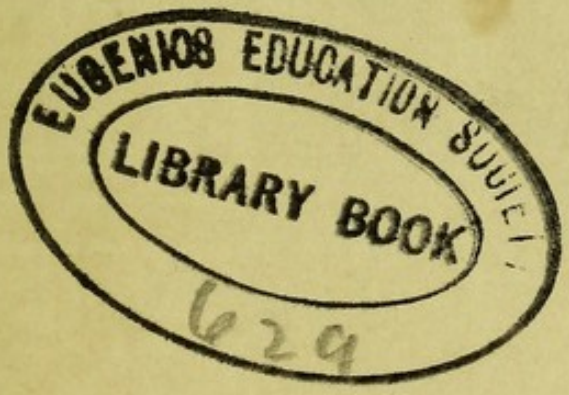

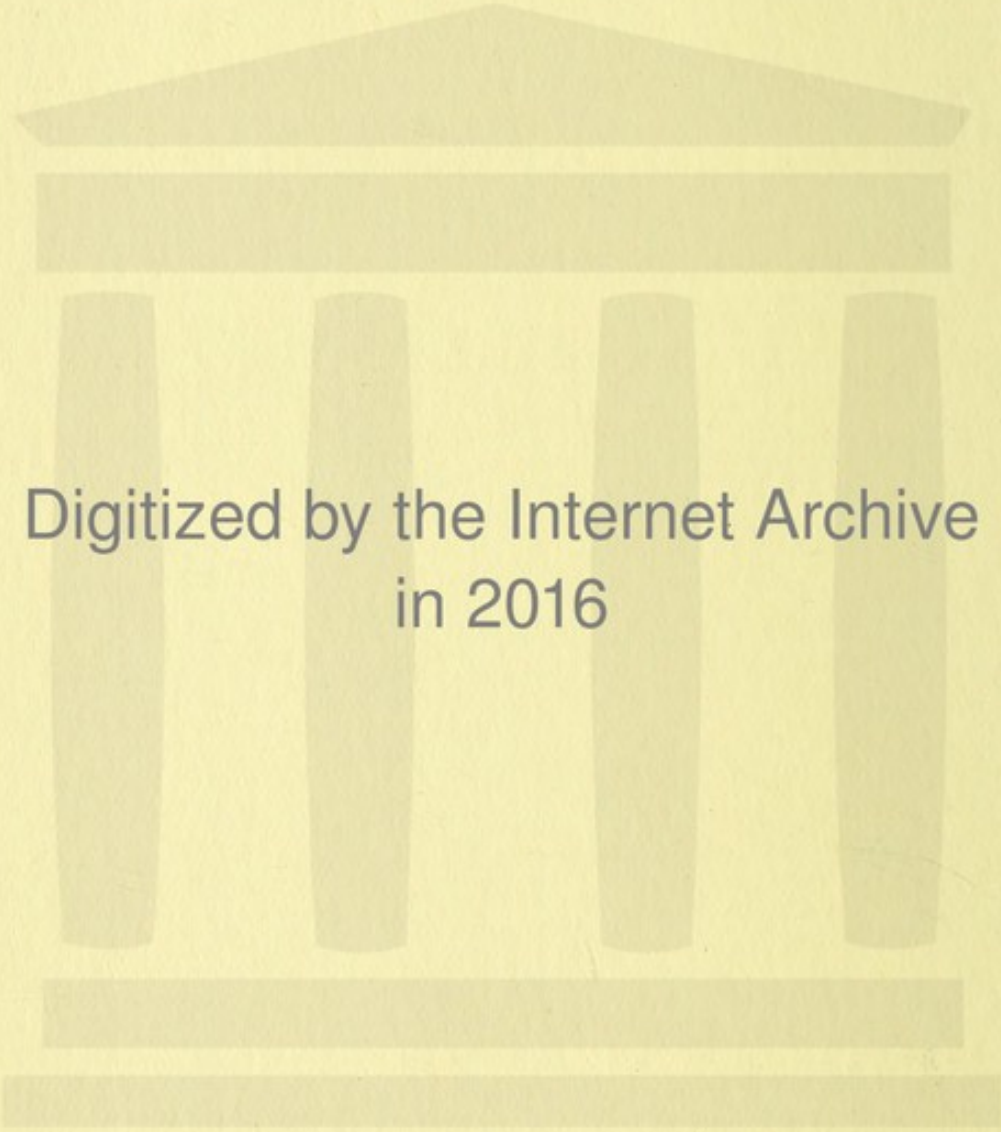

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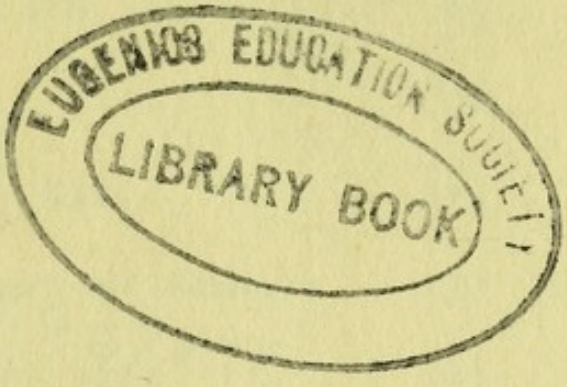

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SOCIAL IDEALISM

CHAPTER I

THE NEW RELIGIOUS METAPHYSIC

THE immediate task that lies before the religious thinker to-day has its own distinctive character. It is not identical, at least in most essential respects, with that which confronted men say one hundred, fifty, or even five-and-twenty years ago. In one respect, certainly, its object is similar. For such reform to-day must consist, as it has ever consisted, in a process of rationalisation, achieved by a wider dissemination of knowledge. On all sides this is coming to be felt ; and that it should therefore be our sole aim and endeavour to rationalise life, not only here and there, but in all its several

departments, is gradually being realised. In attempting this, it cannot but be that we find ourselves in occasional conflict with the settled beliefs and opinions of men, and the various established institutions, alike social, political, and ecclesiastical, whence such opinions are derived. And more especially, it would seem, must this be so in regard to the avowedly religious institutions of mankind; since it is these, in particular, which immemorial custom and habit have so effectually precluded from expanding and adapting themselves to the altered requirements of the age.

To assume, however, that our only, or even our primary object should be to destroy and overthrow, or to suppose that those objects which are consistent with human enlightenment will best be achieved by assailing the time-honoured beliefs of men, is far from the truth. Incidentally, it must be apparent enough, we are indeed called upon to introduce such changes in current thinking as may be the means of modifying such opinions and beliefs. And, it may be remarked parenthetically, that,

for many of the revolutions which have been accomplished already, we have the best of reasons for recording our admiration and gratitude, since but for such revolutions the task of reaching the human understanding must have remained impossible. Second only in importance to those whose memories the great world-faiths have immortalised, are they who have subsequently arisen, and, in the name of Reason and Truth, purged such faiths of the accretions with which the lapse of the centuries has overlaid them. And hence it is that, side by side with the names of the traditional founders of these faiths, we would place the revered examples of such men as Thomas Paine, Huxley, Charles Bradlaugh, and Voltaire.

But profound as is the homage which we would render to the free-thinkers of the past, our own attitude to-day is not primarily one of hostility to the usages of religion. And if we have nothing to take away from the utterances of these sturdy champions of liberty, still less have we aught to add thereto. Their labours,

to a very great extent, are ended. And we have lived to enjoy the fruits. Much of the work which they attempted has yielded results whose far-reaching significance we cannot sufficiently appreciate. Our age has brought an increased sense of freedom—an unexampled period of intellectual and spiritual liberty. And, accordingly, our mission, I take it, is one of mediation. Instead, therefore, of seeking to challenge the doctrines of the sects (whose simultaneous existence constitutes a sufficient refutation of their absolute pretensions), our aim should be rather to show, if it be possible, the common ground of religious agreement between them—in matters which lie in immediate contact with life, and against which the criticism of sceptics and agnostics cannot be directed.

We happen, as it is, to be living at a time when much of what we might call the negative side of religious reconstruction has already been achieved; when most thinking persons are aware—and that acutely—of the glaring inconsistencies which are suggested by our surviving

modes of religious thought—and when, perhaps, comparatively few persons are not in some slight measure impressed by the apparent anomalies and incongruities of our official religion. If only for this reason, our work, it is plain, lies elsewhere. There is little need, I take it, to accentuate the disparity between orthodox faith and our practice ; and still less, if anything, to show that we have outgrown the antiquated metaphysic of an earlier age. Such things are matters of common experience. Our aim, therefore, as it seems to me, should be less to strive to demolish what still remains of the ruins of the past, than to attempt to unify and consolidate existing tendencies, aims, and aspirations, with a view to render the task of Spiritual reconstruction possible of accomplishment in the future. What is needed above all things to this end is, a mutual recognition on our part of some common motive, some fundamental aim and purpose, such as shall provide men with a common ideal, that will enable us to weld together our social and spiritual forces to one supreme end.

Perhaps the initial difficulty that presents itself to us is, to discover precisely wherein the religious impulse of this age especially lies. At the outset, it seems almost easier to say where it is not, than to affirm its presence in any one direction. Our life to-day is inconceivably complex and many-sided—so extraordinarily so, indeed, that unless we are prepared to interpret it under its widest and most comprehensive aspect, we must inevitably miss its deepest significance and import. Nothing is easier than to be misled in this respect by a superficial generalisation of existing conditions. Nothing, at first sight, seems easier than to challenge or call in question the spirit of the time. For side by side with the decay of structures which have hitherto stood as the guardians of morality and religion, we have the growth of forces which, unless they can be utilised and diverted to social ends, must speedily bring destruction in their train.

As it is, much is made, from time to time, of the wane of the older religious sanctions. In the newspapers and elsewhere we are constantly

reminded of the languid interest which is nowadays displayed in the accredited forms of religion. And so usual is it, even nowadays, to identify religion therewith, that indifference towards the surviving forms is constantly construed as convincing testimony to the decline of religion itself. In consequence, a gloomy and depressing prospect is presented to us, as the outcome of modern civilisation.

The inference, I may say, is not altogether unnatural. In the minds of numbers of cultivated, as well as uncultivated persons, religion is still regarded as an adjunct, an auxiliary to life—as something that must, of necessity, be additional and supplementary to, rather than the direct and spontaneous product of, human faith and love. And this impression ever grows upon us as the older forms of religion appear less and less in harmony with existing aims and needs.

Even to-day we view religion only under its older aspects,—and in consequence of this, and because the special beliefs with which we were so familiar, and the exercises they involve, are

no longer in the public eye, we speak of the eclipse of faith. We have not yet reconciled ourselves to the death of the old. We have not yet publicly acknowledged the birth of the new. We have not yet accustomed ourselves to the more recent phase. Nor do we universally suspect that religion may have entered upon such a phase. The bare idea that religious emotion can be directed to any object save that of a traditional character has scarcely yet occurred to us. Only here and there can we realise that this belief is dawning upon mankind. And it is in consequence of this that the whole secret and utility of religion, as it should be apprehended to-day, is apt to escape recognition altogether. It is at supplying this need—at reconciling our faith with life—at rendering the dumb soul of man articulate—at bringing us a practical, living belief—that the reformer of to-day should aim.

None realised the secret of the New Evangel —none foresaw the trend of modern life and thought—more clearly than the prophet Emerson. Such a man, with the swift and un-

erring insight of the seer, would not suffer himself to be deluded by the uncertain indications of appearances. He penetrated to the heart of things—to the very soul of mankind. And, beneath the conflict, diversity, and contradiction of life, his eagle-like vision beheld the all-pervading unity, in which men's cherished prophecies should find their ultimate fulfilment.

Writing in 1856, his commentary was this :—

"The religion of England—is it in the Established Church? No. Is it in the sects? No. They are only the perpetration of some private man's dissent, and are to the Established Church as cabs are to a coach, cheaper and more convenient, but really the same thing. Where dwells the religion? Tell me first where dwells electricity, or motion, or thought, or gesture. They do not dwell or stay at all. Electricity cannot be made fast, mortared up and ended, like the London Monument or the Tower, so that you shall know where to find it, and keep it fixed, as the English do with their things, for evermore; it is passing, glancing, gesticular;

it is a traveller, a new man, a surprise, a secret, which perplexes them and puts them out. Yet, if religion be the doing of good, and for its sake the suffering of all evil, *Souffrir de tout le monde, et ne faire souffrir personne*, that divine secret has existed in England from the days of Alfred to these of Romilly, of Clarkson, and of Florence Nightingale, and in thousands who have no fame."

I am not aware that so lofty, and withal so inclusive an ideal of religion, has yet been formulated by any considerable number of persons, even to-day (though the age is ripe for it). It is upwards of fifty years since Emerson wrote. But behind-hand as we are in giving public expression to this sentiment, one cannot help reflecting that this is precisely the definition of religion that is called for to-day. Nor, I would say, can we hope to deal with any of the vast spiritual problems that are perplexing us in a practical fashion, until we have adopted it.

The temper of our age, it must be evident to many, is little addicted to Theology. Its doubts and its difficulties are not, for the most part,

suggested by the doctrines that it imbibed from the churches in its youth. All unanimity of opinion upon such subjects has long since passed. And this prevailing diversity is in itself a practical object-lesson in the value of all relativity of thought. Moreover, this has not been without the most practical consequences; since, with the growing indisposition, on the part of parents and others, to impose authoritative religious teaching, to which their own intellectual assent was refused, upon the young, the rising generation of to-day have grown up largely independently of the theological prejudice of their fathers. In consequence of this, their religious life has come to involve something rather, which, in its very nature, must appeal to their moral and intellectual senses, than what has received merely traditional sanction. Hence it is that we may witness not only the greatest diversity of opinion, but such breadth and tolerance towards such opinion in general; such tolerance in itself exhibiting an unmistakable distrust of all opinions that are not intellectually and morally satisfying.

Such facts as these, and the still more obvious fact that life at this time derives so enormously from "secular" sources, should bring home to us the justice of Emerson's dictum: "Where dwells the religion? Tell me first where dwells electricity, or motion, or thought, or justice." To any thinking man, the impossibility of retaining religion upon its former exclusive basis must be a foregone conclusion. Whether it can be retained at all must depend solely upon whether we are prepared to identify it with the process which is at work, transforming, renewing, and recreating the life of to-day.

Nothing, I venture to suppose, can possibly be clearer to any man or woman of average sagacity and discernment than that the institutions that are popularly identified with religion afford us the most meagre and inadequate notion of the true Spiritual life and resources of our age. And though we would not seek to disparage such institutions (since they have had, and still retain a place in our social economy—though their importance is no longer absolute), it may be well worth while if we ask ourselves

how it has come about that they should so imperfectly realise and express the Spiritual aspirations of our era.

The problem, no doubt, is in very many respects an exceedingly difficult one to elucidate, and to deal with it with any degree of thoroughness would call for a minute and detailed description of the process which has distinguished our growth. To enter into such a question would necessitate, not only a detailed survey of religion, but also a description of man and a careful investigation of all those influences, mental, moral, social, and material, which have been instrumental in bringing about his development. Broadly speaking, however, we may say that this question resolves itself into a very simple and practical matter: nothing more, in point of fact, than the readjustment of the individual (under a more highly specialised stage of development) to a wider and more complex environment. Little enough, perhaps, do we realise this, or its significance, and the enormous impetus which has been given, under existing conditions, not only to life, but to our

social and intellectual conceptions of life. We are new men. We react to a changing world. Living, as we do, in the midst of all the innumerable forces, tendencies, and movements which are inspiring and uplifting our collective life, we scarcely appreciate the potency of our epoch. Nor do we consider to the full the incalculable advance which it registers upon the past. And, more especially, is the exalted ethical and religious spirit of our age apt to be lost sight of. Many fail altogether to discern the process of regeneration which is in operation. But if we could go back for one brief moment from the one to the other, or if we could but betake ourselves from the present to the past, or if it were possible (which it is not) to abstract the Church from the stream of social life in which it has been, in a great measure, absorbed and incorporated, not only would a vivid contrast be afforded us, but we should thereupon appreciate the progressive nature of the change. As it is, instead of accepting facts as they are, people grow impatient with those whose theories and ideals are inadequate to the needs of the

age. Thus, the stoutest defenders of the old order, realising that things are no longer as they were, constantly complain of the defects which they would see remedied in the churches, and relieve their feelings with ill-considered criticism of the methods and opinions of the clergy. That such an attitude is inconsistent with itself, never seems to occur to them. That the clergy are, nine times out of ten, far more logical than their congregations, never enters their heads. Nor do they suspect for a moment what the Church actually is—a relic of the past, and, as such, radically out of touch with existing aims and tendencies. Yet, to any thinking man or woman, a few moments' consideration of the problem must suffice to show that the "failure" of the Church is due, not to any fundamental defect in its representatives, but to the fact that our social growth has far exceeded the anticipations of its founders and promoters. However rich in spiritual possibilities the earlier conceptions of human life may have been—however impressive human destiny under its once familiar aspect—however

majestic the sublime creation of an omnipotent judge and deliverer of men—however glorious the prospect of future salvation for mankind—these were, I would say, at best, but sorry substitutes for the things which life has to offer us to-day.

A theological flavour still clings to our mode of speech. We still speak, for instance, of the "Will of God"; and for many reasons it is a convenient phrase to retain. But, when we proceed to analyse such a phrase, and when we come to consider the conception which underlies it, what must we say? For all its splendour and sublimity, is the thought of the "Will of God," in the old theological sense, in the least comparable to its modern equivalent — the Human Will? or are its implications anything like so overwhelmingly wondrous, awe-inspiring, or withal so majestic?

By the old theology, we were taught to believe that God created the world. And the thought impressed—as it must necessarily have done—our youthful, untutored imaginations. But, when we attained to years of discretion,

and we came to think about the matter, was the thought of that miraculous fiat, that (we were told) could bring everything from nothing —that could make man, endow him with free-will, and save the righteous in the after-time— so beautiful, so noble, so superlatively divine, as the thought of the Human Providence—the will of all good men and women, who, by their disinterested and unselfish devotion to human welfare, have transformed the world from what it was, and been the means of redeeming the wicked for social and ethical ends? Surely, we may say, and that without the slightest fear of contradiction, that beside such a conception as this, the "Will of God" pales into insignificance.

We are not, indeed, in contending for the supremacy of the Natural and Human Order, required to belittle the past; though, in speaking thus, it is clear we are contending for the *relativity* of religious thought. The past, as well as the present, had its greatness. But assuredly we may say that, beside the impalpable types and shadows of the past, our

own tangible vision of the approaching order is infinitely more inspiring and satisfying.

Nor is our outlook, for all its insistence upon the actual aspect of things, confined to the visible realm alone. Those who imagine that the modern idealist has nothing to offer men but a species of sublimated materialism, misconceive the whole aim and purpose of life to-day. Thus, while, on the one hand, we may gladly acknowledge the means whereby the work of the present is to be accomplished—and, in doing so, rigidly exclude as irrelevant and extraneous all supernaturalistic thought—and while we would sanctify to our uses all means and forces, alike physical, mental, and social to achieve our aim—that aim itself is exclusively a moral and spiritual one. Our supreme trust lies in the Unseen : in the Social Organism ; in the *invisible*, but all-potent, factors of personality, individuality, will, society. We may be said to believe, in fact, in the self-same mysterious power whereof Mr G. Bernard Shaw speaks when he tells us that "where two men are assembled together there is a two-man

power that is far more than double one-man power, being indeed in some instances a quite new force, totally destructive of the idiotic general hypothesis that society is no more than the sum of the units which compose it." Whilst, therefore, our outlook is directed exclusively to Man, we would study him, not as a biological phenomenon, but rather as a bundle of relations, with due reference, that is to say, to his whole life and history, and especially with regard to the psychic and social factors of his being. Our sole aim and ideal must lie, therefore, in human perfectionment (since it is to this end that the social process as realised in the individual converges). And while we are justified in believing that this will be attained through social amelioration, it is not after this exclusively that we are necessarily striving.

It is precisely here, as it seems to me, that the specifically religious attitude of to-day must be distinguished from those movements, political and social, whose avowed ends are material and intellectual merely. Whereas

these offer various inducements of one kind and another which may be the means of appealing to the egoistic sentiment, it should be otherwise from the standpoint which we are considering. Here, we leave no room for any theory of enlightened "self-interest." We have no bargain to make with man. Nor is our attitude consistent with anything short of unconditional surrender to the dictates of the moral consciousness and reason. We propose no material recompense, nor is our attitude in keeping with the theory that any such inducement can be necessary or possible even.

On the face of it, this attitude involves a worthier conception of man, which leads us to regard him, not as a weak, frail, and depraved being that, in order to be influenced to do right, must needs be bribed by thoughts of present or future rewards; but as a being capable of living up to an ideal standard of duty, and, in doing so, of realising the highest that is in him. It is this fact, I would say, that this age is discovering in innumerable ways: that men can, of their own accord, and

by mutual help, discern right from wrong, and, thus knowing, are endowed with the power of performing the good. Hence the modern spirit would exhort us not only to make our religion as our life, but our life our religion.

Before proceeding further, I would take occasion to speak of some few of the agencies by means of which the religion of to-day is being realised. And, in the first place, let me briefly allude to the function of science in this respect. How infinitely more effective, religiously and morally speaking, is science than theology! Without doubt, science (and more especially the scientific habit of mind) has done more to promote the interests of modern ethical culture than any other thing. Not only has it revolutionised our standpoint; not only has it extended and ennobled our conception of human worth and dignity; not only has it enhanced the value of human life a thousandfold; not only has it thrown much-needed light upon the origin and nature of man: it has also actually induced, in its votaries at least, one real moral

virtue which, but for it, could never have existed. I mean that strict and uncompromising regard for veracity and truth, that intellectual sincerity, which, prior to the scientific era, was all but unheard of. Well might Huxley write, "The man of science has learned to believe in justification, not by faith, but by verification." Science establishes a new ideal. The test which it proposes is wholly new: it rests upon an utterly different theory of truth, upon the value of individual experiment and first-hand knowledge (as distinguished from that of authority). Where, in the pre-scientific view of life (Christian or otherwise) can we find so much as the mere mention made of the habit of strict intellectual impartiality? And how, but for that, can we acquire an attitude consistent with the spirit of our age?

The gain—the moral, the *religious* gain—accruing to the age has been incalculable. And it is to science that we must award the palm for this.

Science, as I say, has also been the means of fostering a truer conception of human worth.

Not only has it been the means of prolonging life, by the discovery of the laws of hygiene and sanitation, it has increased the value of life as well. How little we realise the comparative comfort of life to-day. Science is such a commonplace affair that we hardly think it worth while to give it so much as a thought.

I cannot delay to speak at length upon this point. But let me allude to just one thing: the discovery of anæsthetics. Pain and suffering must, in the nature of things, fall to the lot of man; but, thanks to the human heart by which we live, sympathy with suffering is scarcely less natural. And, under anæsthetics, how easily, how beautifully, the relief of such suffering is accomplished! Take the discovery of "laughing gas." What reason we modern sufferers from the agonies of toothache have to bless the memory of Sir Humphrey Davy! Two other names which deserve to go into our modern gallery of saints and saviours are those of Dr Martin and Dr Jackson, who discovered the anæsthetic properties of ether. And we have the greater reason to be grateful to such men

when we remember the overwhelming odds against the acceptance of their discovery. Even sixty years ago, the world was not so well prepared for the discoveries of science as it is to-day. And, at any rate by a large section of the community, such discoveries were not only resented, but greeted with howls of execration. Just as, in the days of Jenner, the clergy protested against vaccination, so it was when later the properties of anæsthetics were discovered. "What right have we," one clergyman indignantly inquired, "to say to our brother man—Let go thy hold upon that noble capacity of thought and reason with which God hath endowed thee, to become a trembling coward before the presence of mere bodily pain?" And another talked of chloroform as "a decoy of Satan, apparently offering itself to bless women, but in the end it will harden and rob God of the deep, earnest cries that should rise to Him in time of trouble for help."

The ingenuity of such objections is only equalled by their inhumanity. When we come to think of it, for how much of our moral

susceptibility we have to praise and bless the holy name of science!

How wondrously science has succeeded in appealing to our humanity! But for science we might still be the abject believers in "original sin." Until the era of Darwin, the social offender was assumed to be tainted by inherited "depravity," and, in consequence, no means of torture that could be devised in punishing him, if only with a view to minimise his chances of suffering hereafter, were too terrible. But what has science done? Not only has it shown us that such depravity exists only in the theological imagination, and that the delinquent is merely a reversion to a primitive type, or the victim, rather than the originator, of evil; it has also brought home to us our collective responsibility in dealing with him. Realising, as we now do, the enormous importance of environment; recognising, as we must, the absolute approximation and parallelism of mind and body, how are we to deal with the criminal and vicious? Obviously, our duty is not to punish, but to reform them. And to that end,

what is called for is the entire reformation of our social and penal systems.

And what science enables us to do in this direction, it will accomplish also in others. And, when one comes to think of it, what a gigantic task is in store for it! Think, for all our enlightenment, how much yet remains to be done: not only of the grievously unjust laws that must be repealed, but of the mass of error, ignorance, and prejudice that must be combated and refuted.

By way of furnishing an example, one may call to mind the iniquitous arrangements which are involved in our present commercial and industrial systems. Here, it is clear, there is the most urgent call for social and moral reformation. And wherefore? we may ask. Is it because men's hearts are so desperately wicked, or because these departments of life lie beyond human control and governance? By no means. Here, obviously, what is needed more than anything is a serviceably scientific conception of society. At present our industrial disorders suggest that society has scarcely emerged from

its infancy. Wherefore, instead of thinking of ourselves as members one of another, whose mutual interests must be served in the relations of industry and commerce, we are infected with the mischievous delusion that, in order to succeed, we must compete against everybody else. What we need is, to ask ourselves how any member of the community can be advantaged so long as he lives at the expense of another, or how a community that tolerates the present cut-throat system of trade can expect to thrive. Surely it must be clear that such an unscientific system is condemned. Until a better economic conception is attained, we cannot hope to effect a change.

And this fact, which argues that we have, at the present time, a highly defective standard of social equity, shows us that it is, after all, *ethics* and *conduct* which are of the most fundamental nature in life, whether individual or social. On orthodox religious grounds, people may still submit to the present social anomalies and abuses, either because they affect to think that they are "divinely ordained," or because their

religion affords them no practical principle of life. But once let them get to the bedrock of social ethics, and an entirely different conviction must be reached. This, at all events, must enable us to see that not only is Man the creator of the system under which he consents to live, but that it is incumbent upon him to employ every means in his power to remedy such defects as disqualify him from fulfilling his obligations to his fellows. Knowing this, and failing to initiate the needed reform, he stands convicted of the most heinous offence of which he can be guilty.

Practically speaking, it will of course be said that but little scope is afforded the individual of effecting the changes of which he is conscious society is in need. There is, no doubt, much truth in this ; but, at least, our wider outlook to-day is enabling us to approach these questions in a spirit that was formerly impossible. As yet, little enthusiasm may be exhibited upon such matters. Only here and there are persons to be found who, willing to be known as "cranks" and "fanatics," are ready to exert themselves

on behalf of the new order. But notwithstanding, on all hands, the time is ripe for much-needed converse and debate upon such problems. And it remains for all who have the welfare of mankind at heart to approach these questions in a serious spirit, and, having devoted such study to them as will qualify them to reach some conclusion, initiate discussions whenever it may be possible.

It is, no doubt, little enough that the best of us can accomplish at any time. But, at least, we may take heart, seeing how much has already been accomplished. When one realises how accessible the best literature is to men to-day, and one sees further the astonishing rapidity with which the masses are beginning to realise the necessity for forming opinions of their own upon progressive questions, as is clear from the growth of the innumerable experiments in collective organisation and thought to-day, one has good reason for hoping for the best. Upon the surface, there may seem to be endless diversity; superficially speaking, one may witness the lack of a common aim and object. But, as

long as things proceed as they are proceeding, we need not despair. From the enthusiasm which is aroused a sense of unity will yet arise, and we, even we ourselves, may do somewhat to achieve it.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW VIEW OF IMMORTALITY

A FUTURE existence for mankind still awaits practical demonstration. Such a life, no doubt, for not a few, is a matter of sincere and genuine belief; and for a good many, I suppose, the prospect that such a thought holds out appears as one of the most glorious and inspiring possibilities that religion can offer them. But, notwithstanding this, a future life for man cannot be said up to the present time to have received any such confirmation at the hands of scientific inquirers as can alone make it a matter of positive certainty.

Many persons are to be found, however, who, though perfectly willing to acknowledge the unsatisfactory state of human knowledge upon this subject, would not only retain such a

belief as an article of their religious faith : they would also assure us that such a belief is necessary, indispensable even, to man ; that it is vital and essential to his spiritual interests ; and that if he were ever to be deprived of it, his belief in the moral government of the universe must speedily vanish, and that with the most deplorable and disastrous of consequences.

The opinion, I believe, is still naïvely cherished by many, that, without another one to supplement it, this life must remain, at least in most respects, inexplicable to us ; and that, unless we have recourse to some theory of a hereafter, in which all the seeming inequalities, defects, and shortcomings of the present are to be rectified, balanced, and readjusted, our faith in the nature of Justice must forthwith undergo an appreciable decline.

At the first blush, it would certainly appear as though this belief were morally justifiable, and that the mature experience of mankind tended to support its adoption. In the first place, the fact that the belief in the soul's

survival is itself a comparatively recent one is a distinct point in its favour. And secondly, that the acceptance of this belief has generally corresponded with an advance in man's ethical conceptions, cannot lead us to dismiss it as wholly irrelevant to the problem of ethics. A connection with man's practical conduct such a belief may very well have had. In his volume, *Science and a Future Life*, Mr Frederick W. H. Myers calls attention to this fact. "So long," he says, "as the earthly prosperity of the righteous was held sufficient to prove the moral government of the world, man's destiny after death might remain an open field for primitive questionings. But when earthly justice was too plainly seen to fail, then the doctrine of future reward and punishment became necessary in order to justify the ways of God to men." Obviously, the problem of a future state in itself would be a matter of indifference to mankind. In consequence, however, of man's moral aspirations, his abiding sense of an ultimate justice, and his inability to square the facts of life with his ideal, such a problem

would naturally acquire an intense significance for him. In the past, at any rate, this must certainly have been so.

The course of the evolution of this belief is clearly indicated in the historic development of mankind. It is exceedingly visible in the Jewish Scriptures. Thus, in the books of the Old Testament, little is said as to the future abode of the soul ; and there are many passages that justify the assumption that no such idea as a future state for it was familiar to the primitive Jewish mind. Among the Israelites the prevailing opinion seems to have been that material well-being was mainly, if not exclusively, contingent upon one thing, viz., the observance of the Divine ordinances which were proclaimed on behalf of Jehovah by his servant Moses. To do well was to prosper ; whereas, to rebel against the decrees of the Almighty was to forfeit the right to his providential care. So that, in one place, the Psalmist, jealous for the supremacy of the Lord, is prompted to utter the fervent exclamation : "I have been young and now am old ; yet have I not seen the

righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Whereas, later on, in the New Testament, a totally different view seems to have been reached. Here, material prosperity is no longer interpreted as affording especial proof of Divine favour. On the contrary, it is rather to the poor, the despised, the unfortunate, and the outcast that the message of Christianity is addressed. *They* it is who are singled out as the recipients of Divine beatitude, and in return for their tribulation, poverty, and affliction, recompense shall be made to them in an after, an invisible, world.

One cannot, I think, presume to disregard the immense significance of these two conceptions ; nor can one, I think, fail to see how immeasurably superior is the latter. It is true that the outcome of this doctrine has not been without its defects, and that it has both tended to make suffering and privation the objects of especial sanctity, and to minimise rather than augment human responsibility, instead of favouring social justice. But, on the other hand, such a conception has undoubtedly

possessed this advantage, that, in holding out hopes of ultimate felicity to the unfortunate and oppressed, it has tended to emphasise one thing : *the outstanding worth of man's soul in contradistinction to the value of his possessions.* And, by conferring upon the rejected and despised the chance of ultimate deliverance, Christianity has prepared the way for a complete revolution in our theory of the moral government of the world. Outward prosperity is not necessarily identical with inward merit, any more than visible degradation implies inherent worthlessness. The reward of virtue lies not so much in the visible world—in the things that "took the eye and had the price"—as in the things which are invisible, and which lie beyond human ken. Grossly materialised as such a conception has been, its promulgation has at least signalised an advance—a mighty, an astounding advance—upon the popular pre-existing theories.

It is still asserted sometimes that morals rest upon religion ; and to judge by such an illustration nothing would seem to be truer. Very

evidently our ethical conceptions have been modified and extended by such a doctrine. The relation, however, of morality to religion is often disputed, and on closer inspection we may readily discover that the twain have in fact an independent basis.

Historic study convinces us that, however much morality may appear to derive from religion, yet it has at the same time its own appropriate foundation. Thus, if by religion we mean the belief in God and the immortality of the soul, it cannot possibly be affirmed that morals and conduct are fundamentally religious, in the accepted sense, for whereas morality in its higher forms acquires a religious aspect, religion is not originally ethical. The gods, as often as not, have proved singularly indifferent to the moral side of men's conduct. Nor could it well have been otherwise: since for their origin we must go to the remotest antiquity, to the most barbaric period of the past. The moral ideas, however, it is plain had no such derivation: they can have had but one field for their origin: man's social

life and human relations. And it was only later, under the influence of social institutions, that moral qualities, as they came to have a social value, were ascribed to the gods. This, naturally, tended to have one effect: that of gradually bringing the gods more and more into touch with human aims and affairs. Until, from polytheism, ancestor worship and the like, by way of monotheism, we gradually reach the ideal of Humanism, in which all that is judged deific ceases to be identified with a supernatural personage, and is seen to culminate in man. In his remarkable work, *The Philosophy of Religion*, Professor Höffding remarks, "Ethical feeling develops in the struggle for life, in the struggle of the individual, but more especially in the struggle of the family, of the class, and of the nation for existence. In the course of this struggle men discover the value of virtue and love. This experience cannot fail to exert an influence on religious ideas. . . . Not till men have discovered ethical problems in practical life and have developed an ethical feeling, not till then can the gods assume an ethical character."

Surprise has frequently been experienced at the lofty moral tone of some of the so-called "heathen" moralists, who (in spite of their indifference to the popular religions) have praised and practised virtue. But when we remember Professor Höffding's words, and that the ethical life of men took its rise, not in revelation, but in experience, the explanation is perfectly simple and intelligible. Morals are not necessarily, and certainly not essentially, religious.

But, true as this is, we must still admit that, at all stages of religious and moral development, a certain connection, and sometimes an intimate one, is found to exist between religion and ethical beliefs and theories. Thus, on the one hand, nothing can be clearer than that an enlightened moral conception has been the means of transforming countless religious opinions. We see this going on to-day, in the movements which are styled as "Modernism" and the "New Theology." And similar attempts at religious reconstruction, which were inspired by more exalted ethical conceptions, were introduced in his day by Plato. While, on the

other hand, religion has no less profoundly reacted upon morality, as when, for instance, it has supplied men with supernatural sanctions, which have tended to enforce moral conduct with a greater chance of success. But true as this is, the provinces of Ethics and Religion are distinct. And upon inquiry, it is clear, at any rate to-day, that moral conduct is in no wise dependent upon religious theories.

The case to which I have just alluded, the institution of an after-life for Humanity, points to one instance in which religious belief has undoubtedly modified man's moral conceptions, and so profound is the modification, and in many respects so relatively elevated is it, that one may well pause to ask whether such a belief is not still indispensable to our moral theories. "Is a future life *not* indispensable to a belief in Justice?" Many, I venture to believe, would make answer in an unequivocal affirmative.

Let us examine this theory a little, in the light of present-day experience. And, first of all, let us ask ourselves to what extent the

theory of an after-life actually weighs with men, practically speaking.

For my own part, I cannot think that, for the majority of mortals to-day, the theory of a future life has an appreciably potent appeal. In the churches, of course, such a view is still maintained, with the most exemplary consistency. And, so far as we may judge, numbers of men and women are still unconvinced of the unreality of the attitude which the profession of such a doctrine tends to encourage. There may be, however, some excuse for this; inasmuch as immemorial custom has so habituated us to the idea of a supernatural future state that the incongruity of the position actually involved almost escapes notice. Moreover, there would apparently be the most excellent reasons for retaining this view, or at least the pleasanter of the two alternatives which it suggests. In the first place, we should be told that even if the terror of hell no longer deters the evil-doer, the hope of heaven must be retained, if only as a concession to human weakness and to provide men with an additional

incentive to well-doing. And secondly, such a thought must be kept in view for the sake of vindicating the claims of infinite Justice. Without such a programme, it is said, a theory of the "Justice of things" is impossible. Retain it, however, and you not only supply men with an inducement to well-doing: you reconcile them to the apparent injustice and contradiction of life as well.

To judge from my own somewhat limited experience, I should not say that the hope of heaven actually operated very much more successfully than the dread of hell. And for this very evident reason: that so far as one is able to decide, the practical experience of men to-day (whatever it may have been in the past), so far from lending it plausibility, so far from encouraging the spirit of "other-worldliness," has precisely the contrary effect. All our interests, so far as one can discover, tend more and more to centre upon the life of to-day, as it is actually perceived and felt. And, naturally, with the overwhelming multiplicity of such interests (many of which are

inevitably entailed by the exigencies of modern life), whatever tends to divert the mind from such affairs is instantly set aside and dismissed. The thought of death, therefore, is naturally excluded from the mind. By most people this thought would be regarded as superfluous, if not as morbid and unhealthy. And very rightly so. But, on this very account, it also follows that the notion of an after state comparatively seldom disturbs men. "Unless," says Dr F. C. S. Schiller, in his brilliant volume of essays on *Humanism*, "men think constantly of death, they have no occasion to think of a future life. And, as a matter of fact, there seems to be the same dearth of tangible and indisputable evidence to attest the existence of a wide-spread pre-occupation with the possibility of a future life." There certainly does. One would not wish, in approaching such a subject, to appear to be guilty of flippancy, nor unmindful of the magnitude of the problem in the eyes of many. There are times, I am constrained to allow, when the thought, the hope, the yearning for survival beyond the

grave does come to one, and that with an extraordinary vividness. But, after all, how does it come? Does it present itself as a rational, ethical, and social desire? Or is it not rather one of those intense personal emotions, which we realise it is our duty to regulate and suppress, lest they overwhelm us and unfit us for our practical duties? I am not unmindful of the fact that this thought links itself with that of our beloved, whose presence haunts us only in the realms of memory. For that reason, the desire must sometimes be very precious and tender. But, for all that, in our most active moments, how is it? Is it not true that for all our occasional yearnings for a world to come, the sense of the world that is, the life that is, is a thousand times more vivid and intense? Let us be sincere with ourselves. Let us watch ourselves. And let us see which yields the more practical results.

Facts are stubborn things. We can never quite get away from them: and though I admit there are moments when our moods invite us "to feign a bliss of doubtful future date," who,

if it came to the point, would willingly exchange his lot, with all the ills with which he is familiar, for another *post-mortem* state of unimaginable splendour? For all our sentiment, it is to me perfectly evident that we are all of us imbued at heart with the same unalterable conviction, viz., that if this is not, indeed, the best of all possible worlds, at least it is a very tolerable place, and that it is our business to make the best use of it we know—for as protracted a period as we may. A tale (which is quoted by Dr Schiller) is related of Mr Myers, who happened one day to ask a certain elderly churchwarden what would become of him after his decease. After considerable reflection, the worthy old gentleman replied that he supposed that he would enter into eternal bliss, but he did wish that Mr Myers would not broach such depressing topics. This story is paralleled by another, which occurs to my mind. An aged divine was, on one occasion, asked by an acquaintance about the health of his wife. His reply was as follows: "I regret to inform you that my wife is in heaven."

Ludicrous as they appear, we cannot help feeling that such replies are typical. So far as one can gather, however it may have been at a former age, nowadays very little serious concern is exhibited as to the after-life. It is in this life, it is here, amidst all the interests and problems of to-day, that our spiritual centre of gravity is realised to be. And at best, our entrance into a higher sphere is therefore regarded in the light of a doubtful boon ; while at worst, I should say, such a thought is little more than meaningless to many. For, supposing the existence of such a state were granted, how should we proceed to picture it ? How, as Huxley inquired, can we conceive of our personality as a thing apart from the phenomena of life ? In endeavouring to form such a conception, all that we discover is, that we are hypostatising a word ; and, as Huxley adds, it alters nothing, if, with Fichte, we assume the Universe to be nothing but a manifestation of ourselves. In truth, it is scarcely to be wondered at that men should exhibit indifference to the problem. For, save

for the testimony of tradition, what assurance have they received of the life to come?

To any thinking man, nothing can possibly be clearer than that the insoluble nature of this problem has rendered it, for all practical purposes, outside the province of serious consideration. Else, let me ask you, why is it that no state has troubled to investigate the whereabouts of the souls of its citizens after death? Why, if we are so mightily exercised about this question for the sake of our spiritual needs, have we not appointed a Royal Commission—composed, let us say, of Sir Oliver Lodge, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, Father Vaughan, the Bishop of London, and General Booth—to inquire into the future chances of the survival of the departed and report to us upon the result? The inference is obvious. Neither individually nor collectively do we find people anxious to settle the question. And so little disposed, indeed, are even those who might fairly be assumed to be specialists upon the subject to reach any final conclusion upon it, that we may well dismiss the matter for all

practical purposes. Thus, supposing that some of the eminent gentlemen whom I have just mentioned were to be approached to sit on such a commission—do you think that they would be so very willing to close with the offer? I doubt it! Unless such an inquiry were calculated to confirm their respective *theological opinions*, we may be very well sure that they would politely intimate that they would rather remain as they are, in possession of *their faith*. The reason is very evident: such *faith* is much more convenient than any actual knowledge upon the subject would be, since it leaves them at perfect liberty to pursue their practical avocations without bestowing too great attention upon the "hereafter." The question, thus viewed, I admit presents a rather startling conclusion, which is completely at variance with the accepted view. But really to realise how profoundly typical of our age it is, we need only bear this one fact in mind: that the only society that has made it its business to seriously investigate the question of man's survival—the Society of Psychical Research—has

a membership, roughly, of some 1500 persons. This yields a sum of about £2000 per annum. It seems scarcely credible, as Dr Schiller points out, that the present age should be interested in its chances of surviving death only to the extent of £2000 annually. But such is a fact, and I know of no better way of getting at facts than by testing their commercial value. Such is the plain truth. And if it could be maintained that sum really represented the moral conviction of this age, all I can say is, we might well be apprehensive of the spiritual condition of man. If people only trouble themselves to the extent of £2000 about the moral government of the world, it must be a deplorable thing indeed.

But, evidently, this lack of interest in such a question has no bearing whatever upon our problem. Obviously, belief in the supernatural (or so-called supernatural) has no necessary connection with moral feeling, and, if proof of this were needed, the spirit of our time affords the most unmistakable confirmation of the fact. For, in spite of the wane of orthodox beliefs

as to the hereafter—and in spite also of the intellectual indifference of the majority of men as to the ultimate destination of the soul—the moral conviction of men is to-day as great as, if not greater than, ever it was.

I do not propose to adduce evidence in support of this assertion. We have but to study the plain facts of the matter, and judge for ourselves. Things, it is true, are still far from satisfactory : men and women are, for the most part, far from being what they might be. But, admitting this fact, what is the one outstanding feature of the age ? I would characterise it as this : the dawn of a newer and a truer faith : the faith in Man—the unalterable belief, the conviction, that however untoward events may appear, no matter how hopeless, forlorn, and degraded life may seem—there is yet something there, something *in mankind*, that is worth while appealing to : something that is good, something that is worth getting at, if only we can find it.

Our outlook to-day is very greatly, perhaps almost entirely, naturalistic, humanistic. We

have lost much of our theological bias. But have we suffered in consequence? Sometimes, it is true, we may detect the universal want of some great ideal — the lack of a high and serious purpose, such as the old faith could give. Sometimes, too, beside the past, the present seems to be preoccupied with questions having little apparent bearing upon the weightier matters of life. In consequence of which, we are apt to complain of its triviality and shallowness. But, in the main, have things changed for the worse? On the contrary, we know that it is far otherwise: that they have immensely improved: and that, in spite of its innumerable shortcomings, the age, as a whole, compares exceedingly favourably with the past. For all its "frivolity" and "self-seeking," never was a time when the Spirit of Reform was more abroad, or when men were putting their "best foot forward," as they are to-day. And unless morals have an independent basis of their own, how are we to account for it all?

We do not realise the progress of to-day, because, instead of looking at the endeavour,

we simply seek results. Results do not give us an adequate idea of progress. Results may take years to reach, and if they are worth reaching, they almost always do. But think what is necessary to reach them: and then think of the moral effort that is being expended to-day. Think of the splendid stand that is being made by our labour party: of the heroic attempts which are being made to secure the political equality of women: of the high-souled endeavours of our peace-reformers: of the magnificent efforts which are being made to promulgate the truths of science: of the interest which is being taken in educational work, co-operation, rationalism, eugenics, and the like. How rapidly these causes have taken root! And to what must we refer their popularity? First, as it seems to me, to the wane of super-natural prejudices and beliefs, which prevented them from making headway at an earlier epoch; but secondly, and chiefly, to this: the conception of worth, goodness, righteousness, and justice in the heart of man. Unconsciously, we have attained the conviction that we have faith

in and experience of no being or power beyond "the angel heart of man." What such a situation, therefore, points to is, that we are prepared to-day to believe that man is himself the source of all good : and that to proclaim that fact it is necessary to combat the errors, follies, superstitions, and delusions that masquerade as wisdom. We have ceased to seek supernatural guidance. We look no longer for intervention from another sphere. The god we have enthroned, the god we are learning to love, serve, and obey, is the God in our own hearts : the God that we identify with the generous impulses that move us : the God that we find in the noble thoughts that reduce such impulses to wise and beneficent schemes for social regeneration : the God that we ourselves *live* out in the will—the human will—which administers justice in Society.

To means beyond human agency we have ceased to look. It is well. It is upon the providence in ourselves—manipulated by the personal and social forces within and around us—that we rely. And it is only by excluding all supernatural intervention — by excluding all

thoughts of an over-ruling justice in human affairs—that this belief will yield the richest and most fruitful result.

My dear friend, the late Dr Momerie, whose broad-churchism resembled (in many respects) the more liberal creed of to-day—profound thinker though he was—missed the essence of this later outlook. To his mind, personal survival after death was an essential part of man's creed. The individual soul was not a force to be incorporated and spent in the social organism. It was a transcendental phenomenon. He could not realise the great constructive process at work in Society. To his mind, life was so deplorably unequal, so hopelessly imperfect, that unless he had taken refuge in the idea of an omnipotent deity who could hereafter be depended on to afford men the opportunities they lacked here, he would have become a confirmed pessimist. And some of his writings have a pessimistic tone, even as it is.

In the volume of sermons that appeared just after his death, on "Immortality," he tells us that "Immortality is a debt which the Creator

owes us, and which he is in honour bound to pay." If we are not immortal, he thinks, God would be eternally disgraced. Immortality, Dr Momerie says, is man's right ; and God can be a good God, an adorable God, only on condition that he is prepared to confer Immortality upon us. If he is not, then the whole theistic position must collapse.

Honestly, I think it does. In spite of all Dr Momerie's unequalled eloquence, and his matchless metaphysical subtlety, his work seems a piece of special pleading. Why, let us ask, does Dr Momerie really claim this right for men ? In the first place, is it man's right ? Who can tell ? Some of us may wish that it were. Others may be *of opinion* that it is. But, until we have positively ascertained the probability, the likelihood, nay the certainty, of such a thing, how can we talk of it as his right ? We may aspire to immortality. And that aspiration may *almost* amount to an argument in favour of it. But, after all, until we have more data to go upon, shall we not be wise in speaking with caution ? As Huxley tells us, "Our business

is to teach our aspirations to conform themselves to fact, not to try to make facts harmonise with our aspirations." No fact can be higher than Truth—even if that truth means annihilation for the individual soul.

But why, let us ask, does Dr Momerie claim immortality for man? Because he loves man? Because he feels for man? Because he is filled with horror and indignation at the atrocious injustice of things? Is his assumption fundamentally ethical? No: this is not the real reason. On careful analysis, it is clear, Dr Momerie really takes up the line of argument that he does, not for man's sake at all: but because he is anxious, at all costs, to uphold the honour of his *God*—a god that he would have us believe is a god of righteousness; but who, nevertheless, is to act independently of—and at variance with—our highest volitions, needs, and ideals. Surely such a god as this is a complete contradiction!

Dr Momerie's argument, to my mind, signally fails. If he loves man so much, why is he at such pains to plead the cause of a being who,

on his own showing, is responsible for so much misery and suffering? Things as they are, Dr Momerie frankly admits, are wrong. Nor shall the devil be requisitioned to explain their unsatisfactory aspect. Evil is here. God permits, consents to it. Yet—such is Dr Momerie's logic—*if only that God can prepare another state for men hereafter*, he will still be a good God! He will still be entitled to man's love and veneration! Would he? Would a being who permitted sin and suffering here, even if he ordained the most glorious state imaginable for man in another world, be a good god, a worshipful god? I will not go into the question of why suffering is permitted (though, if I am to be candid, I must say that, so far as I can see, it is not God's wisdom that allows it, but man's ignorance and folly). But, assuming that sin and suffering are in the "nature of things," and are "providentially ordained," are we to say that, simply because an almighty being can show his *power* by miraculously creating a heaven *afterwards*, he is therefore a beneficent and good God? Surely not. Surely any being

that could do that should first make an end of the trouble here. Apparently Dr Momerie's god cannot do that. And as he cannot do so, and seemingly never will, whether he exists or not, I deny point-blank that he would be entitled to our worship and love. Evidently, Dr Momerie is vastly more concerned with the reputation of his theism than he is for the welfare of man. And since his theory dishonours all that is most sacred in man, we must abandon it in favour of a more ethical view.

Dr Momerie has a tender heart. He feels that things are wrong. He realises that life is incomplete : and he acknowledges that men are not wholly responsible in all cases for their condition. "Think," he says, "of those to whom the gift of life is almost, if not entirely, worthless. Many of our fellow creatures are sentenced at their very birth to penal servitude. Look at that long procession of weary faces and bowed forms and stunted figures ! They are the people who do nothing but stitch and hammer and dig and toil, and who are rewarded for their work by a wage that just keeps them

alive, just enables them to continue this weary round." "Poor wretches!" he continues, "they know that great things are in the world, that great deeds are doing, in which they can have neither part nor lot. They know—at least they have a vague feeling—that goodness is as much out of their reach as happiness, that there is *something* in them which has never had a chance. Hapless mortals! who die without having really lived."

A terrible picture, truly. But why should the thought of a future life brighten it? Can we persuade ourselves that all this wretchedness and suffering is less real than the joy which *may be* hereafter? And then, again, though *we* may arrange a heaven for these poor folk, of what use is the thought for them, and in what way can it practically influence their lives? Such a thought may indeed have given some of them the hope of a better lot somewhere. But how about the majority—would they have had the heart left to have accepted such a state if it had come to them? Dr Momerie does not like the thought that people should be

condemned to such a lot. "If," he says, "this world be all there is for us, its author is not just. Regarded as a system complete in itself it is riddled through and through with wrong. And yet we cannot bring ourselves to think that it was made by chance, or created by the Devil."

But, you will observe, Dr Momerie quite ignores the real contributory causes to the evil; or rather he tries to evade this point by making his god answerable for them; and *he never suspects the blasphemy of which he is guilty.* Nor does he see the limited power of such a god as he acknowledges. Because, what he assumes is, that as things are now, so they must ever remain. *Only a future life can set them straight!* Only *then* God will get it his own way. A rather curious view, when one thinks of it: that the only guarantee of a blissful hereafter is a bad world as a start! The after-life is *needed* just because things are so bad here!

The thought that God was to be held answerable for the inequalities of life has saddened many a theologian. And, in many cases, it has

driven the wisest men to despair and to take refuge in the maddest of insane delusions for the after-state. I do not myself know whether such speculations are wrong. There may, indeed, be an after-state. Personally, I, for one, hope that there is. For I will not pretend that the possibility of my own survival has no significance for me. But, in any case, let me say this in regard to it—that I should prefer to participate in such a state only on one condition : that I had somehow helped to create and fashion it with my own will. Whether this aspiration is an argument in favour of *Karma*, I scarcely know. But, at least, it proceeds from the conviction that I have no right to inherit aught that I have not first helped to produce.

Of one thing, it is clear, this age is convinced : it is not looking for a heaven beyond the clouds. And it is right. For such a heaven it has no use : nor does such a heaven want it. We want our heaven to be here first or nowhere. And in craving for such a heaven, we are acting in obedience to a divine instinct implanted within us. For it is here that heaven is most

needed—where the suffering and the toiling and the downhearted can enter in and share it with us. The problem, then, for us is: must they wait until they die before that heaven comes, or can we not do something to enable them to realise it now?

The god of theology, it is clear, cannot give us this heaven. Faith and prayer alone will not confer it upon us. Only on one condition can such a heaven be achieved: that we are prepared to work for it, by the performance of duty, directed to the service of man.

"Higher than the question of our duration," says Emerson, "is the question of our deserving. Immortality will come to such as are fit for it, and he who would be a great soul in the future must be a great soul now."

To conclude that immortality is ours were to claim too much for man. But, in doing the things that are themselves immortal, it may at least be that man achieves somewhat which is itself beyond all temporality: Eternal and destined to endure when all else shall have passed and faded away.

CHAPTER III

ETERNAL HOPE: SALVATION FOR ALL

My title is significant, and principally for this reason: that it serves to remind us how far—how extraordinarily, inconceivably far—we have travelled, intellectually and morally speaking, of recent times. It is with us, as Emerson, prophet that he was, so truly proclaimed: "Life is ahead of theology, and the people have known more than the preachers have taught." The fact, perhaps, is insufficiently realised even to-day, in spite of our culture and enlightenment—else it were impossible to account for the tardy recognition which is accorded the newer religious conceptions which are gradually superseding those that have already become wholly or partially obsolete. That life is ahead of theology, I take it, very few persons would

be prepared to dispute. Yet how many of us consider the far-reaching implication of such a declaration ? Only a survey of our religious life and thought, as we may view it at this time, by the contrast which it affords us with the past, can bring home to us the silent revolution that has been accomplished.

The present case turns out, upon inquiry, to be an entirely typical one. Time was, and that until comparatively recently, when a belief in the possibility—nay the certainty—of eternal damnation was contemplated with no little equanimity or favour by a considerable section of the religious community. Even within our own memory—or at least the memory of many of us—the prospect of impending torments in hell constituted a conspicuous feature of the spiritual philosophy and discourses of many leading divines of diverse denominations. And I doubt not that some whose eye may alight upon these pages will be able to recall to their mind the period of unspeakable anguish and terror through which they passed, when, as children, they dwelt upon the tortures which

they were told awaited the wicked. Happily, however, all this is a thing of the past. Times have changed. And of all the changes that our thought has undergone, that affecting the spiritual destiny of mankind is by far the most conspicuous and important. Here and there, it is true, the remnant of such a belief continues to survive, though in a somewhat modified form. Nonetheless, it is clear that it has long ceased to have the serious significance for us that it had for an earlier generation. Our religious outlook, considered as a whole, has irrevocably altered. From a thing of dread and gloom, it has assumed an aspect rather of gladness and joy. And as it has identified itself rather with the province of knowledge and experience, so it has lost much of the morbid element that surrounded it so long as it was associated merely with our entrance into an unknown futurity. Shorn of its exclusively supernatural significance, therefore, the idea of death has gradually dissociated itself in our minds from the horrors with which it was once inseparably connected. And, as this has been

accomplished, life has as surely acquired an altogether unsuspected significance and meaning for us.

Some little time ago I happened to be engaged in conversation with a medical friend of wide experience, who was in charge of a private insane asylum. And, our remarks turning in the direction of religious matters, he assured me that, so far as his own experience went, cases of religious mania were now far less common than formerly. At that time very few inmates of his asylum were suffering from "religious" despair. So far as one is in a position to decide, the truth of his statement is amply borne out in one's own experience. Evidently, from what one sees, the great majority of people are not especially solicitous as to their future destination. Explain it as we may, it is clear that we have evidence, on all hands, of an intensified preoccupation rather with problems that involve the life of the world that is. And certainly among the more cultured and representative thinkers there is an ever-growing predisposition to confine their attention to

practical, rather than speculative, questions. At one time, no doubt, such a question as that which we are considering must have appeared intensely practical in its consequences. That, however, it is obviously felt, is so no longer. Hence it is to social and ethical problems, rather than to those which provide a theological interest, that we find the public mind gravitating.

I am not sure that a single rational or thinking person to-day could be found who would cling to the doctrine of hell, as that doctrine was originally and literally understood. The belief, no doubt, is still sometimes supposed to be efficacious, and we occasionally encounter persons who would argue for its retention on the ground that it must act as a deterrent to wrong doing. Whether it be true or not, it is said, the dread of future punishment, supernaturally administered, cannot fail to be without its usefulness for evil-doers : but for such a belief, many men would be led to pursue vicious and demoralising courses. Remove the appeal to the fear of the consequences of evil in an after life, and you must thereby deprive the machinery

of religion of one of its most potent and effective auxiliaries.

But, for my own part (and I am sure that I speak for others as well as myself), I do not think that any but the shallowest and least thinking of persons would resort to such a preposterous argument. Obviously, such a belief, even if it were retained, must ultimately defeat its own ends—or what we now conceive the ends of religion to be.

Supposing that such a theory were to be retained from motives of expediency, it could answer only if the sinner were first convinced of the existence of an after-state. Whereas, as we know full well, in many cases where its acceptance might seem to be most desirable, such a state is denied point-blank. So far as one can see, however, there is no direct or absolute connection whatsoever between the theory of a future state and the leading of a life that merits in any sense the designation of religious.

But putting aside such an unworthy plea, I would urge that to propose to retain the belief

in hell (unless, of course, it could be established as a fact of observation and knowledge) must be unhesitatingly rejected on ethical grounds alone. And for this reason : that its acceptance, even where it might seem most successful, must necessarily be otherwise—in that it must entail rather mental anguish than moral advantage to a man.

How, let me ask you, can any man, by seeking merely to escape future misery, be said to act from a praiseworthy and becoming motive ? *And is not the motive everything ?* How, by striking terror into his heart, can we hope to foster and encourage in a man admiration and love for the moral ideal—or how, by telling him that he has simply to avoid pain and suffering, can it be that we augment and strengthen the sentiment within him, which would love and execute the Right for its own sake ?

I say, in all sincerity, that the whole conception of hell is incongruous and absurd. And the abandonment of this belief in itself proves the tremendous advance which we have made

in our religious thought. Doubtless, many estimable and worthy persons have enjoyed such a belief; but, so far as one can see, a belief in the possibility of hell need involve no ethical conception whatsoever. It may simply coincide, as it not infrequently appears to do, with a spirit of extreme self-righteousness. One has in mind the historic example of the old Scots-woman, who on a certain memorable occasion delivered herself of the pious reflection that she was terribly afraid "that all the members of the Kirk were destined to perdition—with the possible exception of the minister and herself"; and on second thoughts she was constrained to add that she entertained no very sanguine assurance of the minister's spiritual prospects. The illustration almost amounts to a parable. In other words, what is clear is this: that, except in the case of the morbid-minded, such a theory is far more likely to be applied, when it is held at all, to others, than to oneself. It is in the nature of man to live in hopes; and personal religion, if embraced at all, means something more than a theory of damnation.

To be religious almost means that one is to be reckoned among the salt of the earth. And I would say that this instinctive belief in one's own ultimate safety is one of the first-fruits of spiritual experience. Even our old Scotswoman was not denied this. As far as her lights carried her, she was truly religious, and she alighted on a clumsy theory which seemed to her to justify her assurance of salvation. We cannot blame her for thinking that she was worthy of salvation. Her only mistake, perhaps, consisted in too hastily assuming that others could not enjoy the same felicitous privilege as herself. Her heaven, no doubt, was a narrow one. She evidently interpreted salvation in a somewhat peculiar fashion. But that does not greatly signify. What does signify, what I am anxious to show, is, that she was certain she would somehow survive and secure an immortal part in the scheme of things. That is what, I believe, all people in their heart of hearts believe too—if only they will come to think about it. Who, having satisfied himself that he is a living fact, can conceive of ultimate

extinction? Who believes that *he*, at any rate, is on the road to damnation? It is almost unthinkable. There is in man, in every man I believe—however good, bad, or indifferent he may be—an ineradicable, unassailable conviction that he is, in some sense at least, immortal, imperishable, and undying. Nor can he persuade himself that, so long as life remains to him, there will be no chance for him to attain or achieve immortality, in some form or another.

Fortunately, however, the spiritual optimism of to-day has a wider and less exclusive application than it had. We are dropping half of our old Scotswoman's theory. Bigotry, intolerance, and Sectarianism are fast becoming things of the past, and along with the decay of our theological prejudices, we are rapidly reaching an ampler, broader, more sympathetic and inclusive standpoint. We are therefore beginning to feel that our distinctions between one man and another are largely artificial and arbitrary, and that these, as often as not, proceed merely from our ignorance and prejudice.

Who, to-day, believes that men are capable of

being classified as either "Sheep" or "Goats"; or that any man, however far he may fall short of being what he should be, is wholly, irreclaimably bad? Nobody. Again, our conception of sin itself has undergone a profound change. It is not that sin is any less sinful. It is not that we believe that wrong can mysteriously be converted into right, or that what has once incurred the divine displeasure can ever win the approval of man. By no means. But our whole attitude has altered. No longer do we regard Sinfulness as "original," as a supernatural taint, transmitted to us from our remote ancestor, Adam. Rather, we view it as a continuance in certain practices and in satisfying certain brute impulses, which have become unlawful simply because we have grown and developed in moral and mental stature. Our moral standards are higher. And curiously enough, this naturalistic mode of interpretation, so far from diminishing the weight and authority of conscience, has lent it additional confirmation and support. But with this difference—that, instead of regarding the consciousness of sin as

being avoidable and undesirable in our spiritual career, we have come to view it as something inseparably connected with man's growth and expansion. For only as we grow, as we learn wisdom, do we become conscious of our moral responsibility and realise our guilt.

With this evolutionary view before us, it is, of course, impossible to retain the old hell in which our fathers believed. And, as time goes on, it must become increasingly evident that the use for it will be still further diminished. More and more, we must realise the practical impossibility of postponing human beatitude or suffering to some future time, or of relegating them beyond the sphere in which the acts that engender them are committed. More and more, as time goes on, must we realise the secret of moral causation—and by that means connect human happiness and misery with the operation of the Moral Law itself—which, according to a man's deeds, recompenses the doer by pronouncing upon him its maledictions or blessings.

We have, I would say, already begun to realise this. And some of us, it is clear, have

reached the unescapable conclusion that the essential and moral aspect of the problem is unaffected by a theory of a distinctively future life at all. Doubtless, in many cases, the question which affects the future of the soul has lost much of its old significance, though, to my mind, the question is one which many people would prefer to leave open. They are not sure how it may be with them afterwards, so they had rather not say. Perhaps they are secretly convinced that they are justified in treating the matter as of secondary importance. In a measure, they may be right. "Higher," as Emerson says, "than the question of our duration, is the question of our deserving." If, as I firmly believe, everything depends, and must depend, ultimately, upon the present: if, as I think, the state of mind and heart and will of a man is the determining factor of his life —and if, as I am also fully persuaded, there is nothing higher nor greater in earth or heaven for him than his volition, and motives, conduct, and character and attitude to his Ethical Ideal —then surely I should be the last person to

quarrel with those who might refuse to dogmatise upon the means whereby any final adjustment might be possible. Such a problem assuredly presents little practical significance.

But if we can thus afford to dispense with such speculations, I cannot think that the terms heaven and hell, or the meanings that we may now assign to them, are wholly destitute of significance. Though it may no longer be possible for us to use these words in the old sense—to regard hell as the penalty of sin, and heaven as the reward of virtue—have these words no meaning for us? I venture to submit that they have. Nay, I would say that their meaning to-day is immeasurably greater than ever it was. For heaven and hell to-day are nigher to us than they were at any previous epoch.

How well those lines of FitzGerald's, from his *Omar Khayyam*, convey the modern conception of heaven and hell:

"I sent my soul through the invisible
Some letter of the after life to spell—
And by and by my soul returned to me
And answered, I myself am heaven and hell."

I myself *am* heaven and hell. Yes, here is the modern view. Heaven and hell are not future states—they are not far distant in time, nor are they remote from us in space. They are not miraculous abodes wherein the righteous and the wicked are to be supernaturally rewarded and punished. Heaven is not to be the reward of well-doing ; hell is not the penalty incurred by evil-doing. No, if they mean anything, heaven *is* well-doing. Hell *is* wickedness.

This dynamic conception of hell and heaven, as states of one's own inner being, gains marvellously by being thus attached to human experience. And assuredly, we could ill afford to dispense with such an impressive interpretation. Ever more and more, it would seem, do we need to apprehend the solemn truth, that, as moral or immoral causes beget identical or similar effects, so virtue or vice can alone be their own reward. Such a realisation it is that enables us to see that man is at once his own star, his judge and deliverer. For, implanted in the human breast, is the Inward Monitor,

that warns, exhorts, and chastens the soul of every man.

I am not sure that there is any need that I should dwell at length upon the reality of hell. There can be no doubt of its existence. It needed no supernatural revelation to acquaint us with such a fact. Nobody who has lived—lived honestly, truly, deeply—who has thought for himself, or felt for others—but believes in hell. Earth and hell interpenetrate—there is no doubt about it. Earth is full of hell—full of mental and moral and social disorders, and wretchedness and suffering. Earth is full of hell—and countless souls are there ; and unless the fires of hell could purge and purify and refine mankind, we might well doubt whether life were worth while.

But they can. Earth is full of hell. But it is not all hell. Indeed, I would say that we realise hell only by that which we oppose to hell. I mean the thought of heaven—and this too exists on earth. And how much we need to keep this thought of heaven with us ! I say *this* thought of heaven, because I must explain

a little what I mean. As I said just now, the heaven of to-day must not be a far-away place, where angelic beings, unlike mortal men, dwell. What we want is a heaven that can be here, that should be here; that might be or can be now; that is peopled with the thoughts and wishes and persons we know and love. A heaven that it is our privilege and duty to create and sustain and make present, and visible and living and tangible, both to others and to ourselves.

I am not, as a rule, enamoured of employing theological terminology. But this word "heaven" is one that I would wish to retain. If we parted with it, we should lose so much. From long association, it has acquired such a vast and wonderful depth of meaning. At one time, no doubt, it stood for a celestial region beyond the skies, where, seated on a throne, the Almighty was supposed to reign, surrounded by thousands of faithful souls, with crowns on their heads and harps in their hands. That, however, is an antiquated conception. Few believe in it to-day. But what have we to

substitute for it? Have we nothing better to hold out to men than that celestial land? Else how can it be that we treat such a picture with levity or amused contempt? Our attitude is clear. We *have* a better heaven with which to replace the old. And if that has been effaced from our imagination, it is but because a fairer and a worthier has come to us; and when we speak of this, we think on this wise: a state of Human association, communion of soul, and love.

At bottom, I hold that the conception of heaven is ethical. Fundamentally, ideally, it should signify the thought, the aspiration, the consciousness, in which all of us who yearn for the perfect—the good, the beautiful, and the true—may be united together and at one. I know of no more beautiful definition of heaven than that which William Morris has given us in his *Dream of John Ball*. "*Fellowship*," he says, "is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon earth it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them, and

the life that is in it, that shall live on and on for ever."

George Eliot, you may remember, puts the same thought in a very similar manner:

> "*So* to live is heaven:
> To make undying music in the world,
> Breathing as beauteous order that controls
> With growing sway the growing life of man."

Why, then, I ask, should we not retain this word, when the thought for which it stands is so essential, so indispensable to, so inseparable from, all that is best and purest and loftiest and noblest and sublimest in man? I say, we need the thought of heaven: the thought which craves all that is noble, brave, and pure, and good: and that seeks out and finds satisfaction in all that is noblest and bravest and purest and best in others. We need the thought—the thought of the unearthly, the imperishable, and the undying. But we must attach this thought to the things and the persons that we already know, and by that effort unite them with us in the bond of perfect fellowship. "*So to live is heaven.*"

This consciousness of a wider bliss—this enlargement of the heart—this opening of the understanding—this deepening sense of tenderness and love—is a mighty and a growing force in our midst. Unconsciously, it is transforming us, and making us better men and women. We are growing into a more spiritualised conception of life. We are being brought into closer relation with each other, and this is why it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to realise the possibility of loss or extinction of any soul. We mean more to each other—we know our mutual worth better.

Our belief in man has become greater. We often hear it said that our belief in God's goodness is greater, and that God in His goodness could not condemn any soul to hell everlastingly. That, certainly, is one way of regarding the problem. But, if you come to think of it in another, that is only a theological way of saying that our belief in man's goodness is greater. It is not so much that we think that God would not destroy the soul of any man, as that we wish to believe there is something immortal,

imperishable, and eternal in every human heart. What a glorious advance this is upon our old belief !—To think that, instead of looking upon man as vile, depraved, and unworthy, we can see in him something that is eternally worthy and beautiful and good !

Has it never struck us that the crudest free-thinker's philosophy may be more spiritual and lofty than that of many an orthodox person ? Yes : I know the orthodox person says he believes in heaven, and would be sorry to abandon the thought of reaching it some day. That may be all very well. But what an infinitely greater thing it is to be able to think life worth while without a thought of one's personal futurity, and to renounce that altogether, if needs be, so long as one is able to make a little of heaven here below ! That is reaching heaven now !

Our instinctive, natural beliefs are generally the best. It is natural, it is right, just to do good for the sake of it. If one comes to think about it, one finds that the old theological belief possessed little ethical utility. At bottom,

for example, the notion that God might damn a man if he chose, involved in reality an anti-social sentiment. It was not really that we thought so much of God after all : it was that we thought so meanly of man. To be sure, it was something to be able to affirm that a soul could be saved, that it was worth saving—though only by supernatural devices. But to assume that it might be lost (and that without deprivation and loss to the human family at large) showed the limitations of the theory upon which the scheme of salvation reposed. In the first place, it put an entirely fictitious estimate upon the soul : it tended to suggest that it might and should live entirely to itself and to God. Whereas, as we now understand it, the soul must live solely through, for, and by others. The old view, one sees, rested upon a fallacy. It put the soul quite outside the natural sphere —beyond the reach of man. In effect, it taught us that we were separable, divisible entities : we did not impinge upon each other. We were of miraculous origin—supernatural products—alien from the world—and accordingly subject

to laws which emanated from another order. But how changed is our view to-day! What do we now believe? This, I take it: that if it is anything at all, the soul is as natural a thing as any other form of existence: that it is brought into manifestation by equally natural and human means—that it is developed and nourished by similar means: by contact with others—by the loving thoughts and tender, considerate actions of those who minister to its needs—and that its highest nature is expressed by those reactions to the world which enable it to perform its ethical and moral and intellectual and social functions.

How much time people waste in discussing the problem of the genesis of the soul! How many invaluable hours they lose in questioning as to its ultimate nature, its appearance, and its destiny! I do not believe that there is any solution for these questions. I do not believe that souls start ready-made into existence. If they exist, if they are to exist, it is man—it is we—who make them! They must be so many elaborations of the same spiritual substance

which inheres in the whole race. This thought is not vulgar blasphemy. It rests upon the conviction that we are all mutually responsible to each other for the state of our souls. Think of it! Not a thought that you and I think—not a word that we utter—not a thing we do—but affects, influences, smites somebody! Are we to say that that influence entails no effect? What force in nature is comparable in potency to the mental and moral force in man? And what, save this, can create, develop, mould, fashion a soul?

I like, I confess it, the thought of Eternal Hope. It brings us, men and women, ideally together—into touch, in fellowship and communion, as it were, with one another—and it seems to suggest to me the thought that we may all share in an immortality which, I verily believe, inheres in the moral universe.

But does such a hope amount to the conviction that Salvation is to be a foregone conclusion? Or does it lead us to hope that we may be saved by the grace of some superhuman power? Assuredly it does not. Surely if immortality is

anything, it is not the free gift of some beneficent deity : it is not something to be counted on, conferred, or left to come of itself. It must be something that is implicit in life—already with us. Something that we are able to realise and achieve, through effort and purpose and endeavour.

If I were asked, I would say that our immortality must be conditional. And unless we realise in what it consists, we can never taste it. Yes, I can almost believe in the possibility of a lost soul. If a man is so indifferent, so dead, to himself, that Society can find no use for him, that soul is as good as lost. Will he really be lost in eternity ? I do not know. He is lost here. What other loss can be so awful ? If we cannot find ourselves here, what chance, do you think, we shall have of finding ourselves anywhere ?

I am not sure—I do not know—whether I, as a separate individual thing, am immortal. And I may tell you that I do not greatly care. But I believe in immortality—I believe, I know, that immortality exists.

Whether my personal centre of being is to endure everlastingly, I cannot tell. But this I do know—that my Greater Self—my relations with others—the family—the State—the Nation—the Brotherhood of Man—will prove immortal. And, because I believe that, I can afford to rest content. I can grow : I can grow into the greater life. No strong soul fears extinction. It will have found itself in others—their life is its life—their wishes, aspirations, and aims are its—and even its highest and best wishes it realises will be fulfilled. So it is at peace.

If we do not realise this, how shall immortality be ours ? If we are ceaselessly striving against it—if we are continually thwarting our highest social and ethical impulses, how can it be that immortality can be attained ? It cannot.

At his death, it was announced that King Leopold of Belgium, having received the rites of the Church, was assured of the safety of his soul. Who shall say whether his confidence was justified ? We cannot tell. *Had he a soul to save ?* That is the point. And have I a

soul? Let everyone ask himself that question first. Have I breathed the atmosphere of purity, faith, joy, and love while I have walked with men? Have I made undying music in the world? Unless I have—what right have I to claim immortality for myself? How shall we get out of life more than we have contributed to it?

"Good," says Seneca, "cannot be lost but by one means only; that is, if it should change itself into evil, which Nature permitteth not, for Virtue and all its works remain incorruptible."

Virtue, and that alone, the Will of the whole, shall endure everlastingly. Only that shall survive that has not forfeited its right to claim kinship with the good and gone to swell the total sum of all that is most excellent.

CHAPTER IV

"AS A LITTLE CHILD"

THE greatest problem that confronts this age—the greatest problem, for that matter, that can confront any age—is that of the child. The tremendous, the overwhelming importance of this problem is not even yet realised as it should be. But it is, at least, beginning to be seen that upon it, very much, if not everything, must ultimately depend. We have every reason to congratulate ourselves that the status of the child should have risen as it has. For, upon reflection, nothing can well be more evident to us than that the child is the most valuable and precious of a nation's assets. Upon it the entire future of the race must some day depend. Into its keeping must ultimately be entrusted all that we have and are.

The test, the supreme test, therefore, of the

greatness of any people must eventually depend upon one fact, and one fact alone : the efficiency of the generation to come. The future of a people is committed exclusively into the hands of posterity. And, such being the case, its security will be possible only in so far as the welfare of its children is assured.

The child, one might truly affirm, is pre-eminently the problem of the hour : the problem of problems. But true as this is, the magnitude of that problem, as well as its wide-reaching significance, has hitherto all but escaped public notice. In a vague, sentimental fashion, it is true, we have felt the child to have certain indefinite claims upon society. But, for the most part, the solution of the problem has been, like so many others, neglected, or entrusted to the few. And in consequence of this it has been left very largely to our parents, teachers, guardians, and philanthropists to solve. The comparative failure on their part to provide any satisfactory solution of the problem has at length had the effect of setting it before us in its present acute and most complex form.

The problem of the child, as I say, has already attracted widespread attention. It is coming to be regarded not only as a legitimate subject for psychological speculation, but as a serious object of social endeavour. For all that, it is not even yet sufficiently in the public eye; and, practically speaking, our theories upon the subject are in the most deplorable conflict with our judgment and experience. There are still a good many people, who, in spite of some elementary knowledge of the world, cherish their time-honoured prejudices, which refuse to yield to the appeal of facts. For such persons such a problem as that which lies before us fails altogether to assume the aspect which it should. For many, even to-day, the child presents no problem whatever. For many —for very many, it is to be feared—it is a matter which we can very well afford to let alone; or which, if it is to be approached at all, must be approached only in the spirit of hesitation and compromise. We have no business, declare some folks, to give such a question undue prominence: to do so can only lead

to the direst of consequences. The parent, we are reminded, is obviously the proper person to deal with the child. And by exciting public sympathy on its behalf, we can only minimise parental responsibility.

To minds of a certain class, this kind of objection appears perfectly conclusive. And I may even go so far myself as to own that I am, up to a certain point, in agreement with those who would advance it. As far as they go, I am with them : the only thing is, they do not go far enough. Parental responsibility is, to be sure, a great and noble thing. And, luckily for us, there are still many parents—as well as those who believe in the duties of parents—who uphold the principle. That, however, let me say, is not the point. Clearly (in spite of the opinions of some) the first duty of Society is not to concern itself with theories, no matter how exalted and ideal these may be. Our first and greatest duty is always to deal with *facts*. And hence it is, though we may have our theories—and very good, sound theories, too—upon the subject of parenthood : these theories,

as theories, must not be suffered to take precedence of concrete, tangible facts—such as, for instance, the fact that we have in the shape of the child.

When, therefore, our critics accuse us of hypersentimentality, we obviously have the right to retort that it is not we, but *they*, who are exposed to such a charge. Doubtless, we must admit that such critics voice the ideals and aspirations of an overwhelming percentage of persons, parents included (many of whom would only too willingly recognise their responsibility to their offspring). But that, after all, is beside the point. Since that ideal is by no means invariably realised, and since, for sundry reasons, its realisation is impracticable under existing conditions, we have at least the right, the moral right, to require that the issues which are raised shall be squarely faced and dealt with. In which circumstances, what clearly emerges is this fact : that our *collective* responsibility in this matter must be said to exceed even *parental* responsibility.

A policy of expediency alone, upon reflection,

would appear to dictate this course. When we come to think about it, no fact should be so enormously important or significant to us as the lives which go to swell our population. And I cannot help thinking that, if only we realised more the dignity and worth of manhood and womanhood for their own sake, we should never call in question the absolute right of Society to deal with the child. It is only because we do not yet realise the sacred value and importance of human life that we are deterred from our duty in this matter. When, however, we once make an effort to reflect upon what is at stake—when we realise the potential worth of our child, and the fact that he will be the man or woman of to-morrow—we may easily reach the conclusion that no sacrifice that we can make (even if it be the sacrifice of a prejudice) can be too great. For the question presents itself—how, unless these little ones are nurtured and tended, can we possibly expect that their lives will yield the rich results that may be theirs? The problem is the more pressing, I hold, inasmuch as the most recent

investigations in experimental psychology point to the unmistakable influence of environment, in one way and another, upon the young mind. This theory alone must, if we are consistent, have the effect of revolutionising our current conceptions of social responsibility. For nothing short of an extended conception of our own social obligations, coupled with prompt and decisive action upon our part, can possibly save the situation. Since we can no longer look for supernatural intervention from without, the only course open to us is to rely upon natural intervention from within. The one great need of our time, I should say, to accomplish this purpose, for us is, to learn to think, not merely in terms of individuals, but in terms of society.

Having offered these few preliminary generalities, let me now pass on to deal with the subject in somewhat greater fulness of detail. And, in doing so, let me proceed to speak, first of all, of the mightiest of the innumerable social forces which are concerned with the evolution of the child : I mean the factor of motherhood.

Somehow, I cannot help thinking that, for all our professed veneration for the glorious ideal of maternity, the practical aspect of this question is sadly overlooked. What, let us ask, are we actually doing to encourage the exercise of the functions of the mother, here in England, for example? What inducement are we offering to our women to perform the most solemn and sacred duties that can possibly be devolving upon any human being—that of becoming a mother?

Oh, yes. We acknowledge the responsibility of the mother. And, as a rule, we do not hesitate to blame her when she neglects her duties. That, no doubt, is all very well. There are bad mothers, who may richly deserve our censure.

But what of the others—the hundreds—thousands—tens of thousands—hundreds of thousands—who are struggling, at all costs, to maintain not only themselves, but their families, and sometimes their husbands as well, on the miserable pittance they are earning? Do we thank them—do we make their lot what it

might be—do we even show the sentiment of gratitude towards them, that we owe them ?

What is being done by Society to-day to enable the mother to fulfil her duties to her child and the state ? Something, certainly. But, surely, little enough. To be sure, there are the benefit societies. Then we find that, in certain cases, meals are being provided, either free or at cost price, to nursing mothers. Dinners are also dispensed, in some cases, to the children. While, in others, infant sterilised milk is obtainable, either free or at the ordinary cost. Also, we have the various clubs and police-aided clothing schemes to school children, our orphanage asylums, crêches, and foundling hospitals, all of which may be said to do useful work. Further, we have our present poor-law system—medical relief for the mothers and their children, and such aid as is rendered to widows with legitimate children, or to the wives of disabled persons who reside in the borough. And, in addition, we have the free education of all children up to the age of fourteen years.

The fact, however, remains that in spite of

the recent progress which has been made in this direction, our present arrangements are far—very far—from being satisfactory. Much is constantly being said about the decline of the birth-rate. And occasionally expressions of consternation and horror are called forth at the terrible prevalence of infantile mortality. Such things may, in truth, very well give us grounds for alarm. But, let us ask ourselves, can we wonder that things should be as they are, while the lot of the mothers remains what it is? The only marvel is that we should have any mothers at all!

Consider, for a moment, the lot of only too many of our wage-earning women. Whether married or single, necessity compels them to toil from morning to night—year in, year out—in order that they may earn sufficient to enable them to command the bare necessaries of life. What is the result? A life of incessant anxiety, hardship, and privation. How can they feel that they can devote themselves to the sacred duties which we should expect of them? How can they possibly consecrate their

lives to the holy office that many of them would choose? Yes: many of them contrive to do so. But see at what sacrifice and cost! and then think how many more are deterred from becoming mothers because, having learned a little worldly wisdom, they know they will be unable to do their duty by themselves and children. And let us ask ourselves: is it right, is it just, that the vocation of child-bearing should be denied to any woman—as it is in this Mammon-worshipping age?

I cannot delay to enter at greater length upon this subject, much as I am tempted to do so; I can but draw attention to the matter. And having done so, I would ask whether, as it stands at present, the lot of the mother is not the vilest stain upon our civilisation? As it is, the mother must inevitably suffer—and she does. But the injury, alas! does not stop there. As the mother suffers, so must the offspring, and which suffers more I do not pretend to say. But the mother, through no fault of her own, bears the blame as well.

From time to time a good deal is said about

the physical deterioration of the masses. Much has been written in the newspapers and elsewhere relative to the decline of our national physique and stamina. But, though we read about such matters, do we really realise, I wonder, what such facts really represent, or what is responsible for them? We read about them in print, or we hear them discussed. But what do the statistics that are produced really tell us? So far as I can see, very little. Such information, no doubt, is exceedingly important from the standpoint of the expert. But most of us are not experts. And to influence us, to influence public opinion, what we want is a better way of bringing home the facts to people. At the present time, I am convinced, we do not realise the facts as they actually are.

We talk about our slums, our alleys, our by-streets, and we very properly avoid passing through them whenever we can. But though we experience this æsthetic repulsion to the sordid, degrading surroundings of so many of our fellow-beings, do we think of the connection

between these environmental factors and their lives ?

Now, I do not think that much good can be got by gloating over the misery of the unfortunate. I would not recommend the pursuit of slumming, even as a moral hobby. (And I believe, by the way, even slumming has become quite a fashionable pastime in certain quarters.) I will merely content myself by saying this : that if we were really better informed upon such matters, if we really understood them as we ought, if we were more absorbed in the interests, needs, aspirations, and lives of other men, these slums would not, could not be. If our faith in Man were what it should be, these back streets, and their owners' profits, would be made an end of, once and for all.

Yes : we shudder as we pass the pale, sickly, stunted mites of humanity that swarm in our gutters. And we sigh as we think of the wretched existence to which an iniquitous system condemns them. But, as we see them, do we realise the loss that their puny, half-starved bodies mean to Society ? Do we realise the

appalling amount of human material which we are squandering annually by our abominable methods? Just think, if you can, what such facts must mean when you come to interpret them in terms of social life!

I do not say, mind, that we never give a thought to these children. We do. We are sorry for them—sincerely sorry. We should like to take them out of the gutters, and place them in the green fields—away from all the filth and mud and smoke. But we cannot. There they are.

Have we ever troubled, however, to think why it is they are there? what they are? of the causal connection between their young lives and the circumstances that have helped to create them?

What are these children? Let us think. They are just so many *effects*. "Very bad, very terrible effects," you say. Yes: I admit it. But not worse, let me add, than the causes which have conspired to render their lives so unattractive. Let us stop a moment. Let us employ our imagination a little. Let us pause

to think of a few of the actual conditions that have been at work to make these young lives what we see them.

We often talk, in a glib kind of way, about the slums and the slum children. But have we really any adequate notion of what the slums are, or of the relation of the slum to the life of its inhabitant? I fear we have not. Our horror of the slum is more often an æsthetic repulsion than a moral or intellectual aversion. Kindly, optimistic people, who would not live in the slums for worlds, often console themselves and others by telling us that people, and little children among them, can be "gloriously happy even in the slums." I do not dispute the fact. I am sure that they can. I am sure anybody can get accustomed in course of time to anything —even to a slum. And the earlier you begin the more likely you will be to be contented with your lot. But let us ask—suppose people *are* happy in the slums, does that make the slums beautiful? No; of course it does not. Do we really wish people to be happy in the slums? Well, I do not for one. And,

speaking from my own standpoint, my only wish is, that all the slum-dwellers here in England could come out in one great body, state their grievance, and refuse to go back to them.

Think what such an environment means—of the overcrowding—of the lack of fresh air, sunlight, and such-like wholesome stimuli to life. When we realise how much the manifestations of the mind depend upon these things, can we wonder at the wholesale suffering and degradation that our present system gives rise to?

Consider the lack of sunlight and fresh air alone. Man, in common with every other living thing, requires not only food, but light, warmth, and air. "Ah! but," says somebody, "*these*, at least, are free—even to slum-dwellers. No one has to pay for them." Think a moment. Look deeper. What *use* has the average slum-dweller for these things? Think of the thousands and thousands of people who are in utter ignorance of the inestimable importance of them, and who not only exist under conditions which render the enjoyment of fresh air and

sunlight practically impossible; but who are actually *in entire ignorance of their value.* Even well-to-do people are not so vastly well-informed in such matters (though they *can* get their servants to clean and open the windows once in a while). But how about some of the toilers?

Think of the workers in our factories—of the mill-operatives. How many of them, do you suppose, have any adequate idea of the importance of fresh air? How should they have? Used as they are to the close, stifling atmosphere of the mill, what wonder if they exhibit (as they often do) a dread of all draught or outside air? Or what wonder if they do all that they can to exclude all ventilation by closing up every crack and crevice of the doors, windows, and chimney through which the air may enter? Think of this, and then think of what it all means. *It is in this poison-laden, pestiferous atmosphere that thousands upon thousands of our puny children annually draw their first breath, and afterwards spend the greater part of their lives.*

Think, again, of the lack of sunlight in these homes: of the dreary, grimy, depressing surroundings which fall to the lot of so many of our city dwellers, and which not only meet their eye, day after day, but, in course of time, settle upon their very soul. Think, I say, of all this, and think of what it means. Consider the unrelieved monotony of the dark lives of some of the tiny folk—the "half-timers," as they are called, who rise, winter and summer, at five in the morning, trudge to the mill, to work there for six hours: and then spend the rest of the day at school afterwards. Can we wonder at the result? Can we wonder that *the body*, as well as *the mind*, should undergo a process of steady and systematic decay?

I suppose that very few people appreciate the alarming extent to which physical defects and disease are present among our children. Statistics, as I say, convey so little to our minds. But when, a few years ago, a report was prepared, the disclosures that came to light were as tragic as they were instructive. In four schools in Edinburgh it was found that

no less than 70 per cent. of the children who attended were unsound or defective in some respect or another. In the same city, one medical man alone discovered no less than 700 cases of neglected or undetected consumption: while 1300 children were found to be suffering from heart-mischief, and some 1500 from throat trouble. In London, too, affairs have been scarcely better. There, the school doctors have reported 25 per cent. of the children as anæmic, 8 per cent. as having heart disease, 45 per cent. as having adenoids, or similar disorders, and some 66 per cent. more as afflicted with defects of the ears. Impairment of vision again is quite common, while another fruitful source of misery is the teeth.

Let us turn now to another matter of exceptional importance: the question of diet. People must eat to live. We all know that. But how many of us select the proper food? Here, again, even the well-to-do may greatly err. But how is it when the choice of food is as restricted as we find to be the case with so many of the poor? What does the menu of

many of our less fortunate consist of? Very largely of pickles, jam, tinned fish, tea, and other indigestible substances. Can we wonder if a child who is fed upon these things fails to thrive, and if his constitution ultimately suffers —or can we wonder if he goes to swell, in after years, the ranks of the unemployable?

No animal, as I heard Dr Saleeby once say, feeds its children quite so injudiciously as man. One might suppose that, in a land like ours—in this twentieth century, with its illimitable resources—those who are entrusted with the rearing of the young would know what to select for them in the way of food. But no. In only too many cases, for one reason or another, either from ignorance, poverty, or laziness on the part of the mothers, the children never get proper meals at all. And what must the result be? Such results are only too plainly visible.

And what now is the remedy? This: that we should do two things. *First*: that we should undertake to supervise not only the mental training of the child, but his physical

well-being also. In other words, we should not only educate, but *feed*, our young people.

And *secondly* : that we should incorporate in our educational system, training in the art of motherhood. We cannot expect, I fear, to get at the mothers of to-day. But at least we can do this : work in the interests of the mothers of to-morrow. Why, let me ask you, should our girls be taught to read, write, and sum : why should they be given instruction in history and geography, and not, at the same time, be taught to fulfil the highest duties that may await them as the mothers of our children ? And what I say of our girls must apply to our boys also. Why should not they, too, be taught what parental responsibility means ? Why should they be allowed to attend school for a few years without any practical preparation for the years in store for them, and without any appeal being made to their sense of domestic, political, civic, and national responsibility ?

We expect our mothers and fathers to teach these things. But do they ? And, half the time, can they ? Do they realise them them-

selves? What we want, and what we must have, I maintain, is a thorough and systematic course of training for our youth, which will equip our boys and girls, not only intellectually, but morally and physically. And unless we have a sound physical foundation, and all that it must involve, how can we look for a noble superstructure?

At present our educational ideal is in many respects a most mischievously mistaken one. We tax the memory: we burden the brain. *But what do we do to train the will?* Yet the will is the man. And unless we train people not only to remember, but to think and to act, we shall never reap the harvest that we look for.

As it is, one fears much of our education must go for nothing, or next to nothing. Our children, it is true, attend our schools. That indeed may be well. But so long as they are compelled to remain in their present social environment, what can come of it? I do not indeed say nothing can come of it. But I say this, that, while *outside* school, in our homes and

streets, things are allowed to remain as they are, what is learnt inside our schools will never produce the permanent, lasting impression that it ought. Experience, as we know—and bad experience, alas! as well as good—is always more vivid and intense and real than theory. And, as things go, it is to be feared that the atmosphere created by our present educational methods is largely artificial and out of harmony with the serious aims of life.

All this must be changed. Our education must be vital. It must touch life at all points. It must grip the souls and the bodies, as well as the intellects of our young people. And for this we must embrace a more inclusive ideal. That ideal must be not mere ability: it must be worth—moral, social, personal worth. In short, we must create a deeper ethical consciousness. Think, at the present time, what need there is for this. Think how universally our people are exploited for the sake of private gain. Think how eagerly the product of their toil is demanded, and how little their own welfare, their true advantage, their soul, is

considered. This must not be. The world must be brought to its senses. And we can all help to do it.

But we must begin with the child. The child, as I began by remarking, is the problem of problems. Once we have solved that problem, the path will be clear.

We must teach our children. And more than this : we must not neglect to amuse them. Our children want recreation. How many of them get it? Yes : I know, there are the variety shows, the sensational posters, the animated pictures, and any number of other distractions to be found in the street. But are these the things that we can honestly say we would *choose* for our children as entertainments? Who run them? Why are they run? For the sake of our children?—or for the sake of *profit*? I am not condemning these shows wholesale, remember. Only what I say is this, that until the ethical spirit, wholly, solely, and altogether, inspires our life—not only here and there, but in all its various departments—we shall never make the most of our people.

We must teach our children. But we must do it not only directly, but indirectly. We must suggest to them. We must not coerce. We must win them by love. We must show them that they have a place among us, and that they are wanted. That is the best way to inspire the sense of duty. Because that is the way not only to show them their duty, but the way to get them to do it.

Let the children only learn that they have a will. They will find the way fast enough. And instead of the hideous travesty of liberty, we shall have, on earth, the holy city—in whose streets the boys and girls shall play, and in their joy realise the spirit of true ethical, social, and civic idealism.

CHAPTER V

CONSCIENCE—THE VOICE OF MAN

We have gradually accustomed ourselves to one idea at least, the origin of which is comparatively recent: it is the thought that things, all things, the sublimest as well as the least, have a history. The notion that anything — from a speck of protoplasm to the genius of a Shakespeare — ever sprang into being in its final or most perfect shape, without having previously undergone some sort of evolution, ill accords with our modern theory of development. And least of all can we persuade ourselves that the most majestic and impressive of all facts—to wit, the moral nature in man—could have attained its fulness and maturity save by a natural process of growth.

Such an inference, of course, must have

awaited the demonstration that only our own era could afford it. Time was, and that until latterly, when the relative nature of moral problems was scarcely so much as suspected. So dominated was men's thinking by the theological-metaphysic that was formerly in vogue, and the ingenious explanations which it vouchsafed of the spiritual constitution of man, that the actual facts of the case were almost completely obscured or ignored. Man, so it was confidently affirmed—while the inheritor of "original sin" —was nevertheless the favoured recipient of free-will, in order to exercise which he was miraculously endowed with an inner, infallible monitor, in the shape of a supernatural conscience. Accordingly, by this means, though predisposed by his worldly affections to Sin, and liable to succumb to the seductive wiles of Satan, he was yet innately capable of discerning the good and avoiding the evil. Wherefore, transgression could proceed only from wilful and deliberate disobedience on his part to the divine ordinance of God.

The conception still haunts us; though,

when one comes to think about it, it appears strangely antiquated and remote from everyday experience. Recent investigations upon the part of science have done much to render it so. Thus, a more extensive and adequate acquaintance with Zoology and History has partially dispelled the dismal delusion that Man is the unfortunate victim of a mysterious depravity, while a clearer comprehension of psychology and sociology has rendered equally untenable the belief that he possesses in his breast any absolute moral intuition. What is evident to us, on the one hand, is this: that the whole nature of man (physical, mental, moral, and social alike) has undergone a vast process of change, evolution, and improvement; and, on the other, that his exalted status to-day is dependent, not upon supernatural guidance, but strictly natural agencies.

It should at the same time be mentioned, however, that, while this statement roughly describes the process of his moral growth, it makes no attempt to account for that moral nature itself. Nor is any such attempt possible.

That the moral sense exists, the whole experience of the race testifies. While, that it plays an increasingly extensive rôle in human life and affairs with the rise of man is, if anything, still more evident.

In approaching the problem in hand—in proceeding, that is, to speak of the nature and growth of conscience—it may be worth our while to devote a moment or two to consider the derivation of the word itself. Conscience, then, let me remark, comes from two Latin words: *con* = "with," and *scio* = "to know"; that is, "to know with oneself." The point is instructive, inasmuch as the meaning sheds considerable light upon the process with which the conception corresponds. The word itself, I may mention, is of comparatively recent origin, nor does it seem to have had a place in the earliest forms of religion. Thus, throughout the whole of the canonical books of the Old Testament the word never so much as appears. And, so far as I have been able to discover, its first mention occurs in the book of Wisdom, which has been assigned to

the third century B.C. The fact is by no means devoid of interest, when we consider the psychology of the term. In doing so, what we discover may briefly be summarised thus: The claiming for a man of a conscience is not only to make him a responsible moral agent; it is, there and then, to endow him with the right of private judgment, to postulate the capacity on his part to agree with or dissent from certain received opinions; in short, to confer upon him the express privilege of deciding for himself *in the light of some higher law or experience*.

The term, no doubt, in its theological connection, is associated in our minds with an exceedingly circumscribed function. Nonetheless, in contending for a man's *conscience*, religion has done nothing less than sanctify the rational nature in man. To acknowledge such a thing as a conscience is not only to claim for a man inner freedom,—the substitution of constraint from within, for coercion from without: it is an implicit avowal of Humanism. When it was declared that no man should come between

a man and his conscience, religion then and there publicly proclaimed that man's only God should be his sovereign gift of reason.

Needless to say, it is precisely this conception which the earlier religions have lacked. And the explanation is perfectly apparent: such religions were in no wise primarily dependent upon this enlightened attitude: they derived, in fact, little or nothing from the inner lives of their immediate followers, and all that they demanded was scrupulous outward conformity, in order to perpetuate intact the special traditions which they embodied. Religion, at the earlier stage of human progress, seems to consist in little more than the regard for certain external observances, and in the unquestioning submission to whatever ceremonial traditional usages may prescribe. Indeed, for many otherwise rational people, religion means very little more than this still. It is this feature—the element of blind, unreasoning devotion—which serves to distinguish the earlier phase of popular religion. Such religion, it is clear, not only presupposes the suspension of

all individual judgment, it also, in the very nature of things, tends to rigorously suppress it. Hence it is that to judge, to question, to dissent from the received usages of one's tribe or people would be nothing short of impious. In this way respect for usage, custom, and time-honoured institutions would be deemed in itself a sanctified proceeding.

In all the earlier stages of human development, this inveterate habit of blind, unquestioning conformity was probably inevitable. And not only so: though we may now take exception to the attitude it has tended to encourage, it is not, I take it, wholly without an ethical significance. Among ourselves, of course, the curse of the tyrant "custom" is constantly made the object of invective and derision. But, while in an advanced stage of civilisation, too great a respect for tradition is an obstacle and a hindrance, at an earlier stage it ensures the requisite degree of stability and permanence that is essential to the subsequent ascendancy of any social institution. Perhaps we seldom think of this—nor is it, practically

speaking, desirable that we should—since all time-honoured usages have a way of outlasting the need of them. All the same, the conservative tendency of the older forms of religion has not only been inevitable: it has undoubtedly had a distinct utility from the social point of view.

We are apt, as I say, to lose sight of this—or rather, I would suggest, we lose sight of the historic process which has distinguished our own emancipation. When the Roman Church, for example, exhorts her faithful ones to entrust the keeping of their consciences to the custody of her own sanctified corporation, and to keep their thoughts in tune with the Ecclesiastical sentiment of the hour, we are apt to accuse her of wilful and deliberate insincerity. But, in point of fact, what is she really doing? Simply what all other organisations of the sort have invariably done: asserting the instinct of the group over against the right of the individual. Such solicitude on behalf of the spiritual security of her members very naturally excites our contempt or resentment

to-day. But when we view such an institution in its true historical perspective, what emerges is this: that Rome merely exemplifies the survival of what is, after all, the common primitive conception.

Living, as we do to-day, at a time when most people are accustomed to reserve for themselves the right to think, such pretensions are very properly indignantly challenged. It is often objected, and with no little reason, that to renounce one's private judgment (even as regards matters concerning which we may legitimately profess ourselves to be incompetent critics) is attended by the gravest dangers. It undoubtedly is. And it is feeling this that I am convinced we cannot do better than take Professor Clifford's dictum to heart.

"It is wrong always, everywhere, and for any one to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."

Unless one is prepared, with one's whole heart and soul, to abide by the Spirit of this sublime declaration, it is certain that one must miss the superb ethical individualism that an

enlightened conception of religion should involve.

It is not, however, so much upon the ethics of belief that I am especially desirous of enlarging. The dangers arising from the casual acceptance of ill-considered opinions may indeed well be taken to heart by many even now. But, after all (though this age is replete with superstitions of one sort and another), it is not the superstition of the Church that this age has most to dread. Here, at any rate, we may boast, and not without reason, of our emancipation. The right which this scientific age has conferred upon man in the way of intellectual freedom is indeed a blessing whose paramount importance we cannot over-emphasise. It is not for nothing that we are tempted to expatiate upon the comparatively tolerant attitude of to-day. Nor can we presume to over-estimate the benefits which have accrued to us through the freedom of opinion which this epoch has engendered. For all our latitude in this respect, however, it may still be that "the age of reason" has lost something which was to be found in

the earlier "age of faith": that intense and overwhelming force of conviction, that unswerving strength of purpose that united men together, and that naturally proceeded from the concentration of religious and social feeling under less advanced conditions.

As it is, we boast, and not without cause, of the decline of bigotry and prejudice among men, of their mutual tolerance, and of the readiness with which they assimilate novel ideas. All these, no doubt, are an immense gain and advantage. But, great as this advantage is, our independence seems to me to be at present deficient on the positive side. After all, proud as we are of our intellectual progress to-day, are we as proud of this as previous ages have been of their faith? It would scarcely appear so, and the reason appears to be this: that so much of the tolerance of to-day is merely indifference in disguise. It has a merely negative value. The acceptance of the spirit of dissent is truly no mean thing. But mere dissent is not enough for this age, nor for any age. It is not enough for us merely to entertain the

spirit of disagreement, or to realise that each is entitled to think as he pleases. We must do more than this. What our age needs, is what all ages have needed, a quickening of its whole emotional and spiritual life. And this is precisely what, at present, this age is denied. Yet, unless this want is supplied, we cannot hope to realise that community of purpose and interest which is essential to the welfare of all ages.

It may appear strange, but I cannot help feeling that of late we have made almost overmuch of our "unorthodoxy." Our unorthodoxy, it is true, is of immense importance to us, and we could not willingly forego it. But there is the undeniable danger lest we lose sight of the end which such diversity should subserve: not merely individual freedom, but the common good of man. It is this which religion, in the past, has tended to emphasise. And though, at this distance of time, such unity appears perilously near uniformity (which, if it could be insisted upon, would tend to rob man of the right "to think for himself"), there can be no

doubt that, prior to the subsequent period of enlightenment, when men were unanimously in favour of them, such commonly received convictions gave an immense impetus to the spiritual life of the community. To anticipate or desire a return to the former modes of belief would, of course, be the highest pitch of folly. Yet, in view of the need which is coming to be felt of a common basis for thought and action, is it too much to hope that religious reconstruction upon purely ethical lines might, if attempted, meet with universal approval? At present, in consequence of the soulless sectarianism, and the no less unfortunate failure on the part of large masses of people to unite with those who are working upon specifically religious lines, our spiritual life lacks centrality and depth, while our social energy is itself dissipated. What needs to be accomplished above all things is to bring our energies to a common centre. And for this, not only alert minds are needed, but willing hearts as well. It is, in short, *religion* that we want. For it is religion alone that can bind and unite men.

We are constantly reminded, however, that the provinces of "religion" and "ethics" should be carefully discriminated. The warning, no doubt, is necessary enough, because whereas in the popular imagination *religion* is identified with mere emotional assent to certain ready-made opinions, *ethics* is rather derived from the generalised experience of man acquired through human intercourse and relationships. But, convenient as this distinction is, I am not so sure that we can so readily distinguish between their respective spheres, nor am I so sure that such spheres are not largely imaginary and arbitrary. In reality, the spheres of religion and ethics seem to me to be never completely and entirely separate.

It is true, of course, that our ethical religion has reacted profoundly upon our own earlier religious opinion. And we are not, I think, ashamed to acknowledge that we seek, incidentally, to combat superstitions and obsolete dogmas, which still stand in the way of an adequate apprehension of the essentials of the religious life to-day. At the same time, it is

not at the fundamental conceptions of religion that we would direct our criticism.

And nothing can be more certain than this: that, as man has tended to become more rational and ethical, in spite of the decline of belief in the efficacy of supernatural doctrines, his religious instinct, which has caused him to worship, reverence, obey, and love, has proportionately grown. In other words, what would seem to be clear is, that man's whole religious nature, as we see it to-day, not only proves him to be capable of exercising the function of a religious being, but shows the need of directing that function to a worthier and sublimer object, than which none can be greater than Humanity itself.

And it is here that we may observe that the religion of the past has often unconsciously centred. Truly, it has not seldom suffered from the most serious limitations and defects that characterised men's modes of life in the past. But we may make, perhaps, too much of these. We often hear people speak with something akin to contempt of the religion and beliefs of

former ages. And sometimes, seeing that these have been attended by drawbacks, it has been thought that we should be prepared to forego all religious influences to-day. But to argue thus is clearly to fail in interpreting the purpose which underlies the historic growth of religion. And in doing this, we must entirely miss the national spirit which such a study is a means of revealing.

May it not have been that such religions were the means of making ready and preparing the way, by the special discipline which they enforced, of greater things, to be reserved for the after-time? May it not have been that they were steps whereby the soul of humanity might rise to a loftier and truer conception of what was in its own angel heart?

As I read and interpret the past, this is the message of religion.

Take, for example, the pre-Christian System, the religion of the Jews. Do we realise always, as we should, the splendid examples of ethical devotion to which it gave rise? It is often said that men can be better than their faith.

There may be truth in this ; but, after all, do we always sufficiently realise what a man's faith is, interpreted in his own personal life and experience ? What scientific investigation of religion can enable us to appreciate this ?

Perhaps, owing to this fact, the least promising faith may be a more beautiful thing than the outsider suspects. The faith of Israel was great. The God of Israel was not without nobility. He has often been reproached as having been, as he certainly appears on several occasions, a blood-thirsty despot. Under his earlier aspects we see him exhibiting many qualities which we should reprobate in one of ourselves. Perhaps no modern man could love him. But, after all, was it the dread and the awe and the fear of Javeh that caused the chosen people and Moses his servant to honour his holy name and his word ? It is often asserted, of course, that the earlier religions of humanity simply exemplify the spirit of terror, and that their believers were simply coerced into submission through dread of the consequences if they dared to rebel. Mr Spencer and other

eminent writers seem to have adopted this view. But, speaking for myself, I cannot say that it satisfies me. Granted that the religions themselves were little, men's hearts at least were great, and from such faiths, depend upon it, they extracted the best. At least such faiths tended to preserve the social group, and in this way they became the expression of that kindredness of spirit, that community of life, that is the essential source of life and religion.

How wonderful it is to think that from the depths of such a primitive faith should have been drawn some of the sublimest passages in the world's literature! Yet so it is. How no less wonderful it is to reflect that not only the hearts of the Hebrews, but our own hearts to-day, should be stirred and quickened by the spiritual discernment which they betoken! Who can deny inspiration, if such a thing there be, to the prophets—to Isaiah, Micah, Amos, and the rest? For what writings can surpass such words as these?—

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to

do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with thy God."

"Keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last."

"Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour, execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates."

Who, having read such passages and many more like them, can find it in him to affirm that such words were addressed merely to an inconspicuous tribe in remote ages, or that they possess no further application? Or who shall dare to assert that such utterances do not breathe the Spirit of Eternal Truth, and that they do not proclaim the one thing that is needed as much to-day as ever it was? Surely, it is in such disclosures as these that we hear, if not the voice of Israel's God, a greater thing: the outpourings of the Moral Genius of Humanity: the very noblest product of the Social Conscience itself.

This age, it would seem, needs such exhortations. But it needs it, not because it is wicked,

but because it is great, and because it needs to be reminded of its highest possibilities. In ages past it was held that men had intercourse with God, and that the prophets had revealed to them, by supernatural means, the truth by which men were to live. But though that age has passed, how much greater is the faith of to-day !

We cannot, it is true, believe, as they of former time, in an infallible guide to truth, seated in the breast of each solitary soul. Too well we know that each man's standard of the Eternal varies with his experience and culture. But are we, therefore, at liberty to reject all thought of a conscience—an unseen inspirer of all that is lovely, noble, and of good report ? It cannot be. See how this conception has grown. See how we now speak of the social conscience, of the implied moral support, which is to be derived through human intercourse and public opinion.

Is this social conscience a mere figure of speech, a mere symbol, a mere myth ? It cannot be.

As truly now, as in any age, would we acknowledge the promptings and supremacy of conscience. As surely now, as at any time, would we heed the admonitions, the counsels, the reproofs of our inward monitor, the "Great Companion." But to do so, we realise, with ever increasing vividness, the need of collective action and mutual support. It was this that made men great in the past. It is this that shall make us still greater to-day.

The social conscience, I would say, is the greatest fact of modern thought. And the social conscience is disturbed, distressed, and distraught, and not without reason, at the disquieting symptoms of our social outlook to-day. For all our advance upon the past we are yet dissatisfied with things as they are. Who, that is in touch with life at all, is not oppressed to-day with a sense of the grievous injustice of our iniquitous social arrangements—the terrible contrasts between the lot of rich and poor, the appalling state of our industrial system, and the conditions that favour degradation in all its myriad shapes? We cannot, it is true, lay the

blame on anybody in particular. But somehow we feel that we are all implicated ; we feel that we must take our share of the blame upon ourselves, and that unless we all do something, however little it be, to rectify things, we shall not escape condemnation. How, I would ask you, unless we interpret the social unrest which is assailing us, as the voice of conscience, as the whisper of "Our Father Man" within us, are we to lead the life that confronts us ?

If this age be the means of teaching us this, if it can bring us together, it will not have been lived in vain. For all its evils, its horrors, its superstitions, if it enable us to utter all that is in our heart, it will have been worth while. To be true to the highest that is in us is still our privilege ; and thus, steadfast and sustained, despite this season of uncertainty and suspense, the right must triumph and prevail.

For "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

CHAPTER VI

INTERNATIONAL IDEALISM AND ITS MESSAGE

THAN the nation no sublimer conception has entered the human mind. No thought that has been instilled into man has so seized upon his imagination; none other has so inflamed his heart with loyalty and zeal. Nor has any proved so potent a means of inspiring him with lofty and magnanimous ardour and devotion in the cause of mankind. With this supreme thought it is that the religious sense has at all times linked itself. Whenever religion has possessed anything more than a nominal significance—whenever, that is, it has stood for anything beyond a mere philosophic system, or mode of personal belief—it has invariably assumed a national character. Hence it is that we find, as Sir John Seeley so aptly observes,

the Christian religion so intimately associated with the idealisation of the Jewish nationality. As he points out, religion is, and always has been, the basis of societies and states. And but for the former, the latter must have utterly failed to perpetuate their existence. "Look where you will in the wide field of history," writes Professor Seeley in his volume *Natural Religion*, "you will find religion, whenever it works freely and mightily, either giving birth to and sustaining states, or else raising them up to a second life after their destruction. It is a great state builder in the hands of Moses and Ulfilas and Gregory and Nicholas; in the ruder hands of Mohammed and many another tamer and guide of gross populations down to the Prophet of Utah it has the same character, the same too in the hands of the almost forgotten Numas and propagators of the Apollo worship who laid the foundation of Roman and Greek civilisation, and of the pilgrim fathers who founded New England. In the East to this day nationality and religion are almost convertible terms; the Scotch national character

first awoke in the adoption of a new religion and afterwards expressed itself more than once in national covenants; the Reformation itself may be represented as coming out of the German national consciousness, and it has been proposed to call the various forms of Protestantism by the collective name of Teutonic Christianity. Lastly, in Christianity itself, in Romanism, and partly also in Mohammedanism, we see religion in the form of an aggressive or missionary nationality bringing foreign nations into a new citizenship."

It is then, as Professor Seeley suggests, *in religion* that national life is rooted and sustained. Indeed, it may be said that, in a nation's life, its institutions and traditions, its whole religion tends to become articulate and to find expression. Were it not for these, were it not for the *national spirit* which is infused into a religion, religion as we understand it could not have arisen and propagated itself.

Of the ideal element in national growth there can be no possible doubt. Nor, when we view the question of human development under its

varied and manifold aspects as a whole, can any factor take precedence of nationality. To ignore this would be fatal, since it would be to set aside the essential process which has served to distinguish the evolution of humanity. For embodied, crystallised, as it were, in all these experiences, traditions, and cultures lies the whole secret of its progress, aspirations, and prosperity. Not without reason has man clung to this thought. For, as Mazzini so truly remarks, "Without the nation there can be no humanity, even as without organisation and division there can be no expeditious and fruitful labour. Nations are the citizens of humanity, as individuals are the citizens of the world. And as every individual lives a two-fold life, inward and of relation, so do the nations."

"As every individual," he continues, "should strive to promote the power and prosperity of his nation through the exercise of his special function, so should every nation in performing its special mission, according to its special capacity, perform its part in the general work,

and promote the progression, advance, and prosperity of humanity."

In coming to consider this matter, the thought occurs to me that glorious as our national ideals are and have been, Mazzini's vision is still far, very far, from being actually realised. The nation, as I say, has invariably provided the foundation for all that has proved the most lasting and enduring in Society. And from such enthusiasm as it has engendered has proceeded that community of interest, purpose, and aim that has welded together tribes, peoples, and races. But whilst, from this process, has emerged a loftier and more inclusive ethical and spiritual conception of life, we must, nevertheless, sorrowfully confess that our national ideals are miserably and deplorably inadequate.

Thus, whereas on the one hand our national life on its inward side has undeniably tended to create a higher and nobler individual standard of conduct, which has been conducive to the promotion of internal harmony and security, on their outer side (or in relation to other States),

our national standard remains almost stationary —exhibiting little, if indeed any, advance upon the past.

Whilst, therefore, the average civilised man of to-day is fully prepared to realise the nature of his responsibilities and obligations to other individuals, when it comes to the point where national relations are concerned, we frequently witness an utter inability on his part to appreciate the true nature of the problem. With a singularly deplorable lapse in logic, he totally refuses to recognise the rights of any nation but his own. And though he may speak, in a vague manner, about the "duties of States," he practically fails altogether to recognise the claims of other nations. Our attitude in this respect, no doubt, is gradually undergoing some amount of modification. And, as a consequence, aggressive hostility to neighbouring peoples is usually contemplated with disfavour. But widespread as would seem the abhorrence of war, we yet await any openly declared policy such as would render warfare impossible. The feasibility of such a proposal, indeed, is constantly treated

with something akin to contempt. Yet the deplorable contrast which is at present evinced between individual and national ethics, I would submit, so far from rendering the adoption of disarmament impracticable, should render its realisation (and that at no distant date) most certain.

Our national ethics, as I say, are deplorably behind our personal standards. Nor have recent events tended to improve the situation. To realise this we have but to reflect upon the alarming increase in our national expenditure which has been incurred by the frantic rush for armaments. Here, in Europe, after some nineteen centuries of Christianity, we find, it is true, a number of groups of quite well-behaved, respectable people—all, or most of them, capable of exhibiting mutual civility, under ordinary circumstances—and occasionally manifesting positive cordiality to one another. But, apart from their *personal* relations—regarded from the external or mass aspect—how do things strike one? Are not the relations between nations something far worse than

strained? Nay, as the years go on, unless a radical step be taken to effect reconciliation between them, do not things threaten to become serious for all parties? When this question is approached in any serious spirit, we plead that we arm only for purposes of defence. But what does our defensive policy imply? Does it rest upon a secure basis? Does it repose upon any conception of mutual understanding, confidence, or trust? Does it not rest upon the rottenest foundation imaginable?—A sense of mutual intimidation, suspicion, rivalry, and ill-will? Individually speaking, one is well aware that we none of us feel this for other nations. But does not that tend to make the whole proceeding more revolting, cold-blooded, and brutal? Individually speaking, I admit, civilised peoples do not merit this designation. But is a nation, either severally or collectively, that acquiesces in the wholesale slaughter of human beings to be held blameless? In this matter, as it seems to me, we need a wholly new public opinion—a public opinion which, instead of viewing the prospect of its own victory with approval and

satisfaction, would reprobate and condemn all complicity in such enterprise.

We often speak, with a shudder, of our "barbaric past," and boast of the present enlightenment of the world. But, after all, is the condition of the world so vastly improved, or are the relations of nations, officially speaking, so immensely better? War, it is true, may occur with less frequency. But, when it does come, what does it mean? How interminable are modern wars! And how deadly! What was Lord Charles Beresford saying only recently in the House of Commons?—That there should be, in case of the outbreak of war, a strong reserve of surgeons and staff ready to take up duty. And why? Because modern warfare is so humane? Yes; if by that we mean that we are now more alive to the sufferings of the wounded. But why did Lord Charles Beresford lay such stress upon this point?—Simply because, as he reminded us, in warfare to-day the toll of life would be enormous—and because a single shell could maim or kill outright from sixty to eighty persons.

It is not Lord Charles Beresford's business to flinch at such a thought. But can the public conscience (unfamiliar as it is with such unspeakable barbarity) contemplate it with equanimity, or without raising a protest?

This is the sort of thing that States sanction. This is the sort of thing that States compel their citizens to perpetrate. And unless we are prepared to countenance it also, we are immediately dubbed "unpatriotic." Yet who in his heart desires war? Or who—if he *did* desire it—would not be there and then condemned as a traitor to the cause of humanity? How illogical is our position! Little use, I admit, while other nations are arming to the teeth, to talk merely about "disarmament." But why, when we are about it, don't we get at the root of the mischief? Why cannot we realise that, after all, example is the most potent factor in life, and that if we are to have peace, it is our duty not to terrorise other nations, but to tranquillise our own feelings? Our present system is pernicious, not only because it is calculated to excite hostility and ill-will

abroad, but also because it is equally calculated to react upon us and to breed misunderstanding and hatred among ourselves. We may think it "patriotic" when we encourage our youngers to flourish a flag and shout hooray one day in twelve months. But does such sentimentality produce any satisfactory result? How infinitely better it would be if we were prepared to instruct our youth in the principles of arbitration the whole three hundred and sixty-five days of the year!

We are constantly taunted, however, with the assertion that such proposals are not only impracticable but calculated to reduce our national efficiency. That term, it is true, is usually employed with some amount of vagueness. But, according to many people, wars, though not desirable, are yet providentially ordained. And not only so—it is imagined that they have (like all "providential" institutions) a purpose, which is to enable otherwise tractable, mild, inoffensive people to show that they have still some of the "old stuff" left in them.

The charge is constantly brought against this age that its intellectual and moral advance is not an unmixed blessing: that we are cultivating an unnatural sentimentality which is at bottom a symptom of physical decline. While many men would impress upon us that what society is suffering from is a surfeit of luxury. Whether such warnings are seriously taken, I do not pretend to say. Whether, for instance, in order to atone for its sins, society will see fit to revise the petition which it offers in its Churches for peace, and substitute a supplication that war may be sent to afford it a chance of coming to its senses, remains to be seen. But, be that as it may, some of our Empire-builders seem seriously distressed about the matter. And, from what they tell us, the only thing that can save England is severer self-discipline of a martial type.

Only the other day, for instance, Lord Rosebery, in deploring our lack of thrift, took occasion to point out that in private life nowadays we see too much luxury and passion for pleasure. To be sure, to his credit be it said,

he does not attribute this to our comparative immunity from war. But, reading between the lines, he is evidently convinced that life to-day is not strenuous enough for the population, and that therefore people are deprived of the chance which they have had in past ages of putting themselves to the test. Many men share his opinion. But on what facts, let me ask you, is such a conclusion founded? Luxury, I admit, may be a prolific source of social disorder. Indeed, luxury and its twin-vice sloth lie at the bottom of three-fourths of the mischief of human life. But, admitting this, is luxury and the love of it so widespread as Lord Rosebery imagines? We have enough of it, certainly. But are these luxurious folks, largely as they loom upon the social horizon, really in such an overwhelming majority? What do the facts tell us? We have, it is true, no less than upwards of a million rich people in our midst, who get between them some £585,000,000; and then we have another 3,750,000, who, being tolerably well off, manage to absorb some £245,000,000 more. But our

population exceeds this number by some 38,000,000, and none of them are wealthy. And the question is, *What are they getting?* Does Lord Rosebery, when he generalises in this manner, seriously realise—or do we realise for that matter—how very, very little the great bulk of our population are getting? And that, not only is it impossible for them to be afflicted with the vice of luxury (let alone that of thrift), but that it is equally impossible for them to get enough bread and butter to eat or clothes to wear? At this very time no less than one-fifth of our population are existing on a family income of something less than £1 a week. If they can manage to be luxurious on that sum, all I can say is, what they deserve is not our condemnation, but our sincere admiration!

But, seriously, let me ask you, what is to be gained by preaching against self-indulgence and luxury when it is not really from that, but from poverty, that we are suffering? Our nation, it is true, calls for strong, disinterested support from all of us. But how can we expect our people to feel pride in their nation so long

as the nation ignores its first and highest responsibilities, its duties to itself? We look for, we expect, a high standard of national duty and honour. But, while so many millions of our people are denied the common necessaries of life, how can we reasonably anticipate that self-respect and personal dignity which should lie at the foundation of all manhood, individual, civic and national?

I am prompted to speak thus, because, in spite of the prevailing impression upon this subject, I am convinced that our national poverty and degradation is the most serious menace to our national security. The exploitation of labour, and the evils which follow in the train of destitution and similar social disorders, not only beget discontent; unless the masses assert themselves, they become the most powerful instrument for evil in the hands of the capitalist section of the community. At bottom, I am fully persuaded our attitude to other nations is powerfully influenced by economic considerations, and it is precisely here our theories are at fault. We are told, and we fear, that unless

we pursue our present policy, we shall be bound to repent it. We read of the rapid strides which Germany has taken, and of the expansion of American commerce, and we fancy that, unless we heed the warnings of the scaremongers, we must suffer as a natural consequence. Even Mr Blatchford comes forward and tries to convince his socialist comrades that danger lies ahead. Our consternation is not to be wondered at. The present state of our poverty is equalled or exceeded only by one thing—the astounding ignorance which prevails upon economics on all sides. And, therefore, when we are informed that our "imperial" policy is dictated with due regard to our industrial interests, which call for the opening up of fresh markets, we quietly swallow it. That we are imposed upon never enters our devoted heads. The source of our evils we never suspect. That it is the maldistribution of our own consuming power that is preventing the absorption of commodities and capital in this country, we never dream. And so it comes to pass that the blatant "jingoes" can always be certain of a certain amount of

public support (even if it is got only by the aid of the yellow press).

Hence it is that we boast of our Imperialism. What it really is, we do not in the least understand. But because it is a fine word, and because Mr Chamberlain once received a happy inspiration which intimated to us that we should "think imperially," we swallow almost anything that is said in favour of the policy. Instead of going quietly into the subject, instead of consulting the works of such a writer as Professor Hobson, we take everything for granted, and allow ourselves to be coerced into whatever new scheme the caprices of irresponsible financiers and their supporters may dictate. We know not what we do. In spite of the fact that three decades of Imperialism have operated distinctly prejudicially to our national interests, we still believe that, because the interests of the wealthy are served, it must therefore be to the advantage of the community. Why is this? The plain truth is this: that we lack, as yet, all true ethical imagination. We act upon our impulses, rather than upon our reason. We have not

yet realised the highest conception of citizenship: that to be happy we must first be wise. We have not yet grasped the fact that, if any course is bad for the bee, it cannot be good for the hive. We are, in short, *little better than barbarians outside the special limits of our culture.* We fancy that, in our commercial transactions, justice is not only unnecessary, but impracticable, and that if only those who have the wealth do not lose, things will be all right.

Of all unsound principles this is the worst. It rests upon a fallacy. It rests upon the delusion that class interest and privilege must be maintained at any price. That will not do. It is subversive of every democratic sentiment. It violates our entire sense of collective responsibility. You cannot, in a highly organised state of society, afford to let one individual or section of society profit at the expense of the rest. And the more you pursue a policy that upholds that principle, the worse it will be, not only for individuals but for nations. After all, the life of nations is only the life of individuals writ large. And until you secure international

justice, you cannot look for national peace and social security.

It was this fact that Mr Roosevelt overlooked when, in speaking in the city of London only recently, he reminded us of our "duties" to ourselves in Egypt, and, in doing so, had the shameless audacity to state that "weakness, timidity, and sentiment might cause further reaching harm than violence and injustice." Whether Mr Roosevelt and those of his school are to be taken seriously, or whether they are really under the impression that our foreign and colonial policy has been prompted by too fatally philanthropic motives, I am unable to say—though one would almost have credited them with greater discernment. But be that as it may, in advocating such tactics we have every reason to beware of them. For any man to thus perpetrate a wilful and deliberate outrage upon the Eternal Law of Right, and for the press to stand abjectly by and, without raising any effectual protest, simply to suggest that he has been guilty of "tactlessness" or an "error of taste," only goes to show the need for an

enlightened public opinion upon the subject. Until we have such an opinion, we may be sure that all chance of constructive statesmanship will be rendered nothing short of impossible.

The fact needs to be brought home to us, that things are not only advocated, but done and sanctioned, now, continually, in the name of Governments and States, that no individual in his private capacity would dream of tolerating. And, to justify them, we say (and with some excuse) that only those who undertake official positions realise the difficulties that confront us. That, of course, is perfectly true. But what is still truer is this, that no man ought, in the present enlightened state of public opinion, to be expected or allowed to do things in his official capacity that we should disapprove and condemn. If we have not recognised our duties to other nations, at least we may begin to realise that we have duties to those who control our foreign affairs ; and that it is our business to see that these men acquit themselves creditably by interpreting the will of the nation.

It is, in these days, superfluous to say that we would not willingly resort to violence and injustice, even in international relations. But why, we may well ask ourselves, is it ever permitted? The reason is clear: it is because we are not thoroughly democratised: it is because our national spirit is weak, because we have been powerless to utter our voice in public affairs, because instead of our nation being, as it should be, a great, living reality, pulsating with mental, moral, and social energy, we have suffered it to become a sickly abstraction. We have outgrown our strength: our eye has been, not where it should be, on the lives of our people, but upon the expansion of our Empire. And thus our whole existence has been little better than a dream.

Only serious thought can dispel the delusions to which we have been addicted: only the direct appeal to the social and moral consciousness can emancipate us from the mass of error and credulity that impedes our progress. Our life is still unspeakably barbarous, and we almost resent the thought of employing means save of

the clumsiest and coarsest description in promoting our international relations. Yet what can well call for greater delicacy and nicety of treatment?

We still exult in the thought of our "Empire Builders"—in the "men of might," whose exploits remind us only of our barbaric past—of our Rhodeses, Kitcheners, Curzons, Milners, and Chamberlains. But, after all, are these the only men who are doing the work of the nation, or are they the greatest? Great as they may be, there are yet men who are doing still more for us. Nor can these latter be claimed by our nation alone. While the very secret of their strength lies in their international appeal. Among such men we must include our men of science and letters, our artists, our philosophers, our musicians. Such men are verily citizens of the world. They acknowledge no petty distinctions which keep men asunder, which divide the nations and accentuate the sense of rivalry between them. Rather, they realise the source of strength which lies in unity in the higher aims of life; and, in insisting upon

these aims and ideals which make for a common life, they proclaim the universal fellowship of mankind.

Was it lack of patriotism that led Kant at the time when he lived to take less interest in Prussia than in Paris? or that caused Goethe to acknowledge that he did not know what patriotism was, and was glad of it? Surely such men were true citizens and patriots—but not only of their own nation. They could claim the citizenship of the world. And no less is it true of all who, by transcending the thinking of their time, break down the barriers of prejudice, convention, and ignorance that divide mankind.

The growth of this world-spirit at the present epoch possesses a significance wholly unsuspected by many. Little do we realise the means which our facilities for intercourse, culture, and travel are affording men of acquiring that community of interest and purpose which is essential to moral and spiritual growth. But it is even so. And this impetus shall yet yield an ideal greater than the world has known—

which shall bring home to us the meaning of that sublime sentiment which inspired the life of one of our greatest internationalists: "The world is my country, and to do good is my religion."

CHAPTER VII

THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME

THE epithet "Utopian" is generally applied (or rather misapplied) to almost any scheme or theory which may be propounded for improving society, on one condition alone: that it is sufficiently impracticable, chimerical, and impossible. The world has heard of so many Utopias of one kind and another—and, in spite of them, it is still so far from attaining anything at all approaching perfection—that it has almost, by this time, grown impatient, incredulous, and cynical. *Almost*, I must repeat, because, in spite of his experience and knowledge and disillusionment, it is still in the heart of man to hope.

Stronger than nurture—a thousand times stronger—is *nature*. And it is in the nature

of man to aspire, to idealise, and hence it is that the apparently impossible still possesses a surpassing fascination for him. At heart, probably the most prosaic of mortals cherishes some Utopia; for without this privilege and consolation life would be robbed of all the romance, which, from immemorial ages, has led men to seek for a nobler and a fairer order.

Our age, however, with its pre-eminently practical outlook upon life, and conscious of all its splendid and prolific labours in the innumerable departments of Science, no longer contemplates the future with its former simplicity and innocence. Our life, it is felt, has grown inconceivably complex; and realising how little it is that we know of the present, we are conscious of a sense of suspense and uncertainty in approaching the future. Far ahead, in any case, we refuse to look. We may, it is true, still pursue our speculations as to the possibility of achieving a more promising mode of existence. And, in effect at any rate, every effort that is worthy of us aims at accomplishing this. But, even so, we no longer conceive it to be possible

to picture that future as a whole, or with any degree of minuteness and precision. So many things have to be taken into account. All that we can offer, at best, is a rough chart or diagram of what such a future may possibly have in store for us, adding, it may be, a line here or there, as probabilities may seem to warrant. To do more than this, however, would call for omniscience.

With our increasing knowledge of nature, fresh problems have arisen, and these have, among other things, taught us something as to the vast complexity of human nature. Realising which, the construction of any conceivable ideal world for the generations to come becomes less possible than ever.

"Our dreams," as Emerson reminds us, "are the sequel of our waking knowledge"; it is even so with our Utopias. They have their source in human necessity, and, as such, however plausible and inviting they may seem, they possess at last a relative value. None can be final, it is felt, nor can any accommodate the whole of life. No Utopia that the world has

contemplated has done more than hold before man the vision of a loftier order, nor has any enabled him to apprehend the secret which its author has striven to impart.

The fact might well give us occasion for disappointment, were it not for the fact that we are at length enabled to realise the cause of their failure. As it is, we can now see that where their authors went astray was, that they ignored the most important factor which alone could have ensured their theories' realisation. Where they failed was that they altogether overlooked the forces which were in actual operation in society. From the days of Plato to the time of Edward Bellamy, the self-same defect may be witnessed ; instead of proposing progress as their watchword, the Utopists assumed, as a necessary desideratum, the entire effacement of the existing order. In other words, the attitude argued a too exclusive preoccupation with the ideal.

Now, it is precisely this fact—this total or partial inability to attach theory to fact, to fit thought to practice, to graft the ideal upon the

actual, to allow for growth and development—that has rendered the work of our dreamers so lamentably abortive. For their praiseworthy intentions we may readily accord them our unstinted approval. Nor can we pretend that our current thinking has at any time soared to a loftier altitude. In spite of this, however, whilst, collectively speaking, our ideal to-day may lack intensity and clearness, I would make so bold as to say that we are not only conscious of an ideal, but that we are conscious that it is something which, if it is to be realised at all, must not any longer be dreamed over, but worked for. It is this idea, I take it, which is gradually inspiring the modern man, and it is this fact in itself which is the hope and consolation of every genuine reformer.

In the opening words of his *Modern Utopia*, Mr Wells calls attention to one fact which has an intimate bearing upon this point. What he wishes us to realise is, that the modern Utopia must not be *re*volutionary so much as *evolutionary*, for it must be as much the product of the present, as the present is the outcome of the past.

"The Utopia of a modern dreamer," he says, "must needs differ in one fundamental aspect from the Nowheres and Utopias men planned before Darwin quickened the thought of the world. These were all perfect and static states, a balance of happiness won for ever against the forces of unrest and disorder that inhere in things. One beheld a healthy and simple generation enjoying the fruits of the earth in an atmosphere of happiness, to be followed by other virtuous, happy, and entirely similar generations, until the gods grew weary. Change and development were dammed back by invincible dams for ever. But the modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state, but as a hopeful stage, leading to a long ascent of stages."

Here, Mr Wells suggests that what we are called upon to consider is a *Utopian attitude*, so to speak, rather than any special Utopia. Instead of contenting ourselves with patterning the "world to be" after our own heart, we must rather realise our special place and function in the world that is, which, all in good time,

will of itself yield the required change. This must necessarily imply keeping one's attention fixed, not only on the whole, but on the part. In other words, our business is primarily with ourselves: to adjust ourselves, finite instruments though we be, to the social scheme with which we are related.

In speaking, however, of the inutility of the earlier Utopias, I would not be understood to suggest that their weakness was due to any inherent intellectual defect on the part of their creators. It is easy, no doubt, to dismiss these dreams of bygone ages as impracticable, and to say that such men were merely misled by allowing their imaginations to carry them away. No doubt, they did, in point of fact, suffer from the philosophic limitations which were imposed upon them; and, in the light of more accurate scientific knowledge, much that they wrote seems unsatisfactory and fanciful. But, after all, what we have to remember is, that these Utopias were written, for the most part, at periods of profound intellectual enlightenment and culture, and that their writers invariably

appear to have been inspired primarily by the accession of insight and knowledge, to which such schemes testify.

When, for instance, Plato wrote his *Republic*, or when Bacon wrote his *New Atlantis*, or Campanella his *City of the Sun*, the world was passing through extraordinary phases of intellectual and moral advancement. Moreover, had it not subsequently happened that great changes were destined to come about in the histories of Greece, Italy, and England, such visions might have been to some extent fulfilled. As it was, of course, unforeseen circumstances interfered with what may have appeared the natural course of events. But the point upon which I would lay especial stress is this : that no matter how remote and impractical such theories may seem to us to be at this distance of time, when they were written, in all likelihood, the more liberal culture of the time lent support to the assumption that they would some day prevail. And, in truth, had it not been for the actual trend of events —that leveller of all Utopias—who shall say that all these theories must have remained unrealised ?

The point, perhaps, is not worth speculating about. But, to appreciate the intimate relation between the creation of a Utopia and the actual culture of the time, it is instructive to select an example. And I propose, therefore, to cite the case of More's Utopia.

Early in the sixteenth century, as every student of history will remember, the world was passing through changes more momentous than any that it had witnessed since the triumph of Christianity and the downfall of Rome. Its boundaries were suddenly widened. Science had made unexampled strides—printing had recently been discovered. Copernicus had demonstrated the planetary system, "founding his reasonings upon rigid induction." Voyagers from Portugal had discovered the Cape of Good Hope, and had anchored their vesssels in Indian harbours. Columbus, too, had navigated the ocean to the new world. While the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and the flight of the Greek scholars to Florence, revived anew the intellectual life of the middle ages. In England, therefore, as well as on the Continent of

Europe, great changes were in progress ; and under a more rational form of Christianity the religious outlook was undergoing a marked modification. It was with Colet, whose faith was rooted in a simple devotion to the person of Jesus Christ, and with Erasmus, at Oxford, that the Revival of Learning first gained ground. And gradually in the reign of Henry VIII. it assumed a visible shape.

On behalf of the new learning, Sir Thomas More proclaimed the message contained in his *Utopia* ; and his political satire, thus entitled, well expresses the freedom of thought which was representative of the time.

More, in those days, held a high position as Counsellor and Diplomatist, and it was when he was engaged on one of his diplomatic missions that he describes himself as having received news of the "Kingdom of Nowhere." The romance is supposed to be the experience of one of the sailors who had proceeded with Amerigo Vespucci to America, and it is in the course of these wanderings that he is supposed to have sojourned in the isle of Utopia. Need-

less to say, this island has no counterpart in actual fact, but its condition is inspired by a survey of the then existing condition of England.

In this vision of More's, we have something far more substantial than the dream of an ideal commonwealth for man. In it we find a veritable quickening of the social and political conscience of England itself. And this proceeded, we must remember, from the spirit of the age. Until, however, More wrote in 1516, the new learning had confined itself to the scholars and divines. In the *Utopia* we discover the same spirit of liberty, which had entered into the domain of religion, expressing itself under far wider aspects—in the province of practical and secular affairs. And scattered up and down its pages we alight on thoughts which not only enable us to realise the rapidity with which the humanistic impulse must have spread, but also how closely akin, in many respects, was that period with our own.

Evidently enough, More's *Utopia* sets out with one supreme intention : that of challenging the institutions of society. And for that purpose

he very pertinently commences his book with a contrast between the actual state of things and the opinions of the imaginary narrator. Thus, in the preamble, More's informant takes occasion to call attention to the grievous abuses of monarchy, as when he observes that most princes apply themselves rather to the affairs of war, than to the useful art of peace, and that they are generally bent on acquiring new kingdoms rather than governing well those that they already possess. From which topic he proceeds by a natural transition to that of the Ministers of State, of whose vainglory and self-interest he makes particular mention. After which he passes on to speak of the injustice of the penal code of the period.

With the remarkable originality, perspicacity, and insight of his conclusions, we cannot but be impressed. Nor can one fail to reflect that, to this day, many of the maladjustments in our social arrangements expose themselves to his incisive criticism.

The England with which More was familiar presented a spectacle which constituted the

most unspeakably hideous outrage upon his moral consciousness. After fifteen centuries of Christianity, he found little but one huge mass of social injustice, political corruption, and religious tyranny. And, finding little enough to warrant the hope that any outward change could take place, he there and then decided to create, by way of contrast to the world about him, a Kingdom of "Nowhere." In his eyes the whole social system was one vile conspiracy against the poor and the weak: the rich first secured all that they could lay their hands upon, and then, having converted the wealth and industrial resources to their private uses, proceeded in the name of the people to frame laws to support them.

In regard to the question of crime in particular, More discloses an astounding degree of penetration.

We have to remember that, during the reigns of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., capital punishment for robbery exceeded all previous records. Thus, during the reign of Henry VII., it is said, in a single year in England more persons

were beheaded than in seven years in France. Whilst in Henry VIII.'s reign there were upwards of 72,000 persons executed as vagabonds and rogues. Naturally, this state of things roused such a man to revolt. But he does not content himself with vaguely sentimentalising on the enormity of such atrocities. He goes to their root. Thus, in the *Utopia* he makes his friend say that the method in vogue of punishing thieves is neither just in itself, nor good for the public; for, since the severity is too great, the remedy is ineffectual: "Simple theft not being so great a crime that it ought to cost a man his life, no punishment how severe soever is able to restrain those from robbery who can find no other way of livelihood."

Little could More have realised how far beyond his age were such opinions! It was not until upwards of three hundred years later (not till 1861, in fact), that capital punishment was abolished (save for murder, treason, piracy, and setting fire to dock-yards). How truly he might say, as he did, "You in England are readier to chastise than to teach. There are

dreadful punishments enacted against thieves, but it were much better to make such good provisions by which every man might be put in a method how to live, and so be preserved from the fatal necessity of stealing and dying for it."

And he then goes on to trace such crime to its source — to the abominable avarice of the rich, and the pestilential poverty of the poor. "There is," he writes, "a great number of noblemen that are themselves as idle as drones, that subsist on other men's labours, on the labour of their tenants, whom, to raise their revenues they pare to the quick. Now, when the stomachs of these that are thus turned out of doors grow keen, they rob no less keenly; and what else can they do?"

And, side by side with this deplorable inequality, he perceives the shiftlessness, purposelessness, and luxury of those about him.

"You have," he writes, "many infamous houses, and besides those that are known, the taverns and ale-houses are no better; add to these dice, cards, tables, football, tennis, and

quoits, in which money runs away fast. . . . Banish these plagues, and give orders that those who have dispeopled so much soil may either rebuild the villages they have pulled down, or let out their grounds to such as will do it ; restrain these engrossings of the rich . . . . leave fewer occasions to idleness ; let agriculture be set up again, and the manufacture of the wool be regulated, that there may be work found for these companies of idle people whom want forces to be thieves, or who now being idle vagabonds or useless servants will certainly grow thieves at last."

From this quotation, we realise how profoundly More must have been impressed with a sense of social responsibility, and how vividly he realised the potency of the social will for good or evil.

It was by way of protest against this outrageous system that the *Utopia* was conceived. And, in developing the idea which underlies it, More's evident intention was this : to depict, as far as possible, what might be realised under more favourable and equitable conditions.

Where More's theory, to my mind, breaks down is, that it lays the stress in the wrong place. No doubt, given such conditions as he describes, one might obtain a humanity somewhat after the pattern he shows (though, on reading the work, I cannot say that I, for one, should welcome so symmetrical a type). But that, after all, is beside the point. Assuming that such a Utopia were desirable from an ethical standpoint, the thing for us to realise is that its worth for us must lie, not so much in the *having*, as the *striving after*. The joy in possessing it would no doubt be an essential factor in our life. But unless it implied further growth, and entailed conscious endeavour, such as would introduce an element of variety, it would speedily collapse or defeat itself. It is precisely this aspect that More leaves out of account.

In planning his Utopia, More is careful, as a preliminary, not only to secure a complete change of surroundings for his inhabitants, but also so to enclose his paradise that they shall be protected, first of all, from all chance of in-

trusion from strangers from without, and next from all source of division from within. And thus, at the outset, he fails to allow for the free play of individuality.

His Utopians are to live in a sort of communism—they are to possess no property, and even the houses are to be open to all comers; while at the end of ten years the inhabitants are required to shift their quarters. The inconvenience of any such arrangement never seems to trouble these obliging folk, who appear to be actuated entirely by motives of mutual affection and sympathy.

Whatever defects we may see in such domestic arrangements, however, More's theory as to the labour problem reveals a profound insight into the social economy. Here he wisely ordains that none shall live in idleness. All are to follow a trade, but none is to wear himself out. The working hours, therefore, must be limited to six, and time must be allowed for leisure and congenial employment, which is "for the most part" to be "reading."

Slaves are to be tolerated, but apparently

their duties are to be restricted only to such unpleasant occupations as the slaughter of cattle. And, in passing, I may remark that, in one respect, at any rate, More's Utopia shows an enormous advance upon the modern town. The Utopians are not vegetarians, but, it seems, their susceptibilities are of a distinctly higher type than our own. Thus, we are told, "There are without their town places appointed near some running water, for killing the beasts and washing away their filth . . . . they suffer none of their citizens to kill their cattle, because they say that pity and good nature are much impaired by butchering of animals."

For my own part, I cannot help thinking that the attention of the local authorities in some of our great towns and cities might profitably be directed to such a passage. Presumably, for some years to come, meat-eating will not be a thing of the past. But why, meanwhile, our public thoroughfares should be rendered as unsightly as they are at present, by the bleeding carcases of beasts displayed in the shop-windows, I fail to understand. Moreover,

I cannot help feeling that the situation of some of the slaughter-houses in some of the most densely populated parts of our towns is, to say the least of it, exceedingly unsatisfactory. To remedy these defects, of course, would involve a higher æsthetic culture than we have to-day. But, in that of his Utopians, More presents to us an ideal which is well within our reach. They "never sup without music," we are told. But chiefest of all pleasures they appear to reckon the enjoyment of health. Nor are they votaries of the cult of Mrs Eddy, it seems. For we learn, "Though there is no nation in the world that needs physic so little as they do, yet there is not any that honours it so much."

With the religion and morals of the Utopians, I have little space to deal. But, in confessing their belief in a supreme being, they reserve to themselves the right of private judgment. Whilst, on moral questions, we have almost a summary of the doctrines of Bentham and of Mill. "They inquire," More writes, "into the nature of virtue and pleasure, but their chief dispute is concerning the happiness of a

man, and wherein it consists. . . . They seem, indeed, more inclinable to that opinion that places, if not the whole, yet the chief part of a man's happiness in pleasure." Nor is there wanting a touch of Stoicism—as, for example, when we read, "Virtue is a living according to nature. Reason directs us to keep our minds as free from passion and as cheerful as we can, and that we should consider ourselves as bound by the ties of good nature and humanity to use our utmost endeavours to help forward the happiness of all other persons."

In this Utopia of More there is so much that applies to ourselves that I have yielded to the irresistible temptation of dwelling upon it at some length. But if, as is clear, the needs of our own day are not widely dissimilar from those which More discovered in 1516, I cannot say that I think they will be met by picturing such ideals. The vision, no doubt, we still need. But to realise it, greater imagination of the practical sort is called for.

The Utopias of the past, and More's no less than the rest, all suffer from one fundamental

defect: they leave no room for the exercise of the will. Everything is so arranged as to spare humanity the need of originality, deliberation, and volition. In this they display, to my mind, an ignorance far beyond that of the writer of Genesis. It is impossible (and the fact must needs be faced) that things should proceed without let and hindrance. And supposing that they could, we should immediately reduce men to the level of automata.

As it is, we have to remember that the further we seem to be from our ideal the greater hope there is for us. For, after all, that ideal develops and deepens only as man grows and presses on to achieve. In the meanwhile, it is true, circumstances are constantly arising which seem to imperil our spiritual and social security. Problems greater than any which exercised men in the past arise, and greater wisdom and resourcefulness is demanded in solving them. But it is here, and in this alone, that our greater hope and consolation lies. So long as we are conscious of the defects and abuses which are around us, we need never

despair. All that we have to do, we may be sure, is to set ourselves to work to suggest a remedy. And so long as we remain true to this principle, we need never fear for the future.

It is this principle which I should call the "Utopian attitude." It promises us, it is true, no immediate Millennium. It holds out no prospect of universal beatification. But it does imply this: an enlargement of heart, a deepening of the moral nature, and an increase of intellectual efficiency.

The world, as it exists to-day, is in many respects perhaps scarcely better than it was in the time of More. Poverty is still with us: opulence is still craved and cringed to. Crime still haunts our highways. But, above all these things, one fact greater than all the rest impresses us: it is Man's increasing sense of power and responsibility. Above the tumult and the strife and the clatter, we hear the shout of a great awakening. The soul of man, though still bound by the fetters of ignorance and folly, is struggling to be free. And we,

who watch its efforts to attain liberation, are consoled, realising as we do that it is in our power to aid this.

One thought, above all others, must encourage us to-day. And it is that, if we can no longer look for any local Utopia, there is no occasion to desire it. The commingling of races, the intercourse between men of all nationalities, and the better understanding which has been elicited between them—all point to one unmistakable fact : that the New Utopia, whenever it arrives, must be world-wide.

How feeble, beside what has even now been accomplished in the world, seem these dreams of the past ! How glorious are the opportunities and possibilities of to-day ! Wherever one turns, it is the same. On all sides, human advancement is testifying to the advent of the new order. Here we see schemes set afoot for promoting peace and goodwill between nations ; there the rise of industrialism ; and elsewhere the growth of co-operative effort, the rise of garden-cities and the like. Everywhere it is the same. On all hands, we see that the

religious life of the community has overflowed its banks. It has run far beyond its old channels. It has entered into the secular sphere, and in so doing purified and uplifted the life of the masses.

Much, no doubt, remains to be done. But the forces which are making for peace, for liberty, for fraternity—in spite of the tendency to reaction—shall yet establish the ideal commonwealth for man. It may not come by a bound. But the steps which are being taken will lead to it.

One thought only remains to be added. It is this: that those who are conscious of this latest phase cannot be content to remain as onlookers. They also must *play their part.* Whatever the ultimate end, whenever it be reached, somewhat remains *to be done* individually, by all, as well as collectively.

The modern man who is thus in step with his age will not stay to ask himself why should I heed the impulse? Whither he proceeds, he may not tell. It is enough that, having derived such a vision of the Fair and the Beautiful,

he should strive to render somewhat to the Universe who gave it.

To have added something to swell the sum-total of life: to have contributed, in however small a degree, to the worth and splendour of the whole—such will be the aim, the Religion, of the ethical idealist to-day. With William Morris, he shall realise that "the reward of labour is life"; and thus knowing, his soul shall see the sublime sufficiency of the least, as well as the greatest, endeavour, so long as it be directed to the supreme and sovereign end: Humanity.

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