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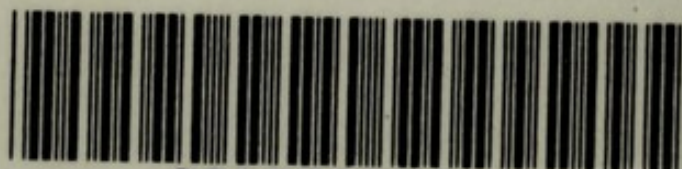


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HUMAN CHARACTER



*By the same Author*

MODERN SCIENCE AND MATERIALISM  
MODERN SCIENCE & THE ILLUSIONS  
OF PROFESSOR BERGSON

With Preface by SIR RAY LANKESTER, K.C.B.,  
F.R.S., etc.

LETTERS OF JOHN STUART MILL

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# HUMAN CHARACTER

BY  
HUGH ELLIOT

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

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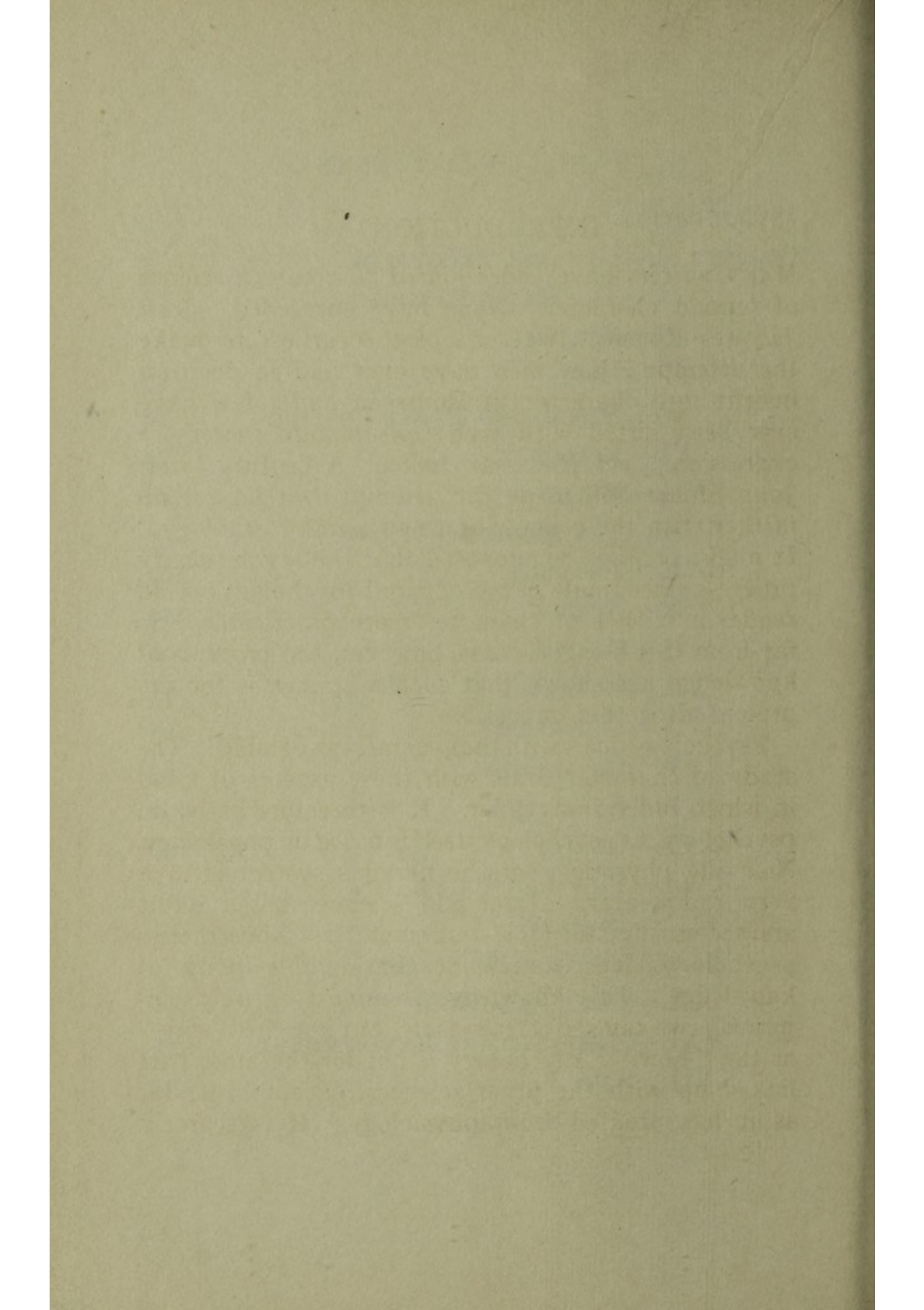
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## INTRODUCTION

MANY writers have endeavoured to create a science of human character. None have succeeded. Jean Jacques Rousseau was one of the earliest to make the attempt. Few men have ever had so deep an insight into character as Rousseau had ; few have ever been gifted with such consummate powers of expression ; yet Rousseau failed. A century later, John Stuart Mill made the attempt, but he got no farther than the coinage of a new name "ethology." It might perhaps be supposed that the revolutionary progress since made in biology and psychology would render a science of character more practicable. So far from this being the case, however, the progress of knowledge has shown that such a science is for the present altogether impossible.

Psychology deals with the general laws of mind. The study of character deals with those aspects of mind in which individuals differ. It is therefore based on psychology, as psychology itself is based on physiology. Now the physiology of the nervous system is in a very rudimentary state, and sciences based on it are necessarily still more rudimentary. Nevertheless psychology does contain a considerable body of knowledge. This knowledge is almost entirely empirical ; we can see certain facts, but not the " why " or the " how." Psychology is not for the most part linked up with the other sciences, except in so far as it has profited from physiology. It is scarcely



entitled to be called a science at all. It is merely a collection of haphazard and isolated observations, the significance of which is obscure, and must remain obscure until they have been "explained" by physiology.

The study of character is not, and cannot for a long time be in a state which would justify the introduction of any name ending in "-ology." It cannot begin to be a science, until we begin to explain the variations in character by reference to variations of the nervous system. All that can be done, and all that it is attempted to do in the present work, is to bring together in a concrete form a collection of random observations and throw them into as systematic a shape as possible.

The observations, though random, must not be superficial. The study of character is not one that can be undertaken by anybody without previous preparation. Observations, not carried out in the light of extensive knowledge, are worthless. Wide knowledge is essential—knowledge of science, knowledge of literature, and above all knowledge of men and women of all kinds and of different races. Knowledge is essential ;—and yet mere knowledge by itself avails little towards an understanding of character. Some of the most learned men in the world are as children in the comprehension of their fellow-men. It is not knowledge alone that is needed—though without it nothing can be done—it is experience of the world from many different points of view. A life which has had many vicissitudes is in itself a good training. A rich man and a poor man see the world in different ways. One who has been both rich and



poor knows more than either. In England, the upper, middle, and lower classes all have their own outlook on social life. One who has lived in all these different strata of society can shear away from his outlook the adventitious peculiarities of each class, and lay hold on what is common to all classes. The greater the vicissitudes of life, the more abundant the material for a study of character.

Many other qualifications are called for. The mind bent on a study of character should be exclusive and detached. The student must move among men of all kinds ; he must be with them, and yet not of them. He must enter into their feelings and opinions enough to understand them and sympathise with them, but not so much as to be carried away by them. He must be a listener rather than a talker, a thinker rather than an actor, belonging to no set, but received as an equal among people of the most varied kinds. Above all, he must not be these things by conscious effort, but because he is built that way, and can do no other.

If all these qualities were essential to the study of character, it would be an act of presumption in anyone to undertake it. Indeed no one can get very far without realising the astonishing difficulties of the subject. The inquirer must often be reduced to the verge of despair. Many have given way to despair and abandoned the effort. But if no one makes the attempt, nothing can ever be done. It is in that spirit that the present work is undertaken.

The difficulties of literary exposition are also very great. The subject is a single whole, but it is necessary for literary purposes to break it up into chapters,



and to deal with it part by part, thereby giving an appearance of separateness to what is really unified and indissoluble. For unity is an essential feature of mind. A further untoward result of this necessity is that some overlapping is involved between the chapters. Where no hard and fast lines of demarcation can be drawn, this seems almost inevitable. An explorer making his way through a subterranean labyrinth will often arrive at the same point by different routes. After wandering for some time he comes back to where he has been before. In the study of character there is no established classification; there are no high roads along which we may advance, such as have been established in the natural sciences. We grope all the time, and find our way as best we can. We do not affirm that the paths we have selected are really the main routes through the labyrinth; we merely say that they are the best we have been able to find in the course of our explorations. Nor do we affirm that we have covered the whole ground; that claim would indeed be ludicrous. All that we claim to have done is to have travelled through certain parts of this intricate maze, and to have gathered certain general truths which here and there shed a flicker of light in the general obscurity.

As to the *kind* of knowledge which is most useful, it may be said that there are very few branches of learning altogether irrelevant. Biology must be the foundation of everything in our study. Anatomy of the brain and nervous system is of indirect utility. The physiology of the nervous system is of first-class importance. If the main principles of nervous physiology are firmly rooted in the back of the mind,



the observing eye will move with far greater discernment and intelligence. Psychology also is an important part of the training. But it has to be remembered that psychology is not yet fully emancipated from metaphysics. It is often very academic and unreal, accentuating points of little significance, and overlooking others of much significance. It is by no means singular to find professors of psychology whose understanding of human character is no higher than that of a schoolboy, and far lower than that of an ordinary man of the world. The reputation of such persons is founded on the heavy labouring of academic points of little real interest ; on minute descriptions of one or two trees growing in a forest which they have never noticed. In recent years, however, psychology has become more vital and real ; and the student of character certainly cannot dispense with it.

After science, literature forms a valuable preparation. Great writers, far more than men of science, penetrate human nature, and often hit upon truths of great interest and value. In this connection, Shakespeare possessed a more profound insight into character than perhaps any other writer. We have quoted freely from great writers in the course of the present work, but from none so freely as from Shakespeare, who might be described as the greatest psychologist the world has ever known. All branches of literature are useful, and particularly foreign literatures, which often bring out aspects unfamiliar to us, and throw into relief points which might otherwise have escaped observation.

But it is not in books that we shall learn to know



human nature. On the contrary too much reading is a burden, which brings not a truer view of life, but a view artificially extracted and to some degree distorted. Moreover there is an early limit of what can be learnt from books. The literature of one generation in one country carries a few general ideas which oscillate about, and appear in numerous different forms.

When we have read a few of the most important books of the period, we have little more to learn. Other books present us with the same ideas over again, though dressed up in a form which makes them appear to be new. Hence our study of literature should range back over the past, and should be extended to foreign countries, until there are few departments with which we are altogether unfamiliar. And the fewer the books which we read in the course of this study, the less likely are we to be thrown off our natural balance, and overweighted by book-learning.

For, as we have said, it is not in books that we shall learn to know men. Books are an adjunct, more or less indispensable. We learn to know men first and foremost by moving among men, and by the varied relations which we have with our fellow-creatures. We cannot take shelter in a cloister; we have to move out in the great world—to knock about the world—to enter into varied relations with humanity, to feel their joys, and suffer their sorrows, to fight our way with them, to win with them, and to lose with them. We have to live among men, and to gain from them at first-hand the material for our study of character. The scientific knowledge and the literary



knowledge are altogether secondary. Their function is not to teach us directly, but to discipline our minds—to steep our minds in an atmosphere which enables us to observe the significant facts and to discard the insignificant. Science and literature train the mind for the study of character. Without them our observations would be desultory and blind ; we should be led away by false theories : we should mistake the inessential for the essential ; we might *see* much, but we should *perceive* nothing. But science and literature are merely the preliminaries ; the studies best adapted for directing our observations on sound lines. All our knowledge must come from the observations which, thus prepared, we find ourselves able to make.

In addition to this preparation of positive knowledge there is required a considerable training in what might be called negative knowledge. That is to say we must learn to get rid of the innumerable biasses and prejudices with which we are quite certain to start. A person with an altogether untrained mind is not necessarily a person without ideas. He is usually a person with confirmed ideas ; his mind is very far from empty ; it is filled with all sorts of conceptions which have been acquired by tradition or suggestion, and accepted without criticism. These prepossessions gravely embarrass the mind in the perception of truth. Wrong in themselves, they cumber the ground and definitely interfere with the growth of truer views. They need not indeed be always wrong ; but they are nearly always shallow. They interpret character by its obvious and superficial traits, instead of by the deeper and more fundamental traits. As an instance, we may mention the classification of men



into those who are good and those who are bad. In a sense it is a true classification, but it is a shallow one, and leads to no further insight into character or motives. We could similarly divide men into those who have fair hair and those who have dark. The moral classification of men is of great practical importance no doubt ; but there it ends. We may herd men as sheep and goats ; and for many purposes we must do so ; but if we get below the surface, we discover that there is no real bond of similarity among the sheep, or among the goats. The similarity is superficial only ; and, in order to group men according to their real affinities, we shall have to classify them on altogether different principles. We must therefore reconstitute our minds, not only by learning, but also by unlearning, which to most people is a much more difficult task.

Another shallow and artificial classification of men is that according to their social quality or degree. Useful as this may be for many of the ordinary purposes of life, it immediately fails us if we pass beyond the narrow sphere within which it is sufficiently true. Honours are altogether adventitious ; even a man's name is not a part of him ; it is an arbitrary sound which has been attached to him by his neighbours, but is in no way a part of his personality. Divest a prince of his clothes, his honours, and his name, and cast him naked on the world ; he will then appear *as he is*, and will very likely sink to the lowest strata of society. If we deprive men of all that is adventitious, they are then seen for what they are—units in the great human hive, temporary lessees of life, curious natural phenomena which effloresce



for a few years, and then suffer disintegration and oblivion. The life of a species is relatively continuous ; from generation to generation it animates a fresh collection of individuals. They are the vessels of life, always being renewed, the old ones passing away, the new ones rising into existence ; the life of the species is the only life that lasts. The lives of individuals are but passing phases of it. But it is not thus that we ordinarily see men. We see them covered with adventitious trappings ; the crude natural facts are obscured by shallow but all-pervasive artifice ; and we see the characters of men, not as they really are, but as they seem to be through the translucent disguises of social convention.

Thus there are many difficulties which surge up in the path of the student of character. We have mentioned only the more important. He needs many qualities, some of which are congenital and not capable of being acquired by those who lack them. The present writer would not have it supposed that his attempt implies any claim to special possession of these qualities. On the contrary, the need for them has often been borne in upon him by the sharp experience of his own deficiencies, as well as from the advantages which he has derived from such of them as he may think he partially possesses. One further caution is needed. In view of the exceptional difficulties of the subject, he has allowed himself great latitude in the mode of treatment. He has not felt bound, in his choice of words for instance, by the technical usages of psychology. He has selected the words which appear most likely to convey his meaning to the average reader, even though such selection



may appear loose to the expert. But some degree of looseness is not without its advantages. Our ideas cannot as yet be very precise, and undue precision in the terminology would be misleading. Precise terminology connotes an underlying theory. We have not aimed at forcing the facts within the current theories of psychology, but rather at presenting the facts and allowing such theories to emerge from them, as may naturally arise.



## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

ALL that immediate observation can tell us about a man is what he does. We can see his movements ; we can hear his conversation ; we can perceive the expression on his face. All these phases are due to muscular contractions, great or small, complex or simple, which cause an immediate effect upon our senses. They may be classed together as action, and it is only actions which are immediately perceptible to the observer.

When we begin to ask why the man performed these particular actions, we are thrown back on inference. We instinctively imagine ourselves in his place : we know the kind of motive that would lead us to the same actions ; and we attribute similar motives to the man before us. But it is an inference, not an observation, and very often an erroneous inference. Sometimes the motive is obvious, as, for instance, when a man having inadvertently touched a flame suddenly withdraws his hand. Sometimes, on the contrary, the motive is very deep and obscure.

The study of human character is the study of motives. We can see only the outside of a man ; we want to know what goes on inside. His actions are the data from which we start ; from them we have to infer his thoughts and feelings, so as to realise the state of mind prompting the actions which are all that we can observe. The question is often fraught with insuperable difficulties. We do not know



why other people do certain things. We often do not know why even we ourselves do the things that we do ; though, in our desire to be logical, we invent reasons for them, which are sufficient to satisfy our thirst for reason. Witness the clumsy and ponderous efforts of Herbert Spencer to ascertain the real motives which had led him to write a *System of Philosophy*.

The obsession of logic lies at the root of much misunderstanding of human character. We try to explain actions by reference to logical motives : and we fail, because the motives are very commonly not logical, and are in fact more powerful than any which logic is capable of producing. If we wish to understand human character, the first and foremost proposition which we have to grasp is that motives do not spring from intellect but from feeling : that the world of human life is governed, not by reason, but by passion, emotion, and sentiment.

Among other animals than man, this is obvious. They act by an instinct of which they are unconscious ; they do not act from reason, though where there is an appearance of method in their behaviour, uninstructed persons are too ready to suppose that they are guided by a power of reasoning. The human being is merely one species, distinguished, it is true, by the size of its brain. But the fundamental needs of the human being are the same as those of other animals :—maintenance and preservation of the individual, maintenance and preservation of the species. These requirements are carried out through the same agency as in the rest of the vertebrates : that is, by instinct, which when fully mobilised and brought into



consciousness we call passion or emotion. But it is very often not mobilised, and not brought into consciousness; and we then do not realize what motives have prompted our actions.

Human actions are of course infinitely more varied, methodical, and adaptable than those of the lower animals. They are not initiated by reason, but they are carried out by reason. Intellect is the means whereby the behests of emotion are performed. Emotion is the driving force: intellect is the instrument which it often uses; it is not itself a force, or a motive. It is, however, often by far the most conspicuous element in the state of mind which leads to action. The action is attributed therefore to the faculty of reasoning, instead of to the deep and obscure emotion which lies buried in the recesses of the unconscious. In the human mind, what is most easily seen is what is most on the surface and least significant. The strongest forces are those which are buried deepest, and which we have in common with other animals. To understand character, we have continually to be shredding off the externals, and going beneath them. The true significance of a motive might almost be said to be inversely proportional to the ease of discerning it.

We may take as an example our motives for doing right and refraining from actions that are wrong. The old theory was very simple and thoroughly logical. Wrong was that which offended God; and if we did wrong, we should suffer the pains of Hell. Well, there is a definite motive at all events—a motive based on reason—but is it, or was it ever, the real motive for refraining from evil? At the present



day, a great many people do not believe in God, and a still greater number do not believe in Hell. Yet, notwithstanding all the prejudice raised against them, it is not alleged that they are less moral or more iniquitous than true believers. Writers on ethics have rushed to the rescue from all sides: they have tried to find fresh foundations for morals, to take the place of dying religion. They seek those foundations in reason, but they have not yet found them: nor are they likely to find them. They say that such and such conduct is detrimental to society; very likely they are right; but can they really imagine that an academic argument of this sort is capable of chaining up the powerful animal passions of humanity? Neither God nor Hell could do that; and to imagine that a metaphysical dissertation can govern the conduct of mankind, betrays an ignorance of human character that is blank and overwhelming.

And yet the animal passions of a large proportion of humanity are kept under control. It is not logic or reasoning that chain them; it is another passion—another instinct—of the same order as themselves, and very nearly as strong. The moral emotions are a deep and powerful instinct, buried in every mind, and so much part of our constitution that we are almost unaware of their very existence. We refrain from wrong-doing as the result of a deep emotion which controls our actions, very often unknown to ourselves. This truth was seen as far back as Adam Smith; it has been seen here and there by writers of later periods; it has been expounded in our own time by Professor Westermarck, who stands almost



alone among ethical writers. We shall deal with it later. Here we have only to point out how men, blinded by the gospel of reason, seek for some *logical* motive for right conduct—some motive that they can *see* with their logical eyes. The real motive is not logical ; it is not founded in reason but in feeling ; and it is buried so deep that they cannot see it. If the only motive were one of logic or reason, it would be blown away like a straw in the first breeze that came. Fortunately for the human species, the bulwark of morals is infinitely stronger than any yet offered us either by religion or by metaphysics.

The first point to appreciate about human character, therefore, is that motives spring from instinct, not from reason : that the human mind consists of feelings, to which intellect is merely a superficial veneer.

The next fundamental point to observe is that our mental life is a sequence of thoughts and feelings, following each other in endless succession. We experience from time to time an immense variety of different feelings, but within certain limits we experience only one of these at any one moment. In other words we cannot attend to more than one thing at a time. The remainder of our feelings rest inactive, until some stimulus happens to evoke them, and when one comes in the other goes out. We may figure the mind as a vast collocation of *potential* feelings, over which the light of consciousness travels unceasingly, illuminating one or two at a time and leaving the rest in darkness. These one or two feelings are for the time being actual ; all the rest of the mind is potential.



Since what a man *does* is the resultant of what he *feels*, he may in similar situations do very different things at different times. The situation in which he finds himself may affect his feelings, and cause him to act differently from the way in which he has acted on previous occasions. In short, the character of an individual is not an absolute fixed property, but fluctuates from time to time according to his physical state as well as to the mental factors which may be in operation. Where these are very unusual and powerful, the individual does or says things which give rise to the comment "He is beside himself" or "He is not himself." We recognise that his actions are not normal to him: that external factors have caused a certain torsion of the mind, and induced temporarily a new character. In love, such changes are very conspicuous, and have given rise to proverbs, with the ethical value of which we are not concerned:—

"The gods are deaf to hot and peevish vows."

"Unheedful vows may heedfully be broken."

Though such changes of personality are only conspicuous under exceptional influences, they are constantly occurring in less conspicuous manner under the ordinary influences of common life. Most men have a somewhat different character before dinner from what they have after dinner. In short, character is an abstraction—a name for the *average* mental manifestations, and not representing anything fixed or constant. People differ much in this respect. Some have closely knit characters, which do not ever fluctuate widely from the mean. Others have very loose characters, and are capable of assuming many different rôles in different environments.



The mind as a whole is dormant at any one time ; one part alone is in activity. It gives rise to an incessant stream of mental energy, which however is always flowing out from some fresh region. A continuous flame is burning—the flame of conscious thoughts and feelings ; but this flame of consciousness never remains still ; it is for ever shifting its ground ; it travels over the mind, emanating now from one quarter, now from another. And the intensity with which it burns never alters very widely. In times of excitement it burns brightly, in times of dullness it dwindles ; but the extremes are not wide apart.

Its average luminosity however is different with different people. Some appear to live a vivid and intense conscious life ; others are cold and dull. That is to say, some have a larger average flow of mental energy than others—a matter which appears to be determined almost entirely by heredity. Those whose energy is abundant and vivid are capable of great accomplishments. The others are capable of less. Among mankind there are the lilies and the weeds ; those of high potentialities and those of low. Those of high potentialities may, of course, exert them either for good or harm. They may be exalted or degraded in mind ; but in either case they are more so than those of low potentialities.

“ Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.”

If we regard the mind as a mass of potential feelings, each of which is liable to become active under suitable stimulus, then all that the external stimulus does is to evoke a feeling, which expresses itself in action. Take for instance the case of a person who falls in love. The lady is not, properly speaking, the cause of



the love, but the stimulus which evokes amorous tendencies already present in potential form. The reason why a man falls in love is that he is of amorous proclivity, and the lady is merely a key which opens the floodgates. Other keys would have had the same effect. The emotion is very exclusive, however, and when it becomes concentrated on one person, it is relatively anaesthetic to others. Moreover, given a suitable key, the intensity of love has little relation to the real virtues of the lady ; it depends on the constitution of the individual concerned. In short the external stimulus does not *create* feelings ; it merely unlocks them and renders them active. It is clear that no stimulus can lash into activity what is not originally present. Some men are not capable of falling much in love, even under the best adapted circumstances ; others are prone to love with intensity even though the external motive is far from prepossessing. Their amorous tendency is sensitive enough to be aroused on slight provocation.

It follows that the actions of men are not in main part due to their apparent external cause. They are due to the constitution of the man himself ; the external cause merely determines the upheaval and illumination of this particular side of his mind.

Let us take another instance. It is sometimes alleged that if kings and aristocracies were abolished, men would cease to be snobbish. This opinion is due to the same fallacy, which supposes that the external cause *creates* the feeling, instead of merely mobilising it. Snobbishness is not due to kings and aristocracies. It would be nearer the mark to say that kings and aristocracies are due to snobbishness ;



for snobbishness is a strong innate feeling ; and all strong feelings encourage the growth of external institutions which incite and stimulate them. Those feelings, if deprived of this particular form of stimulus, would soon turn to some other. Given the sentiment, some stimulus or other is sure to be found for unlocking it. If not a king, well then anyone of unusual qualities or wealth will serve.

“ A substitute shines brightly as a king,  
Until a king be by.”

The strength of the sentiment depends, *not* on its external cause, but on the mental constitution of the individual.

Such is the case again with wars. Why do nations make war ? Many objective reasons are always given. There has been an aggression by the enemy ; the enemy has committed some offence ; therefore war must be made upon him. And those, who think that the key to human nature is found in logic, elaborate the most ingenious arguments as to why it is absolutely essential to go to war.

The arguments may be beyond criticism—or they may not. But certain it is that, among modern civilisations they do not touch the real cause of war. The alleged or real offence committed by the enemy merely unlocks the deep and warlike sentiments which slumber in men. When those sentiments have slept for long, they become very sensitive, and ready to be called into activity by the least stimulus. Men do not make war as the result of a process of logic. They make war because something has awakened their warlike sentiments ; and having determined to make war, they proceed to justify the procedure by logic,



and then fancy that the logical motive is the real motive. War does not spring from the intellect but from the passions and instincts of mankind. If those passions are jaded and exhausted, men are difficult to whip into war. An offence by the enemy attracts little attention. But if the passions are fresh and unused, that same offence will suffice to set all civilisation in a blaze. Measures taken for the prevention of war commonly overlook this fact. They aim at abolishing the objective, ostensible, logical causes of war. But the real effective cause lies in the human heart. By removing the external stimuli, wars may *perhaps* be made less frequent. But so long as warlike passions persist, war will persist. When the passion becomes restive, it will soon find a stimulus. The angry man does not have to look far before he finds occasion for offence ; and the whole machinery of prevention by logic will be rent into shreds and swept away in a moment.

So it is with all our social institutions, such as law or government. They appear to be the motive force compelling people to certain kinds of conduct. But fundamentally they are the product of the instincts and emotions of the people—the machinery by which these deep and powerful, but obscure, sentiments are brought into action. The fall of Rome was not due to the barbarians ; it was due to the decadence of the Roman people. Men are not passive and logical instruments, on which impressions can be registered and translated into action. They are storehouses of energy ; it is the internal energy that controls their actions. All that is done by outward impressions is to release energy in this or that direction.



The mental life consists then of a succession of feelings following continuously upon one another. The more vivid the feeling of the moment, the more buried is the remainder of the mind. The feeling existing at the moment represents the entire flow of mental energy at that moment. If it is merely feeble there may be room for other feelings to coexist with it to a certain extent. But strong mental concentration implies anaesthesia elsewhere. Soldiers in battle often do not know that they are wounded. They feel the pain only when the excitement has passed off and new sensations can arise into consciousness. Persons buried in thought are "absent-minded." In extreme concentration all feelings are obliterated, save that reigning for the moment.

In short a fundamental factor in human character is the orientation of attention. Circumstances often result in the forcing upon attention of certain aspects of life. Persons of low degree, for instance, are apt to find themselves in situations where their social inferiority is brought unpleasantly before their minds. In this way their attention is forced upon questions of status. This usually gives rise to snobbery, or to aggressive insistence upon equality, or to oversensitive pride—"How apt the poor are to be proud." There will in some form or other be a special reaction to social status; whereas in another individual, more happily circumstanced, such questions will make no impression on his mind.

The direction of a person's interests and attention is thus a far more important point in his character than the opinions which he holds on the subjects in question. A tyrant and a slave, for instance, are much



more alike than either of them is to a free citizen. For both a tyrant and a slave have prominently in their minds the conception of subordination—the régime of command and obey. The free citizen thinks in altogether different ways. His mind gives little response to that aspect of life. The slave would at once become a tyrant, if circumstances were altered; and in point of fact, persons of servile character towards their superiors are usually domineering towards their inferiors.

Similarly, in sexual matters, prudery is more nearly allied to excess than either of them is to indifference. Prudery may, and often does, pass into excess: in each case the mind is responsive to questions of sex, and it is chiefly a question of environment and education whether the response is in the direction of prudery or the reverse.

As in matters of sex, so with regard to drink, the characters of the teetotaller and the drunkard are more alike than either is to that of the man who takes no interest in the question. The teetotaller is a potential drunkard, just as the prude is a potential rake, and the slave a potential tyrant. The most extreme teetotalism exists side by side with drunkenness; and in countries where one is little developed, so also will be the other. In many political and social movements, the opponents are often much nearer one another than either is to persons outside the movement altogether. An extreme anabaptist is more likely to become an extreme baptist than one who is not interested in the question of baptism. In all spheres, the views entertained by any person are less significant for a diagnosis of his character than



the subjects on which his attention is focused. Indifference and interest are in wider contrast than the hostile views on one side or the other. The fact is deeply rooted in the physiology of the nervous system. The electrical manifestations which accompany a feeling of pleasure are more similar to those which accompany a feeling of pain than to those which characterise indifference; and in all human life, pleasure far more easily converts to pain than to indifference.

The interests and feelings of an individual are thus mainly influential in determining what impressions he receives from the external world. They also give a colouring to whatever impressions are received. A pure mind picks up from the world only those aspects which conform to its sentiments. The evil of the world is not so much condemned as unnoticed, "for unstained thoughts do seldom dream on evil." An evil mind, on the other hand, picks out the evil aspects of the world; the better aspects being largely unobserved. "Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile." The harsh judgments passed by self-constituted moralists on all and sundry are invariably the sign of an evil mind—a mind attuned to all forms of vice, and blind to the better qualities of human nature. This is why "charity shall cover the multitude of sins." It is not self-conscious charity, for which the individual gives himself full credit in his own mind; it is the spontaneous and unconscious good feeling of a mind to which good has far easier access than evil. Such a mind may indeed be guilty of a multitude of sins; but they are sins against



conventions rather than against men ; they are sins in which no malice is involved.

We here find an explanation also of that human tendency which the Freudians call "projection." If we view anyone with feelings of dislike, and harbour hostile intentions towards him, we are almost certain to attribute to him similar feelings and similar intentions towards ourselves, though this may be quite contrary to the fact. We read into his mind the feelings which exist in our own. For the drift of our thoughts blinds us to his better qualities, while leaving us highly sensitive to all his worse qualities. People often give away their inner thoughts unintentionally by unconsciously assuming that others are thinking or feeling the same as they do. Hence the proverb "*qui s'excuse s'accuse.*" A person who has committed an offence, great or small, imagines that others suspect him of having committed it ; and his attempts to excuse or palliate it often bring about suspicion which never otherwise would have been entertained. One of the main reasons why people misunderstand one another is the assumption that the attention and feelings of other people are similar to their own. Hence, where feeling runs high, as often in political spheres, each side is apt to attribute insincerity to the other. Each side is so totally unable to imagine any other thoughts than its own, that the expression of a different opinion is immediately put down to an intentional wish to pervert the truth.

The human mind therefore is not a *tabula rasa*, equally receptive to impressions of any kind, as was alleged by Helvetius. It is a highly selective machine, extremely sensitive to impressions of one kind, and



anaesthetic to impressions of other kinds. Different minds also are very different in their orientation; hence the different points of view, the different modes of feeling that arise in different persons from identical external impressions. The world presents an infinite number of aspects, and the character of an individual depends upon which of these aspects he is sensitive to, and which escape his notice.

Feelings differ from one another according to whether they are deep or superficial. Deep feelings are those which constantly recur and are permanent actuating motives in the life of the individual. Shallow feelings are those which are purely ephemeral, arising out of some passing episode of the environment. Shallow feelings are often very intense in their expression. Though not lasting, they may be of great strength for a brief period. Deep feelings are often very mild on the contrary. Sometimes they are so deep that we are barely conscious of them; they are allied to instincts, and govern our lives almost unseen, or (if it may be said of a feeling) unfelt. Many indeed of our motives are organic rather than conscious. Consciousness is somewhat of an adventitious factor, appertaining only to certain kinds of nervous processes. Many of the differences in human character depend upon the following principles.

First, there are variations in the volume of the normal current of disposable mental energy. There are the people whose mental life is strong, and those in whom it is weak.

Secondly, some people are governed more by the permanent and deeper feelings; others by the



transient feelings of the moment. Some are solid, and others are mercurial.

Thirdly, there is the difference of suggestibility. Some people take the colour and thoughts of their environment. Others are comparatively impenetrable, and pursue the path which they have laid down for themselves.

Fourthly, the current of mental life, though more or less constant for one individual, may be concentrated strongly in a few interests, or spread less strongly over many. The stream may run torrentially through a narrow gorge, as in the fanatic, or it may flow placidly over wide meadows. The volume of water is the same in both cases. The current of mental life is sure to have many vicissitudes, even in the experience of one individual; but to some, narrowness and force are normal, to others width and gentleness.

Fifthly, men vary according to the actual feelings of which their mental current is characteristically composed. Some are intellectual, others emotional, others again abound in active energy. Each of these *pro tanto* excludes the others; though where the innate endowment of energy is high, more than one may be powerfully developed, and the mind may switch readily from one sphere to the other. After all, the differences are not great. Everyone has more or less intellectual capacity, more or less emotional capacity, more or less active energy. We are concerned only with slight differences in the proportions of these. A slight excess of one or defect of another may appear to us as a large difference of



character, though intrinsically they are but trifling departures from the normal.

We have to remember that, though we speak throughout in terms of mind, we are really dealing with manifestations of the brain and central nervous system. The perpetual current of mental energy to which we have referred is in reality a flow of nervous energy. The nervous system is a storehouse of energy continually burning with a steady flame, and continually supplied afresh by nutrition. We may use the simile of a will-o'-the-wisp dancing over a marsh. It never remains still ; it travels to and fro within the limits of its marsh, never varying much in brightness. It is not a permanent entity but a permanent process ; like a steady flame, it appears to be a thing because it is a continuous process. The marsh represents the brain and nervous system : the will-o'-the-wisp represents the mind. Small wonder that philosophers have never been able to impound it, and have wasted numberless volumes in the vain and paradoxical endeavour to ascertain what kind of *substance* this *function* is composed of.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MAJOR PASSIONS

By most of the older writers on character, it was assumed that human actions and motives were governed by reason or conscious purpose. Superficially purpose does seem to lie at the basis of most human activities. Reason, however, is not a motive in itself. Men are not moved primarily by reason, but by feeling ; and reason is merely an instrument by which they attain the ends desired. These ends are inspired by feeling, of the existence and purpose of which we are often unconscious. Since it is feeling, and not intellect, which inspires human action, it is in feeling that we must seek the key to character.

In order that the human race may survive and flourish, human actions must, on the whole, be directed to three great ends :—the survival of the individual, the perpetuation of the species, and the maintenance of society. If men did not attend to their personal welfare and security, and were indifferent to the continuance of life, the race would perish by the early death of its individuals. If they were indifferent to the propagation of the species and lacking in the instincts of reproduction and parenthood, the race would similarly perish by depletion, or the lack of new generations to take the place of the old. And if, finally, men had none of the instincts of social life, they would lose the benefits of unity and the strength of numbers, and would speedily succumb in their



single-handed battles against a hostile environment : the struggle for existence would be so severe as to involve speedy extinction of the race.

In response to these three primary needs, there are three primary instincts deeply rooted in the human mind. All the major emotions and passions are related more or less directly to these primary instincts. Among the lower animals, they may be observed in their naked and primitive form ; but among men they are disguised and refined in a multitude of different ways and under many different names. Man has a far wider range of emotions than the lower animals. Under the instinct of self-preservation, there are included such diverse feelings as egoism, ambition, desire for power and for wealth, vanity, greed, pride, courage, self-confidence, pugnacity, etc. Some of these we are accustomed to regard as high and some as low qualities. From the purely scientific point of view, however, their moral bearing is irrelevant : they all have for their goal the survival and prosperity of the individual : and for want of a more suitable name, we shall refer to them under the title of egoism.

The instinct of reproduction likewise appears in many different guises, which may be placed together under the title of love. The social feelings are also predominant in every walk of life, and have given rise to a code of morals. Though morals are often supposed to be based on reason or on religion, the true source of their immense strength and hold upon mankind is the social instinct.

These three fundamental instincts, with their varieties, govern nearly all the so-called purposive activities of human life. They will be dealt with



later in separate chapters. Normally they carve out the destinies of men with but little show of feeling and nothing to suggest the prodigious power which they exert upon the mind. They are so universally present, they fill so large a part of our lives, that we are no more actively conscious of their presence than we are of the ground we walk upon. We soon become conscious of the ground we walk upon, however, if it suddenly terminates in a deep chasm, or rises abruptly into a precipice: and so, too, the great human instincts are liable at any time to be mobilised in consciousness, giving rise to intense feeling or emotion or passion. We have to consider now some of the characteristics of passions in general.

Passion is a state of nervous excitement, tending to express itself in muscular and glandular activity. Generally speaking, passion left to itself becomes converted into action; and every passion has a specific form of action into which it most readily passes. Thus anger expresses itself by hitting the person who has aroused it; fear expresses itself by running away; grief has its own forms of expression, often by activity of the lachrymal glands: love leads to other kinds of activities: surprise leads to actions which satisfy curiosity, and so on. In short, passion is not compatible with a state of inactivity, unless on the one hand it is strongly controlled by the will, or, on the other hand, it is so powerful as to be paralysing, as, for instance, in extreme terror.

The natural expression of passion results in its relief, and the suppression of the natural activities are very apt to increase the tension of the passion. Anger is relieved by blows: grief is relieved by tears:



" Give sorrow words : the grief that does not speak  
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

The same is true of love :—

" Free vent of words love's fire doth assuage."

Before the days of chloroform surgeons used to encourage their patients to cry out during operations. The pain was less felt if it was allowed free expression.

Where the expression is very violent by comparison with the emotion causing it, that emotion may be altogether drained off and vanish.

" The violence of either grief or joy

Their own enactures with themselves destroy."

Nearly always a violent expression exhausts passion and leads to a state of calm : a fact which has led to the French proverb, "*Les grosses pluies durent peu.*"

It often happens, however, that for one reason or another the natural expression is either impossible or else inadequate to relieve the passion. In that case it seeks exit by circuitous routes. An angry man, if he cannot reach the source of his anger, vents it on anyone who may happen to be near by : or he may even assault inanimate objects. One of Montaigne's Essays describes " How the soul dischargeth her passions on false objects when the true fail it." Grief, like other passions, overflows its true object and colours all the thoughts.

" How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world ! "

Or, as Edmund remarks in King Lear :—

" This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeit of our own behaviour—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars."



Thus passion is always relieved by suitable action ; and action is the natural outcome of passion. The action need not necessarily take the form of bodily motion : it may consist of contractions of the facial muscles producing what we call facial expression. Nearly all passions have typical facies, which have been illustrated in works by Darwin and others. Co-ordinated movements of the tongue, lips and larynx give rise to speech, which is a form of action by which emotion may be relieved. A person who is excited about some event that has recently happened will go about reciting the event to all his friends. The excitement is relieved by speech. Patients who have recently undergone operations usually give their visitors a full account of all they have suffered. Their minds are full of it, and the tension is relieved by speech.

✿ Anger is always reduced by free expression in speech. If we have been insulted by someone, our displeasure is relieved by abuse, only less effectually than by blows : the most difficult and the least natural course is that of supporting the insult in silence. Swearing, or the use of bad language, is one common form of expressing annoyance or irritation. It relieves the tension ; but, as an unspecific form of expression, does not relieve it very greatly, and is only felt to be adapted to minor forms of annoyance.

Since passion is relieved by action, and may be altogether exhausted or even inverted by overaction or over-expression, we may regard action as the natural exit or drainage of emotion. Hence when this natural exit is blocked up—when all forms of action and expression are inhibited—the tension may



become very high : the passion grows and strengthens instead of being relieved. The effects of repression are well known, and have been thoroughly worked along certain lines by Freud. A repressed emotion does not dwindle and disappear unless it was weak from the start :—

“ Small lights are soon blown out : huge fires abide.”

A major passion, cut off from expression, either grows in intensity until finally it bursts its bonds, or else it becomes “ sublimated ” : *i.e.*, converted into some other feeling, conscious or unconscious, which finds expression and relief in movements of normal or pathological type. Schoolboys, soldiers and others who have been subjected to the kind of repression involved by rigid discipline, are very apt to break out into riotous behaviour when they are suddenly left free. The noisy and disorderly throngs of a bank holiday are made up of those whose normal lives are spent in enforced subjection.

The effect is the same whether the repression is self-imposed or enforced from without. The most violent and uncontrollable passions are those which escape after being bottled up.

“ The blood of youth burns not with such excess,  
As gravity's revolt to wantonness.”

The puritanism of Cromwell was succeeded by the licence of Charles II. The excesses of the French Revolution were proportional to the previous repressions and sufferings of the people ; and the suddenness with which the Revolution passed away was due to the extreme violence with which the repressed passions escaped. Had expression been moderate, it would have been more lasting. Repres-



sion is accountable for many of the larger forces in life and society, both for good and bad. In fact, large forces can scarcely be generated at all without some previous repression :—" Fire that's closest kept burns most of all"—a truth which we shall continually come across as we proceed.

Passions may undergo other alterations besides that of translation into action ; for one passion may change into another. There is a certain equivalence among passions: they are states of nervous tension, and may within certain limits be transformed one into another, leaving the nervous tension unaltered. Thus love may easily change into hate or into jealousy: and the extent of hate or jealousy is equivalent to the extent of antecedent love. On the occasion of a death, for instance, love commonly changes into grief—the grief being proportional to the love. Fear and hate are also in close alliance: a man may be sometimes feared and sometimes hated—and the more one of these sentiments is in the ascendancy the less is the other felt, while the nervous tension remains constant all the time. Thus where the original nervous tension is high, all the passions to which it may give rise are strong, and are apt to undergo extreme oscillations of form. Lovers' quarrels are proverbially intense ; but they pass off as quickly as they come up. Civil wars are more bitter than wars between races unknown to one another ; for the passions of hate represent in part the pre-existent emotions of social community. Religious wars are similarly bitter, the bitterness being partly derived from a transformation of the deep and powerful religious emotions. Anger may give place to fear, or



fear to anger, at the least stimulus : so, too, anger may convert into grief, or *vice versâ* :

“ Be this the whetstone of your sword : let grief

Convert to anger ; blunt not the heart, enrage it.”

The vigour with which the enemy is pursued is proportional to the anger against him, and that again is proportional to the grief or fear which he has caused. As always, passion passes into action, but the grief or fear does not proceed at once to its normal exit : it transforms into anger of equivalent intensity, and the actions are those characteristic of anger and not of grief. Action is always inspired by emotion of some sort : but very often the emotion which causes it is derived through several transformation stages from some other emotion, which is the original starting-point. Thus the true motives of men are often hard to disentangle, and often quite unknown even to the individual himself. The emotions of egoism, of jealousy, and of sex are particularly liable to these vicarious manifestations, and are accountable for much more of what men do in the world than a superficial view would seem to indicate. They will be referred to later in more detail.

Throughout these easily effected transformations in the quality of emotions, there always remains something permanent, running through each transformation unchanged : it is what we have called the degree of nervous tension. Strong love does not change straightway into mild hate or mild jealousy : nor does a slight grief change into a violent anger. A constant degree of intensity prevails throughout these changes of form, and is the main durable element of them all. Thus a strong emotion persists : it cannot



be built up in a day, nor broken down in a day, though it may at different times assume very different aspects. In short, emotion is a growth, implying a definite modification of the brain-cells; and the length of time required to exhaust it or break it up, may be gauged by the length of time taken to build it. Any passion that arises suddenly is sure to be ephemeral, especially if it is expressed with violence. A love affair that springs up in two or three days has in it no seeds of durability. Sudden anger, sudden fear, sudden hate mean little: they have no material basis in the brain, and vanish as easily as they came. But the deeper passions—those which have grown up over a long period—do not fade so easily. They may change their form from love to jealousy, to hate, to fear, etc.; but one thing they cannot change into, and that is indifference. For indifference means a relaxation of nervous tension, a basic sapping of the emotion, which can only be effected by slow degrees, and may take years to accomplish, or may never be capable of accomplishment at all. In judging the true strength and value of an emotion, therefore, the time-factor is a most important element.

Passion is physically exhausting, and a permanent mobilised emotion is a heavy physiological tax, of the same kind as that involved by hard and continuous intellectual work. The power to support emotion differs very greatly among different people, and tends to diminish with age. Emotions in general are either of a painful or pleasurable type; and for every individual there seems to be a certain fixed limit of pleasure-tone that cannot be passed. Above that limit the nervous tension cannot be permanently



maintained ; and further stimulus leads, not to further pleasure, but to pain. A certain individual has, for instance, a certain capacity for love—the emotion which, beyond all others, is bound up with happiness and pleasure, from the highest moral type down to the very lowest. When, as often happens, the stimulus is such as to stir the passion to a degree of tension beyond the capacity of the individual, its manifestations cease to be pleasurable and become painful. This may happen in a variety of different ways. The love may partially convert into jealousy : —a painful sentiment which compensates for and annihilates the excess of pleasurable sentiment. Or the excess may take the form of animosity towards other persons : an old man's love is often associated with some such animosities. In one way or another the excess of love over what the individual can support is transformed into some other emotion of unpleasant tone : for all men, possibilities of happiness are limited by the capacity of their nervous constitutions. For short periods, indeed, this limit may be passed, and widely passed ; but the over-emotion thus generated quickly collapses and is followed by reaction. " Violent delights have violent ends."

Many popular sayings are based on this observation :

" The wise have held that joys of sense,  
The more their pleasure is intense,  
More certainly demand again  
Usurious interest of pain."

Accessions of fortune, of power, etc., rarely bring the happiness that was anticipated from them ; for few individuals realise that their possible range of happi-



ness is physically limited, and very likely is not much greater than that which they already enjoy.

There seems to be no corresponding limit to painful emotion; and this fact arises from physiological reasons. A stimulus of given strength is bound to produce emotion, also of a certain strength; and when it cannot be pleasurable it must be painful. In the nervous system the pain centre is lower than the pleasure centre; and as Professor Sherrington has remarked, pain is characteristic of the function of the noci-ceptors, which are prepotent over all other receptors. In other words, pain is evoked in priority to pleasure, and if excess emotion is generated it is bound to be of a painful and not a pleasurable character.

With many people the predominant emotional tone is unpleasant. The unpleasantness may take very different forms: one of the commonest seems to be a general state of mild malice and discontent towards the world. Such persons notice the bad qualities of individuals rather than the good; and in consequence they speak more ill than good of their friends and acquaintances. Politics is a useful diversion for persons so constituted. Their tendency to be malicious is then expressed by severe strictures on politicians, to whom no harm is done; while their personal friends profit through the drafting off of their hostile sentiments in a different direction.

Another common expression of low emotional capacity is in a predominant melancholy of disposition, which when highly exaggerated passes into true insanity. Among persons so constituted there is a tendency for any emotion that may arise to transform



into melancholy or grief, and to express itself through the ordinary channels of grief. Love, anger, surprise, fear, egoism, etc., all pass into melancholy, which thus colours a great part of the life of the individual.

“Da er kein Elend hat, will er sich Elend machen.”<sup>1</sup>

Jealousy is another emotional type that predominates in some minds. The passions of egoism and love, which fill so large a part of human life, readily transform in these cases into jealousy, losing thereby their agreeable qualities.

We have pointed out that an emotion may disappear either by working itself off in action, or by transformation into some other equivalent emotion, or by the slowly disintegrating work of time. There is yet another way in which emotion may be drafted off:—namely, by transformation into an intellectual process. Fear, for instance, vanishes as soon as the individual begins to think out a method of removing the cause of fear. Anger ceases when rational means are considered for retaliating; and in these cases the intensity of the intellectual process is proportional to the fear or the anger from which it is derived. Usually not all of the original emotion is transformed; and the more of it there is remaining, the less vigorous will be the intellectual effort. The intellect reaches its best when all traces of the causative emotion have been transformed. We shall deal with this subject more fully under the heading of intellect; for the present, we need only note that here, as in many other ways, intellect is one form of emotion and subject to the same laws as passions in general. The

<sup>1</sup> Since he has no grief, he will make grief for himself.



profound influence exercised by emotion on belief will also be postponed to a future chapter. We now pass to a consideration of some of the major passions individually.

It is desirable to note, however, that all classifications of human passions are made rather for convenience of treatment than in correspondence to any real division. The mind is not divided into watertight compartments, and whatever feeling arises is probably a mixture of many different elements, involving emotions of various kinds, involving also some intellectual elements, and some active expression. Geometry is based on the conception of a straight line which has length but no breadth, although such lines cannot be made, and do not exist in material nature. A straight line is no more than an idea—a product of imagination and analysis: its use being that though not itself a real thing, it can stand for real things in mathematical analysis. So, too, in psychology, no single emotion is found in a pure and undiluted state. All the feelings of the mind are mixtures of many elements, though often one or two are greatly in the ascendancy over the rest. We treat the major passions separately, therefore, merely for the sake of convenience and as a product of analysis, without meaning to imply that they can exist separately in real life.



## CHAPTER III

### EGOISM

THE above title is here used to embrace all those emotions which have for their result the preservation of the individual, as distinct from the preservation of the species or of society. The word has, unfortunately, acquired unpleasant connotations; being adopted as the equivalent of selfishness, and implying an inadequate regard for the interests of others. We here use the word in quite a different sense; and we use it merely because there is no other in the least appropriate. Various kinds of egoism are among the most admired qualities in human nature:—as, for instance, courage, industry, self-respect: qualities which lie at the root of character, and more than any others make the man. Egoism, like love, has its ignoble forms as well as its noble. Excessive development of its ignoble sides, involving an underdevelopment of social feeling, is very common:—so common as almost to have monopolised the meaning of the word. But psychology has nothing to do with ethics: and those laws which hold true for the good aspects generally hold true also for the bad.

The egoistic passions conform to the principles already laid down. They imply permanent structures in the nervous system, which cannot be altered except by the efflux of time: they are transformable into other passions or into intellect: and they are relieved by specific modes of action. Further, if specific modes of action are prevented, and the passion deprived of its natural exit, it is likely to grow



and attain great force ; whereas if expression is facilitated and the emotion is drafted off in action at once, it becomes de-vitalised and weakened.

Many practical conclusions hang upon this principle. Success and prosperity in life depend almost entirely upon a strong development of the higher egoistic emotions. If these emotions are satisfied and drafted off as quickly as they form, they can never arrive at any great strength. Hence the enervating effects of luxury which " is always fatal except to an industrious people." The egoistic emotions become debilitated and flabby, until they degenerate into mere sordid and impotent selfishness. Ambition, which has prevailed in every age and climate with the same commanding energy, often breaks down on this rock :

" . . . che sedendo in piuma  
In fama non si vien, ne sotto coltre,  
Senza la qual chi sua vita consuma,  
Cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia,  
Qual fummo in aer ed in acqua la schiuma."<sup>1</sup>

Spoilt children become selfish, in the same way as older persons sunk in luxury ; and for the same reason. " Security is mortal's chiefest enemy," for it leaves the healthy egoistic impulses without proper exercise. Nietzsche characteristically summed up this principle in the profound aphorism, " Live dangerously."

On the other hand, a certain degree of adversity acts like repression in strengthening the egoistic

<sup>1</sup> Neither by reclining upon down, nor under coverlets, does one come to fame, without which, whoever consumes his life, leaves of himself the same trace on earth as smoke in air or foam on water.



feelings, which are so essential a foundation for a strong character. The Romans degenerated in luxury, but "their nerves were braced by adversity." Adversity brings home the realities of life: it scatters the unreal ideas, small figments and vanities that grow up in an idle mind.

"Das Muss ist hart, aber beim *Muss* kann der Mensch allein zeigen wie's inwendig mit ihm steht. Willkürlich leben kann jeder."<sup>1</sup>

All human qualities depend on the character of the emotions established in the individual: and more than any others the egoistic emotions turn to inferior channels if they are not exercised along the higher paths. All effort is painful to some extent, but without effort, slow degeneration tends to set in. "On acquiert rarement les qualités dont on peut se passer." Where there are not good qualities, there will be bad qualities. Weeds grow up if the ground is left to itself.

If any object is achieved with little effort, there is present in the mind only a minor emotion in connection with that object. But if it has to be fought for, and won against obstacles; if the struggle is one that lasts over a long period; an emotion grows up in connection with it, and that emotion is converted, when the end is attained, into a pleasure, the durability of which is proportional to the strength of the emotion. "Nous ne nous attachons d'une manière durable aux choses que d'après les soins, les travaux ou les désirs qu'elles nous ont coûtés."

The egoistic instinct is protean in its manifestations,

<sup>1</sup> The must is hard, but by the *must* alone can men show what is in them. Anyone can live untrammelled.



the channels into which it shall develop being largely determined by training and environment in early life. No part of education is nearly so important as that which determines it into right channels rather than wrong ; for upon the structure of his egoistic emotions depend mainly not only the prosperity, but the happiness of the individual. The emotion of pride, for instance, is one that may assume the finest or the most repellent forms. In its finer manifestations, it gives dignity, self-respect, and moral courage, raising the individual above any temptation to meanness, subterfuge or falsehood. If unduly suppressed, as by a humble calling in life, it often gathers increased force :—

“ Oh, world, how apt the poor are to be proud !  
 If one should be a prey, how much the better  
 To fall before the lion than the wolf ! ”

If the cause of suppression is removed, so that the individual suddenly finds himself transported into a higher social status, the suppressed egoism tends to burst forth with excessive violence, exceeding all the bounds of propriety. The insolence of the *nouveau riche* is proverbial.

“ La gente nuova, e i subiti guadagni,  
 Orgoglio e dismisura han generata.” <sup>1</sup>

For the same reason stern repression among children almost inevitably leads to a strong egoistic development, which is far more likely to assume the lower forms than the higher. Guidance, not repression, is needed. Repression always leads to falsehood, for “ falsehood is the natural antagonist of violence.”

<sup>1</sup> The upstart people, and sudden gains, have bred pride and excess.



It leads also to an uneven development, in which the weeds have an equal chance with the finer plants ; and being far more numerous, are likely to be most in evidence. The doctrine of repression in education is, happily, dying out ; it is based on the deeply erroneous opinion that all egoism is evil, and that mankind is born in sin.

In contrast again to the more laudable kinds of pride, there is the less laudable kind known as vanity. Pride and vanity are usually considered to be antagonistic to one another ; and in so far as this is true, the reason probably is that they are respectively higher and lower forms of the same emotion : so that when the one is present, there is no material for the other. Vanity is one of the less agreeable manifestations of egoism. It speedily takes on an atmosphere of selfishness, which promotes unhappiness : for "*La vanité est l'ennemi du bonheur.*"

Pride is a form of self-esteem ; and its character depends mainly on which of our qualities we select to esteem. If physical appearance is the quality selected, then pride assumes the form of vanity. There may be pride of wealth, pride of power, etc. And in all cases the more it is fed the more it grows. Vanity is increased by flattery : the love of power is fed by homage. "*Supple knees feed arrogance.*" The emotion thus is very liable to become excessive : to grow out of proportion to the altruistic emotions and at their expense, with a deleterious effect upon the character. Too much honour "*is a burden, too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven.*"

Whereas strong and independent characters are based on a vigorous development of the higher



egoistic emotions, a low development of these emotions results in a weak and submissive form of character. The principle of obedience, if carried too far, has an enervating effect, by interfering with the development of independence and self-confidence. When the obedience is freely rendered, as, for instance, from filial respect, or from regard to properly accredited authority, it is attended with no weakening effects upon the mind, but it is a proper and desirable manifestation of higher feelings. But obedience for the sake of obedience is a sign of withered egoism, usually accompanied with exaggerated egoism of the lower types. Men differ widely in their reactions to the principle of obedience. Some men are naturally of a submissive spirit: they cannot stand alone: they rest on authority: they can neither act for themselves nor think for themselves. Just as the roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour, so the submissive spirit goes about seeking whom he may obey. Over-emphasis on obedience was one of the vices of the medieval church; and was one of its chief mainstays. For the spirit of curiosity and scepticism is a manifestation of mental independence, which is benumbed by habits of obedience and belief. In the sphere of thought as well as in that of action, enterprise and resourcefulness, pushing along new lines, are antagonistic to the passive acceptance of the environment as it is. Regard and disregard of authority mark one of the great dividing lines of human character. They go so deep as to cut through the divisions of a more superficial philosophy. How, for instance, could there be a wider *apparent* difference than that between the doctrines



of religion and those of war? Religion instils the principles of love and meekness: it enjoins us to love our enemies; whereas war cultivates the spirit of hate and mastery, and enjoins us to kill our enemies. Yet the Church is always a staunch supporter of the Army, and the Army of the Church: the most bitter wars in history have been wars in the name of religion. Great as their superficial differences are, the Army and the Church are united by a deep similarity. They are both concrete embodiments of the emotions of obedience and subservience to authority: they both demand suppression of individuality in thought and action: they are both built up on a hierarchical plan, where each grade requires its inferior grades to accept its verdicts without criticism or independent judgment. And hence the type of character appropriate to the one is appropriate also to the other. The community of feeling given by a deep emotion overshadows the surface differences which seem to be so great.

As already observed, a large part of human nature is based on the egoistic emotions: from the necessities of the case they remain more constantly in play throughout life than any other set of emotions. They can assume widely different forms, including the highest and lowest manifestations of the mind. The stronger the character of the individual, the greater his vital energy, the more vigorous will be his egoism. Repression may drive its expression from one channel to another; but the sum-total of egoistic impulses is largely determined by heredity and early environment. If not unduly interfered with, egoism tends to develop on wholesome lines:—and this is a fact which not only accords with experience, but is a



necessary inference from natural selection. Modern societies could never have existed but for the military courage of their ancestors. And accordingly the courage of the soldier is "found to be the cheapest and most common quality of human nature." The esteem in which this virtue is held has led to attempts in all ages to cultivate it ; and often by misguided measures, which merely prove the danger of interfering with the normal course of nature. The Romans attempted to develop courage through the medium of the amphitheatre ; but it soon transpired that cruelty is not the way to produce fortitude. It is, on the contrary, more likely to develop the instincts of fear and pusillanimity, which, however much they may be repressed by regard for convention, remain part of the individual's mental constitution, and are liable to take command in an emergency.

Similarly, in the education of children, the spirit of truth cannot be cultivated by placing them in situations where there is an overwhelming temptation to lie. Truth is cultivated by a gradual strengthening of the innate disposition to truth. This emotion should have enough to push against, to ensure that it slowly strengthens and does not deteriorate : but it should not be confronted with obstacles too great for it ; for this, if it does not lead to actual lying, promotes a desire to lie and a tendency towards it, which otherwise would be likely to die of inanition. Human nature can never be dealt with by violent or forcible methods. As already remarked, falsehood is the natural antagonist of violence. Character is based on emotion ; and emotion is a growth—a product of time.

It is largely the failure to realise this truth, that is



accountable for the wide perversion of egoism throughout the world :—a perversion so general as to have given a bad name to this whole set of instincts. For if a healthy emotion becomes perverted or is left unexercised, its natural site in the mind is not left vacant ; its place is filled by some other attribute, substituted for the healthy one by the process of transformation already described. A man without courage, for instance, is not merely deficient in a good quality. He supports in its place a substituted bad quality : namely, that of timidity. Lack of courage is not merely a negative deficiency, but implies a positive incubus as well—the incubus of fear. Similarly throughout the whole great range of egoistic emotions, the sum-total of which is approximately determined at birth, any emotion that goes wrong is represented by some other emotion, very probably of an unpleasant character. Egoism then becomes selfishness, jealousy, pride, etc. Many of these perversions will be illustrated in the chapter on jealousy ; but one or two others, which do not fall under that heading, may be noticed here.

The lower types of egoistic feeling are like weeds which, once they have obtained root, continue to flourish and spread, choking all healthier growths. The emotion of self creeps in everywhere ; it absorbs the other sentiments. Every natural feeling tends to undergo prompt transformation into egoism, which grows like a cancer until it has absorbed all the chief powers of the mind. The individual then tests all things by the touchstone of self. If a friend passes him in the street without noticing him, it is set down as an intentional slight. He cannot bear that his



opinion on any subject should be questioned. He is not capable of carrying on rational discussion to reach the truth on some controverted point ; for when any opinion is expressed different from his own he takes it as personal to himself, and is ready at a moment to take offence. The emotions of truth are converted almost bodily into egoism. Where the cancer has gone far, it is difficult even to express any opinion on some altogether abstract subject without giving offence to such a person ; for in some unforeseen way, he will link it up with self, discover a reflection upon himself, and react accordingly. And just as his opinions are the touchstone of truth, so his sentiments are the touchstone of morals. Whatever he does is right : in his own view, he is pious, righteous and just. If others hold a different view as to what is right, it is a sign of moral delinquency on their part. The mass of the moral emotions are, like the emotions of truth, converted into egoism. If it is true that " men's faults do seldom to themselves appear," it is because in most men the self-emotions are over-developed ; but the type we are describing is physically incapable of seeing its own faults, while possessing an unnatural *flair* for the faults of others. Lacking in dignity, yet always on their dignity ; lacking in pride, yet always proud ; avaricious, jealous, sententious ; tyrants of their domestic circle, and haters of society ; have we not all met one or two in the course of our lives who, at the least, show tendencies towards this picture ? Jealousy follows inevitably from such a character ; for the successes of others are all estimated relatively to self. Even the passion of love in such persons is profoundly metamorphosed into egoism, and is liable



to cease instantly if the link with self is severed. The type has been illustrated by George Meredith in *The Egoist*.

Egoism in truth, if not kept in check by normal social life, may become an all-embracing cancer—and a greater curse to the victim even than to his neighbours and dependants. It grows at the expense of all the other emotions, and, most of all, at the expense of the higher egoistic emotions themselves. Courage is undermined; timidity develops. Self-confidence becomes bluster, and evaporates before the least difficulty.

“Wo so ein Köpschen keinen Ausgang sieht,  
Stellt er sich gleich das Ende vor.”<sup>1</sup>

Doubt and delay rule where resolution is demanded; and dilatoriness is taken for prudence, in accordance with the general principle of laying unction to the soul. And thus the selfish man goes down in the world; he is paralysed in the presence of a difficult situation: his higher egoistic impulses are weakened and impotent. He attributes to ill-luck or to the malevolence of others the many wounds which he receives, wounds which are hard to cure, for

“Those wounds heal ill that men do give themselves:  
Omission to do what is necessary  
Seals a commission to a blank of danger;  
And danger, like an ague, subtly taints  
Even then when we sit idly in the sun.”

Thus egoism lies at the root of the most admirable and the most contemptible forms of character. Biologically, it is clear that egoism must constitute a

<sup>1</sup> When such a head sees no outlet, it imagines that the end has come.



large proportion of everybody's mental make-up: the self-conserving instincts must be paramount and unceasing, to ensure individual survival. In strong characters, the original endowment of egoism is very high, and confers on its possessors the capacity for great achievements. But this endowment is singularly liable to be poisoned and degraded to low forms of expression, the degree of degradation being proportional to the original endowment. And that is why *corruptio optimi pessima*. A small original endowment cannot either rise to great heights, or sink to great depths.

We have said enough to illustrate the vast influence of egoism on character. In judging men, the egoistic impulses are the first traits which we have to appraise.



## CHAPTER IV

### LOVE

THE passion of love is far simpler and easier to describe than that of egoism. It is quite as powerful, and often more powerful; for Nature is more interested in the preservation of the species than in that of the individual. But whereas the preservation of the individual is a necessity that never ceases from moment to moment, the preservation of the species need only occasionally be present in the human mind. Moreover, the kind of actions needed for self-preservation are as varied as the different situations which may arise: while the kind of actions needed for racial preservation are relatively few, and the emotions from which they spring are consequently less diverse.

Another broad distinction is that while egoistic activities are often prompted by the pains which accrue from failure to fulfil them, the race-preserving activities are usually prompted, not by the threat of pain, but by the pleasure which accrues from their fulfilment. In the one case, Nature works by inflicting penalties for omission: in the other case by a premium on fulfilment. In many situations of life, these two instincts are in active conflict, which issues in opposite lines of conduct in different persons.

In point of fact, the passion of love is suffused with happiness and pleasure, from its highest and most "spiritual" manifestations down to its lowest and coarsest. This circumstance has caused it to be adopted as a guiding principle of life in some religions



and philosophies, and among many who have neither religion nor philosophy. In France, particularly, the art of love has almost been erected into a philosophy of itself, and very often of a low order. To many Frenchmen love-making is an essential part of life—even the main feature of life—an outlook summed up in the saying, “*Pas de triomphe qui vaille un baiser.*” This working philosophy of life, so different from the English, is reflected in French literature, to which it gives a dominant tone, and where it is often explicitly formulated. The following sample, so thoroughly typical of much French thought, is taken from a play of Edouard Pailleron :—

“ Il n’y a qu’une seule chose qui ne nous ennuie jamais, c’est d’aimer et d’être aimées ! Et plus je vieillis, plus je vois qu’il n’y a pas d’autre bonheur au monde.”

“ Il n’y en a qu’un bonheur vrai ! Un seul ! C’est l’amour ! C’est l’amour, je te dis.”

A similar sentiment prevailed among the ancients, and is well expressed in Ovid’s *Amores* :—

“ Qui nolet fieri desidiosus, amet ! ”

For reasons already given, however, great pleasures are commonly associated with great pains. “ A bright day brings forth the adder ” ; and in practical life, any conscious striving to realise this philosophy is more likely to result in pains than in pleasures. The fact is not lost upon French writers. Buffon apostrophises Love :—

“ Amour ! Pourquoi fais-tu l’état heureux de tous les êtres et le malheur de l’homme ? ”

And then he answers his own question :—

“ C’est qu’il n’y a dans cette passion *que le*



*physique* qui soit bon, et que le moral n'en vaut rien."

This sentiment is contrary to the current views both of religion and of morals. Undoubtedly it may nevertheless be true; but the presumption is very much against it; for as will be shown in the following chapter, morals are a product of evolution, embodying in a code the collective wisdom of the race.

We are not here concerned with morals, however; we are concerned only with a study of the actual manifestations of the passion of love. As in the case of egoism, the instinct is deep-rooted. With egoism the emotions which ensue are concentrated upon self; with love they are concentrated upon some other person. For the formation of a durable love, time is an essential factor. Love at first sight may indeed be ardent, but has in it no guarantee of permanence. It is only through the continued stimulus of frequent association that the instincts of love cease to be plastic and become set firmly on a given person. And when so set, it is only through the lapse of a similar duration of time that they dwindle. Love, like all other emotions, is a growth that can neither form nor vanish in a day.

"But that I know love is begun by time,  
And that I see, in passages of proof,  
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it."

Love may, however, be very passionate, though transient: the more passionate it is, the more transient is it likely to be, unless the passion has been a slow growth lasting through a considerable time.

Like all other emotions, love is expressed and relieved by suitable action. The specific action, to



which love ultimately tends, is that which provides for the perpetuation of the species. Such action is intimately bound up with the emotion of love, and usually has a profound influence upon it. Where the love is passionate and has been of very brief duration : —*i.e.*, where it is shallow ; expression is likely to exhaust it, and it soon passes away. But where the love is deep, expression strengthens it. It obtains a wider basis in the nervous system ; and the desire for expression, momentarily appeased, wells up again with fresh and added vigour. In the nervous system as in the muscular system, exercise promotes growth and development : so that while a shallow love is exhausted and destroyed by easy expression, a deeper love becomes stronger and more firmly rooted than before.

It is not only by this specific action that the passion of love is relieved. Speech is psychologically a form of action ; and it is a form of action which can be adapted to the relief of all the emotions. The expression of love in words greatly relieves the tension ; and may even exhaust the love itself, if the passion is not very deep.

“ Free vent of words love’s fire doth assuage.”

A lover is never tired of proclaiming the beauty and virtues of his lady ; and however tedious this may be to his friends, it is to himself a real relief. If the expression is very exaggerated and violent, though based only on a short acquaintance, an early decline of the passion is surely indicated. Where the passion is deeper, verbal expression is likely to be more moderate.

The converse of this proposition is also true.



Where expression is difficult or impossible, so that the passion is dammed up, it may rise to great strength, and ultimately burst its bonds. Restraint on expression may indeed starve the passion, so that in course of time it dies out ; but the immediate effect of restraint is more often to enhance it, by generating an unendurable need for relief. Thus when once a love has been started, obstacles tend much more to its strengthening than to its extinction. As has been remarked by an acute observer of human nature :—

“ Entre deux êtres susceptibles d’amour, la durée de la passion est en raison de la résistance primitive de la femme, ou des obstacles que les hasards sociaux mettent à votre bonheur.”

This is but one further illustration of the fact that forbidden fruits taste sweetest. What is easiest gained is least valued. Obstacles and difficulties, so long as they are not too great to be overcome, deepen and strengthen character in every department.

When once it has been firmly established, the passion of love is very prone to instantaneous transformations into some other emotion, which is then experienced with intensity proportional to the love. A word or a glance suffices, for instance, to transform love into jealousy ; and the transformation may be partial or almost complete. While the jealousy is dominant, the love has, *pro tanto*, disappeared. It no longer calls for expression in word or deed : whereas the substituted feeling of jealousy calls strongly for relief by action. The transformation is, of course, liable to be inverted in a moment ; and the jealousy that has been awakened reverts once more to love. Normally the love is certain to be restored



before long. Love and jealousy may then surge alternately through the mind: the actions of the individual expressing sometimes one, sometimes the other; though, if the occasion of jealousy has been slight, that sentiment quickly passes away, and does not return unless fresh occasion is given. The main point is that the strength of the passion—the degree of tension—remains constant throughout these alternations. The jealousy is proportional to the love: and if one is present in full strength in the mind, the other is absent: if both exist together, neither can be in full strength: for the complete emotion is represented by their sum.

Love similarly turns into grief, as, for instance, upon the death of the person loved: the grief is proportional to the antecedent love, nor is it possible by any measures (save by the lapse of time) to alter this equivalence.

“ If I could temporise with my affection,  
Or brew it to a weak and colder palate,  
The like allayment could I give my grief:  
My love admits no qualifying dross;  
No more my grief, in such a precious loss.”

When grief is due to a single non-recurrent cause, it usually dies down in course of time. Like all other emotions, it is starved for want of fresh stimulus, and gradually ceases to demand expression.

Love readily turns into hate: the hate being an equivalent of the love.

“ . . . as much as I do Cressid love,  
So much by weight hate I her Diomed.”

The same principle is stated in *Orlando Furioso* :—



“ *Contra il fratel d'ira minor non arse,  
Che per Ginevra gia d'amore ardesse.*”<sup>1</sup>

These illustrations refer to hate directed against a third person, and show clearly the direct equivalence of the love and the hate. The hate, however, may very well turn against the person loved. In such cases, the love is likely to be still more completely transformed, and the hate, therefore, reach a still higher degree. It is possible to love one person and hate another at the same approximate time ; but it is not so easy to love and hate the same person at the same time. Hence when a deep love has turned into hatred of the same person, the hate attains the fullest possible depth.

“ Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned  
Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.”

When love has grown into a strong passion, all other emotions which modify it or into which it is transformed, have an intensity proportionate to the love, however slight their cause.

“ Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;  
And as my love is siz'd, my fear is so :  
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear ;  
Where little fears grow great, great love grows  
there.”

However slight the cause of fear, however mild the suspicion, these emotions exhibit a mental tension proportionate to the love on which they are based.

That tension, moreover, leaves its traces on the mind, even when the love begins to decline. A powerful love involves a material basis in the nervous system—

<sup>1</sup> He burnt with anger against his brother, no less than he had previously burnt with love towards Genevra.



a definite growth or modification of nerve-cells which has come about by gradual development—and the waning of love may proceed more rapidly than the decay of its material basis. The love then is apt to return to its full force in fits and starts ; at other times the tension is expressed in a different manner, as, for instance, by extravagant language or behaviour.

“ When love begins to sicken and decay,  
It useth an enforced ceremony.”

This behaviour arises out of an unconscious desire to keep the other person at a distance, in order that there may be no occasion to express a love which is no longer felt ; for under such circumstances, expression instead of being easy and spontaneous, becomes laboured and unnatural.

One great passion in full operation always excludes another ; for it concentrates all the mental energy, leaving none available for other passions. A strong passion of love thus reduces the egoistic emotions to comparative impotence. The individual subordinates his personal welfare to the requirements of his passion ; and probably more lives have been wrecked on this account than through any other single cause. This is well illustrated in what is perhaps the finest love story in all literature—the story of Manon Lescaut and the comte des Grieux. All the chief elements in the psychology of love are brought out in this great masterpiece :—the complete suppression of every interest or emotion conflicting with love, the strengthening effect of obstacles, the mildness of verbal expression, and the unswerving determination of conduct. *La grande passion* is represented in its absolute purity, unadulterated by those wisps of other



emotions which in real life are never altogether suppressed.

The more completely the mind is dominated by love, the more rigidly are other passions excluded. Grief is not compatible with love :—

“ Venus smiles not in a house of tears.”

Fear melts away in the presence of love :—

“ Against love’s fire fear’s frost hath dissolution.”

Prudence, caution, wisdom are, of course, wholly driven out by dominant love-passion.

“ To be wise and love exceeds man’s might.”

This proverb appears to be very ancient and general. It appears in *The Shepherd’s Calendar*, March :—

“ To be wise, and eke to love,  
Is granted scarce to gods above.”

Bacon similarly observes that “ it is impossible to love and to be wise ” ; while among the ancients Publius Syrus wrote :—

“ Amare et sapere vix deo conceditur.”

The passion of love is so exclusively in possession of the mind that foreign thoughts can obtain no entry. The individual cannot realise that he may later have different feelings. He acts entirely on impulse :—

“ When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows : these blazes, daughter,  
Giving more light than heat, . . .

“ You must not take for fire.”

If love tends to exclude all other passions, that which it excludes most rigorously is another love. A passion aroused towards one person consumes the love-energy of the mind, and inhibits a similar passion towards any other person.

“ παλαιὰ καινῶν λείπεται κηδευμάτων.”



Love thus consumes the mind of the individual : it is the mind of the individual so long as his thoughts are intent upon it. At such times the whole energy of mind is directed in one channel ; and there is no admission of thoughts, emotions, or impressions of an incompatible nature. The senses are dulled for other spheres of life, while becoming abnormally acute for the sphere in which attention is fixed. The eyes of a lover are all for his mistress ; other persons pass by unnoticed ; other concerns escape his attention.

“ He sees his love, and nothing else he sees ;

For nothing else with his proud sight agrees.”

The picture is that of close mental concentration, a temporary narrowing and deepening of the waters of the mind, which flow with great force down one channel, leaving mere dribbles in other channels. The individual attains superhuman qualities in one sphere, and becomes a child in all others. He sees nothing but what is good in the person with whom he is in love : he cannot see her as others do : his critical faculty is paralysed as far as she is concerned. If he does recognise that she has certain deficiencies ; if he retains some portion of his critical faculty, his mind is not wholly absorbed in love.

“ Plus on juge, moins on aime.”

And since the mental energies are a strictly finite quantity, the more they are concentrated on love, the less adapted do they become for other emotions, for intellectual judgment, for action, for all other walks of life.

Love represents a mental growth ; and if the person upon whom it is concentrated dies suddenly, there remains a great body of emotion dammed up and



blocked off from its natural exit. Normally the bulk of this emotion is transmuted into grief, and expresses itself as grief; but the sudden shifting of issue throws a severe physical and mental strain upon the individual. The love-instincts cannot be thus quashed in a moment; they clamour for an outlet; they tend strongly to reassert themselves; and they may be so strong as to adjust themselves to some new object, and crystallise around another person. Widows who have been deeply in love with their husbands often surprise their friends by marrying again soon after their husbands have died. The physical and mental need for love has been so great as to leap the chasm involved by a transference of affection. Had they loved their first husbands less they would have supported more easily the single state.

There seems, indeed, to be a great difference between persons in the capacity for love. In some it rises instinctively to a high level, and when it has been further developed by an actual experience, it becomes so dominant a feature of the mind that life is insupportable without some means of expressing it. No doubt it can be expressed in grief; but this cannot endure; unless the love-instincts become quiescent they constantly furnish fuel to the grief. And there are some persons so dominated by the love-instincts that quiescence is never attained. Some fresh outlet must be provided; and re-marriage is often the solution. Religion in some cases offers another solution: the enormously deep and powerful religious instincts can act, as we shall hereafter show, as an equivalent to love; and religion is a far more durable and less



exhausting substitute than grief. But some minds are ill-adapted for religion : and if no means can be found for expression of the pent-up and ever-renewed passions of love, the individual is reduced to dire extremities, which may even pass over into insanity.

Thus the existence of a love-passion is far more due to the constitution of the individual than to the stimulus provided by a person to be loved. As always in human character, the great motives of action spring from congenital tendencies, and not from environmental influence. The love-passion lies potentially in the individual ; although, before it is awakened into activity, the presence of some other individual is necessary. That other individual is the key which opens the flood-gates : and if the flood is congenitally strong, very slight stimulus from the environment is sufficient to mobilise it. The love is not generated by the person loved. It merely fastens round that person, who acts as a channel of escape for emotions previously dormant. The maternal instinct, for example, is strong in most women. It imperatively demands expression. But spinsters, having no children, cannot express it. The instinct may then by a normal process be transmuted into religion ; or it may express itself vicariously upon pet dogs, cats, parrots, etc. These creatures, so tiresome to those who have no need of them, do provide an exit, incomplete no doubt, but sufficient to afford much relief to the vacant maternal instincts. When the animals are dressed in coats, and fed on human food, the satisfaction given is still greater, notwithstanding the ridicule excited among those who cannot appreciate the psychology of the process.



It should be added that the emotion of love, like that of egoism, is easily corrupted, becoming anti-social and degenerate. Suppression of the higher forms of love leaves the way clear for the lower forms. If the instincts are strong, and if they are cut off from their higher manifestations, they will flow out by the lower manifestations, as certainly as a proposition in Euclid follows from its premisses. The emotion of love, like that of egoism, has to be cultivated and guided into the form desired. It cannot be cut off or suppressed without the risk of disastrous consequences. An old man, whose jaded instincts drive him to the promiscuous pursuit of women, is no less contemptible and pitiful an object than one who is eaten up with selfishness and the exclusive pursuit of his own comforts. And here again, *corruptio optimi pessima*. The depth of the degeneration is proportional to the strength of the instinct and to the height which it might under other circumstances have attained.

If our understanding of the principles of character is correct, we ought to be able to apply those principles in various situations of practical life. The passion of love—so overwhelming and so regardless of personal and social interests—often creates problems of practical life that appear to be almost insoluble. Young people, and (we may add) people who are no longer young, often fall in love when marriage is either impossible or undesirable from the point of view of their personal interests. Parents are frequently confronted with this problem. It is one that a genuine psychologist should be able to solve more successfully than others. The so-called psychologist of academic



renown usually finds himself more at home in measuring reaction times, and these important matters are left to the unaided instinct of the man of the world.

Yet in cases where it is desired to abort a love-affair, the principles to follow are not very hard to see. First and foremost, it is necessary to reduce the tension of the passion. This can be done in several ways. It should be treated lightly: not, of course, with ridicule or anger, but with relative indifference. Any line of action which raises anger or hostility or romance or any fresh passion merely adds fuel to the flames. Tension is also reduced by providing opportunities for copious verbal expression. The passionate and reiterated praises act as a valve through which the emotion may partially escape: the more they overshoot the mark the more surely do they exhaust the passion. "Sublimation" can also be resorted to: that is to say, the setting up of new interests and new excitements which sap the energy of the present emotion. Obstacles placed in the way, hostile threats or actions, are apt to strengthen the passion rather than weaken it. It is necessary to establish an atmosphere free from high-tension elements. The subtle operation of suggestion, the determined maintenance of a calm atmosphere, can accomplish what might almost seem miracles. Friendly advice and assistance are then most likely to reach their mark:

People differ greatly, however: and a line of treatment suited for some is unsuited for others. For those of poor spirit, threats and hostile actions are sufficiently effective. The love-passion is transmuted bodily into fear, and the call of love is drowned by the call of self. This "classical" method of parents



is rough and ready, and often fails ; still more, it often brings about the very conclusion which it is intended to avert ; for it stokes up the fire to a furnace and creates an atmosphere of hysterical frenzy where calm and sense are most needed.

A love-affair of short duration can usually be aborted by rational measures without much difficulty. If the parties are young, there should be very little difficulty at all. The minds of the young are very plastic. *La grande passion* is an experience of mature years, when the mind sets strongly on one object and cannot easily be shaken. Our knowledge of the individual and of the nature and duration of the love-affair, will usually suffice to give a clear idea as to the difficulties likely to be met with in overcoming it. This is the kind of problem in practical life that we often have to solve : and upon our success in solving it depends perhaps an entire lifetime of happiness.



## CHAPTER V

### SOCIAL AND MORAL FEELING

SOCIAL feeling is the last of the three main groups of human instincts. It is probably not so deeply rooted as either of the first two. The instincts subserving preservation of the individual, and perpetuation of the species, must have been in operation since the dawn of life ; and the gregarious instincts are probably much more recent in the biological sense. But in every other sense they must be of high antiquity ; and at the present time these instincts are enormously powerful. Without them the human species would soon disintegrate : individuals would have to fight their battles with nature single-handed, and they would not for long be able to survive so unequal a contest.

And yet the great force and ubiquity of the social feeling is, as a rule, not fully realised. It governs our relations with other people : and our relations with other people already constitute a large part of life. We feel quite different when we are alone and when we are in society. If we hear anything amusing or interesting, our first impulse is to communicate it to our neighbours. We dress like other people ; we act like other people ; we live like other people : not because of any artificial conventions, but because it is natural for us to do so ; our instinct leads us to fill our part in the social life of our time, and there is strong instinctive repugnance to do anything else.

Thus conventions arise, being the habits and



customs prevalent in our community. Departure from such conventions involves some *odium* and a reputation for eccentricity ; but the departures are never very great, nor could they be. The conventions are merely the concrete expression of the gregarious instinct : they are a bond of union among men ; they ensure common action, which, whether reasonable or unreasonable, becomes a force greater than any one individual can wield. For often the conventions are unreasonable : but that matters nothing to the social instinct, which like all other passions strains towards relief by action. The feeling of community with others is gratified as well by an unreasonable convention, as by a reasonable one.

Social habits, however, are most dominating when they are most necessary. Patriotism in time of war is the expression of highly concentrated social feeling with enormous motive strength. It arises in response to a true social need : for upon its hold on mankind depends the very existence of the social community. Failure to exhibit this emotion at appropriate times is keenly resented : it is certain to involve the persecution and may involve the death of the recalcitrant individual.

On a somewhat different footing are those offences against social feeling known as crime. Murder, for instance, is in sharp antagonism to the social instincts ; and in most countries it is avenged by the execution of the murderer. All other crimes are, in essence, anti-social actions ; and they are punished with a severity proportional to the degree in which they offend the social instincts of mankind. The social instincts thus lie at the basis of law, as well as of



convention. Law is a concrete expression of social instinct in the same way that weeping is a concrete expression of grief, or that hitting a man is a concrete expression of anger. In primitive communities law is not codified ; the social feeling vents itself indiscriminately on malefactors as a mere outburst of indignation. In more advanced communities it becomes codified, but without losing any of its fundamental character. If the codified law is more severe than popular sentiment demands, it is not found possible to apply it, and it falls into desuetude. If, on the other hand, it is less severe than popular sentiment demands, lynching is apt to result ; the mob take the matter into their own hands. If this rarely happens in civilised countries, it is because the law is quickly adjusted to meet the growth of public opinion. Lynching seldom occurs, because social feeling finds readier expression in a strengthening of the law.

In addition to convention and law, both of them generally codified by practice and habit, the social feeling finds expression through religion. In religion, we have a third code of sanctions and prohibitions, differing very much in different times and places, but expressing the social feelings of those who adhere to the religion in question. And here again, the religious code falls promptly into desuetude, the moment it ceases to represent popular feeling. The Christian religion for instance was founded among the lowest social strata and the least educated classes of classical times ; and the social instincts of such classes are still embodied in the code of Christianity, without however having the slightest influence on



the conduct of those whose instincts are different. The pusillanimity of a slavish people impelled them, when struck on one cheek to turn the other ; and this behaviour is now enjoined by religious law, though no one pays the smallest attention to it. The poverty-stricken rabble of Palestine found expression for their sentiments in the condemnation of wealth ; and accordingly the religious code lays down that a rich man cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Notwithstanding this threat, the greater part of mankind now pass their lives in endeavouring to become rich. In short, religious law, like secular law, and like convention, immediately becomes inoperative when it ceases to represent the social feeling of the time. No law and no convention are based on logic or reason ; they may, indeed, often be justified by logic and reason—by pointing out that society would disintegrate without them, and so on ; but such justification does not in the slightest increase their force or hold upon mankind. The whole of their immense motive power is due to the strength of the social feeling, which created and maintains them—a vast body of emotion, comparable to the emotions of egoism and of love.

Morals are thus a more or less codified expression of social feeling : they are embodied in religion, in legislation, and in convention. They have no higher sanction than the emotions which give rise to them. This fact has often been misunderstood by those who urge that religion furnishes a law of morals, and that the decay of religion would mean the decay of morals. The decline of religion in the last fifty years has caused grave concern to those



who believe that morals are based on religion. If there is no God, they say, who rewards the righteous and punishes the guilty, if there is no heaven and no hell, what is there to guide men to do right rather than wrong? What indeed do right and wrong mean? So long as they had reference to the commands of a supreme lawgiver, there was no difficulty about it. But if there is no supreme lawgiver, how shall we distinguish right from wrong, and what makes the difference between them? Whole libraries have been written to answer this question; and numerous systems of ethics have grown up representing the different schools of thought as to what is the standard of right and wrong. Like so many of the problems of metaphysics, however, the whole controversy is on a false basis. It is not the reasoning that is wrong, but the premisses that are false. It would indeed be a sorry business, if human morals were determined by religious creeds, or by metaphysical subtleties, or by any abstract doctrines whatever; for not only are all doctrines highly perishable, giving way to new theories and undergoing constant modification, but they never sink down into the minds of the people; however flawless the reasoning, they never could supply a genuine motive power for conduct. Doctrines are the sport of the intellectual world; they exercise a mild and superficial effect upon a few highly educated people. Morals on the other hand are the serious business of all men: they exercise a profound and powerful effect upon the masses.

There is therefore no external standard of right and wrong. The test of right and wrong is found in the social feelings of the community.



“ There’s nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.”

If it were otherwise—if human morals depended on intellectual adherence to a creed or dogma—society would soon dissolve through the lack of any sufficient bond of cohesion. But since morals depend on deep-rooted and universal instinct, implanted by long ages of evolution, so that it has become part of the nervous structure of the human species, they supply a bond of cohesion sufficient to overcome to a great extent the disruptive tendency of unchecked egoism. So far from morals being based on law and religion, law and religion derive their force from the moral instinct. If a law does not accord with our instinct, we call it unjust and try to get it altered. If religion does not accord with our instinct, we either abandon our creed, or else by means of theological subtleties, we endeavour to read into it a meaning very different from that which the words bear.

The social and moral feelings conform to the laws already laid down for the other major passions. They are very liable to transform into other passions ; and the channels through which they may manifest themselves are very various. The social instinct is easily corrupted ; but its normal strength is not altered thereby. As in the case of the other passions, everyone has a certain congenital endowment of social feeling. This endowment is a relatively fixed quantity for each individual, but it may express itself in high or low forms in very varying proportions. In its high forms it is characterised by amiable feelings towards mankind ; in its low forms by unamiable feelings ; the former attitude is allied to love,



the latter is allied to hate. One man may be fond of society, and notices chiefly the better qualities of his friends ; another man may dislike society and notice chiefly the worse qualities of those with whom he comes in contact. Yet both of these may have equal endowments of social feeling. Love of mankind and hate of mankind are alike manifestations of social feeling ; and the strength of that feeling is proportioned to the love or to the hate as the case may be. A low endowment of social feeling is characterised by relative *indifference* to mankind, by no strong like or strong dislike. According to the principles already described, a strong liking may easily become a strong dislike or *vice versâ* ; but neither can sink into indifference, for indifference is on altogether another plane. The strength of an individual's social feeling is estimated therefore by the force with which he reacts to social life, whether in the form of like or dislike of other men.

These two types—the amiable and the unamiable—although so nearly allied psychologically, present a very wide contrast in ordinary life. They are allied in the sense that it is generally a mere hazard of environment in which direction an individual develops. A given native endowment of social feeling may readily be determined along one line or the other according to education or adventitious circumstances. The two types present a wide contrast in the sense that they colour all the reactions of the individual to social life : they dominate our relations with other persons, and decide the opinion which we form of other persons, and which other persons form of us.



Both types are well known. The amiable type sees the amiable qualities of other people ; it sees others in a favourable light ; in other words, it sees what is conformable to the amiable emotion, and not what is unconformable : just as a lover sees the good qualities and not the bad qualities in his mistress, and just as the egoist sees his own good qualities, but not his own bad qualities. The amiable man is naturally popular among his associates : for he speaks well of others, and is actuated by a kindly disposition towards them. Evil qualities do not touch him greatly ; they pass him by, leaving little impression, " for unstained thoughts do seldom dream on evil." His judgments of the world are benevolent ; he is more often heard praising what is good in the world than reviling what is bad.

The unamiable type is just the opposite of all this. The unamiable features of the world make more impression on such a mind than the amiable features. A man so constituted is more often heard reviling the evil in the world than praising the good. His mental eye dwells by preference on the abuses, the shortcomings, the weaknesses and the follies of humanity ; and since this is what he chiefly sees in the world, he normally reacts to society in an antagonistic manner. He is naturally unpopular among his associates : for there is a touch of malevolence in what he says and does. His social feeling goes out in the form of dislike for men—an inevitable result of seeing mainly their bad qualities.

" Qui vitia odit homines odit."

The average man is, of course, a mixture of these two types. Primitively the social feeling is of the



first or amiable type. It is natural to man as a social animal to rejoice in the society of his fellows. A child, unless perverted by education or surroundings is fond of other children and likes to be with them. Their bad qualities are unnoticed, not condoned or approved of, but literally unnoticed ; or, if noticed, they make little impression. An evil environment, or misguided education, soon removes this innocent anaesthesia to evil : the social feeling becomes corrupted, and gradually transmutes from the first type to the second. And the higher the original endowment of social feeling, the greater the heights to which it may rise, and the greater the depths to which it may fall. We reach again that principle of *corruptio optimi pessima*, which we found to hold good both of egoism and of love.

As in the cases of the other emotions, the social feeling is strengthened by obstacles in the way of its expression. Solitude constitutes such an obstacle, and habitual loneliness has a marked effect on human character. The recluse is more strongly affected by society than one who always lives among others. His social instinct is more clamorous for expression, unless, indeed, it has become deadened by the gradual decay wrought by time. But before this slow paralysis occurs the social instinct is fortified by compulsory removal from society. It may express itself either in the normal or in the corrupted manner. One who is thrown out of social life by misfortune—as in the story of *Robinson Crusoe*—pines for society as a starving man pines for food. His social instinct is enormously enhanced ; above all things he wants to be among other men, it matters little whom. Such



is the state of mind often generated among prisoners in solitary confinement.

Or it may express itself in the corrupt form—by an increased hatred of men, a hyper-susceptibility to their faults, a magnified intolerance of evil. These sentiments, however natural to the man, are all strengthened by solitude; they furnish the key to the character of many of the medieval martyrs. Their reputation for piety is based largely on their inveterate hatred of human vices. That hatred of vice is at heart a hatred of men, and the hatred of men is an expression of corrupt social feeling, attaining an abnormal or exaggerated force by reason of the obstacle which solitude creates to its expression.

A hermit then is a man whose social feelings are hyper-sensitised. He is inspired by an exaggerated need for the society of other men or by an exaggerated hatred of other men. Exaggeration one way or the other is inevitable. If it takes the form of a deep need for society, the individual will (if he can) terminate his solitude and go into social life. Voluntary and continued seclusion is therefore nearly always a sign of misanthropy: the voluntary recluse hates men, and his mind is largely taken up with dwelling on their wickedness and follies. Few persons in modern life can be totally secluded; many, however, are undersupplied as regards an exit for their social feelings; and some mental change of the kind above described almost invariably results.

When the social feelings are cut off from adequate expression, the superfluous emotion may sometimes transmute, and especially into some form of egoism. Solitary people are often selfish. In course of time



the strength of the social emotions may gradually decay until social life no longer excites any strong emotion, either amiable or unamiable. The social instinct is so deep-rooted, however, that this process is not likely to go very far.

Some people are born with a naturally small endowment of social emotion. The presence or absence of other people does not affect them so much as it does the average man. In a certain sense they appear to be inhuman. They have no strong likings for other men nor any strong dislikings.

The social emotions find expression in many different ways. They are usually strongest between members of the same family ; a fact that is stated in the proverb " blood is thicker than water." The social feeling in this case merges into the feeling of love, treated in the preceding chapter ; nor can any sharp line of demarcation be drawn. Since the social feelings here reach their highest intensity, it is here also that they can reach their lowest corruption. A family feud is the most bitter of all feuds. It is physically easier to love a relative than an outsider ; it is physically easier therefore to hate a relative than an outsider. But it is much harder to be indifferent to a relative. A relative has more emotion-raising powers than an outsider, and we inevitably react with more energy towards him, being very often " a little more than kin, and less than kind."

If a person's social feelings have become corrupted, so that he views the world in an antagonistic manner, that sentiment will naturally vent itself in part upon his family or nearest surroundings, and it is then intense in proportion to his natural feeling towards



them. But very often the animosity is not caused by any fault on their part: it is a case of innate animosity venting itself on the objects which happen to be nearest at hand. In such cases it may be instantly drafted off on to any more suitable object which may make its appearance. The truth of this observation may be verified by anyone who cares to interfere in a chance quarrel between a husband and wife. The overt cause of the quarrel may be and probably is something quite insignificant. The officious stranger thinks he will soon clear that up for them, and receive the thanks of both parties. But the true cause of the quarrel is very different from the overt cause. It is that they *want* to quarrel; they have a quarrelsome emotion which needs expression, and living in such close contiguity, they afford each other a readier opportunity for working it off, than other persons farther removed. The officious stranger no doubt reconciles them, but in a way quite different from what he had intended. He provides a god-sent butt on which the irascibility of both parties can be worked off: they unite and turn upon him, like bears snatching at a bun. A stranger cannot profitably interfere with quarrels, unless their cause is external and not internal.

After the family, the country excites a high expression of social feeling. Patriotism carries off a large branch of the social emotions. In time of war, when a special stimulus is present, this is obvious. It takes the form of love of country or hatred of the enemy according to the constitution of the individual. As usual it is relieved by active expression. During the late war, the civilians who had no direct share in



the struggle were the most bitter in their feelings towards the enemy, and the loudest in their protestations of patriotism. Among the soldiers actively fighting, there was less bitterness and fewer protestations. The contrast was marked, and the atmosphere totally different. Those who could not vent their feelings in deeds were obliged to relieve themselves as best they could in words.

After the country, social feelings go out to the world in general. Philanthropy and humanity are the widest expressions of the social instinct; but being more abstract, they offer less relief than patriotism or the domestic sentiments. Apart from these, the social feeling crystallises round every combination of people, great or small, gathered together for some special end—a school, a village, a club, a society, a profession, a social rank, etc., and is then often called *esprit de corps*. Social feeling may thus manifest itself in a wide variety of different ways; some highly abstract, as for instance in trying to establish a scheme of international justice; others wholly concrete, as for instance in presenting a casual pauper with a penny. Further, since the social endowment of any individual is strictly limited, the more he expresses it in one way, the less is there left for expression in other ways. Thus strange anomalies are found in persons. One man is greatly concerned about the vivisection of dogs, but is very partial to shooting pheasants. Another man is occupied with schemes of universal brotherhood, but neglects and maltreats his wife. A third is a model of kindness and thoughtfulness towards all who meet him; but desires to exterminate every man, woman, and child



of the nation with which his country is at war. Murderers are often kindhearted ; and the inquisitors were very likely benevolent gentlemen in private life. Since the anti-social element exists to some extent in all men, it is always useful to have butts on which it may be expended relatively harmlessly. As previously remarked, this public service is rendered to some extent by the existence of politicians. It is rendered unintentionally and unwillingly no doubt ; but if the whole truth could be seen in the deepest recesses of the human mind, it might be found to be by no means the smallest of the services which they render ; their careers might be found to be based in large part on a public demand, of which they were totally unconscious ; for appearances and realities are the widest of all differences, and the motives which universally drive mankind are the most difficult of all causes for mankind to discover.

The social and moral feelings are often very uneven and eclectic. If they go out strongly in one direction, they are likely to be enfeebled in others. Thus a person with a very tenacious regard for certain moral principles may be deficient in moral principles of another sort. Sanctimonious people are of this type, and they often acquire somewhat unjustly a reputation for hypocrisy in consequence ; their deficiencies in one sphere are merely a physical consequent of overdoing morals in another sphere. They

“Compound for sins they are inclined to  
By damning those they have no mind to.”

The commission of sins offends against the social feelings ; and, in so far as it does not weaken them,



drives them with the greater force into other channels. A curious consequence often follows from this trait of character. Everyone as he passes through life is sure to have his social and moral feelings corrupted to a greater or less extent by his environment. That is to say, everyone has in his composition a certain anti-social element, and since that element is in him it is bound to express itself somehow or other. If he sternly represses all manifestations of it, it becomes widely and thinly diffused through his whole mind, and to a small degree poisons all that he says and does. He is all round a slightly less amiable person than he would have been without that element. Now supposing that he does not repress its manifestations, the anti-social feeling will find free outlet along some channel; and down that channel of activity the individual will be a wrong-doer in a perfectly definite manner. But the worst evils may have some compensations, however inadequate. The anti-social feeling, being drafted off, no longer diffuses through the mind, and no longer poisons the conduct of the individual in other spheres. And thus it is that a person who suffers from some admitted follies or weaknesses is often a more amiable character than one whose moral armour is proof against all attack. The "unco guid" is not always the best man, and rarely the most popular. He differs from others, not by greater freedom from anti-social elements, but by the fact that those elements are more generally diffused throughout his mind in weak form, instead of being concentrated on one or two points in stronger form.

The social and moral emotions easily transform



into others of a different kind. Patriotism so readily passes into hate or into fear that sometimes it is even confused with them. During the late war, in all countries, hate of the enemy was taken as equivalent to an expression of patriotism, though the only true expression of patriotism is by praise of one's own country and by labour on its behalf. The infusion of hate implies some corruption of the emotion. As for fear, it is never very far removed from hate. These sentiments all transmute into joy when victory is attained, and the joy is proportioned to the hate, the fear, or the patriotism previously entertained.

The moral emotions serve as a cloak for a great many others which have nothing to do with morals. Egoism, for instance, often appears under the guise of morals. If a man does something which annoys us, we are prone to allege that his action is wrong. Egoism transmutes into moral sentiment, and is expressed accordingly. If we dislike a man we impute shortcomings to him, and attack him on moral grounds which are not our true motive. Many of the moral judgments passed on others are egoistic at heart. The force with which we condemn a man is more often proportionate to our personal dislike of him than to any actual offence which he may have committed. Jealousy is particularly prone to masquerade under the form of morals, as will be shown in the following chapter.



## CHAPTER VI

### JEALOUSY

THE three major passions already described are primary and fundamental. The existence of the human race is based upon them. Since the requirements of the individual, of the species, and of society are exceedingly diverse, the three major passions are protean in their manifestations. They adopt innumerable different forms, some very simple, others highly complex. These latter may be regarded as derivative passions, involving some degree of transmutation from the primitive type of the original passions.

There are many of these derivative passions, great and small. One of the most ubiquitous and powerful of all is that of jealousy. It is one of the great motive forces of the world. Its magnitude often fails to be recognised, for it is a passion which is apt to be concealed from a sense of shame, and it then expresses itself by vicarious rather than direct action. Those who see only the surface of human life can never realise the dominating power of jealousy in the human mind.

Jealousy is derived by transmutation from one or other of the three original passions, already noted. It arises from egoism when someone else has succeeded where we have failed or has acquired prosperity while we are left behind. It arises from love, as illustrated in innumerable novels. It arises from the social



feeling : " Flattery adheres to power and envy to superior merit." Its force is always proportional to the force of the original passion from which it is transmuted. Thus a very selfish man is always a very jealous man. Since jealousy is an unpleasant emotion, selfishness brings on the individual its own retribution in the form of haunting jealousies. In the same way jealousy is proportional to love. A weak love gives rise only to a weak jealousy, but

" Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear ;

Where little fears grow great, great love grows there."

Jealousy is also proportional to the strength of social feeling. Jealousy directed against relatives or friends is more intense than when directed against strangers ; because the original social emotion is stronger in the case of relatives and friends than it is in the case of strangers. The success of a stranger may be viewed with relative indifference ; but indifference is not possible where the successful person has some emotional significance for ourselves. In that case, we shall either view his success with altruistic pleasure or with jealous annoyance. These two modes of sentiment, outwardly so dissimilar, are psychologically in close relation, and an individual may fluctuate between the two from day to day, or even from hour to hour, according to the state of his health and digestion, or other co-operating factors.

The higher and simpler forms of egoism, of love, and of social feeling are always attended with pleasure. Jealousy, being attended with pain, implies some degradation from the purest type of emotion. It has already been pointed out that the maximum pleasure-tone is a strictly limited quantity. When an emotion



is raised by some external stimulus beyond the point at which it can be supported, the excess is drafted off in another direction, and very commonly in the direction of jealousy. A strong stimulus, therefore, applied to a person of low emotional tone is apt to promote jealous sentiments. A moderate degree of self-satisfaction is pleasant and wholesome, but when it swells to an overweening self-importance, the pure emotion becomes insupportable as such, and is partially transmuted into jealousies.

Love of women is also limited by individual constitution. After the limit has been reached any excess of the emotion turns into a dread of rivalry—a jealousy of all and sundry. This commanding passion conjures up imaginary objects of jealousy when there are no real objects to fasten upon.

“ . . . Trifles light as air  
Are to the jealous confirmations strong  
As proof of holy writ.”

Similarly in the social sphere, a mild appeal to the altruistic sentiments is likely to provoke a mild response; whereas a strong or exaggerated appeal will provoke a strong response if the emotional tone of the individual is equal to it; but otherwise will merely provoke hostility as the consequence of over-stimulus.

Although jealousy is derived by transformation of one of the three original passions, in many cases the transformation is so constant and automatic that jealousy becomes part of the permanent structure of the mind. Thus men differ widely in their capacity for jealousy. For a mind addicted to jealousy there is small occasion for real exciting causes. The



jealousy must come out somehow, and it fastens indiscriminately on any object in the environment, with the slenderest possible justification.

“ They are not ever jealous for the cause,  
But jealous for they're jealous. 'Tis a monster  
Begot upon itself, born on itself.”

All strong emotions find their way out somehow. What a man does in life is due far less to the circumstances of his environment than to his innate constitution. He imagines that he does a thing for some reason—or to secure some end ; more often he does it because it is the nature of the man to do that kind of thing ; and the ostensible reason is but a pretext, a favourable opportunity offered by the environment for emotional expression. Jealousy is no exception to this rule. However little opportunity the environment may offer, still “ Rancour will out.”

Nevertheless it often comes out in a very much disguised form. Rancour and envy are so contemptible to those who happen to be unaffected by them that the individual rarely allows the emotion to be seen more than he can help. It must come out, but it comes out by circuitous and subterranean routes. Moral indignation in particular is often used as a cloak for jealousy. Most men are a mixture of good qualities and bad, in varying proportions. No men are perfect ; all have some bad qualities ; and it depends mainly upon our constitutional disposition, whether what chiefly strikes us in the man are his good qualities or his bad. Now if we have any occasion of jealousy towards him, we shall assuredly see his bad qualities almost exclusively. We fasten attention upon them and give free rein to expressions



of moral indignation. Very likely this moral criticism admits of no direct reply. If the qualities selected for attention are bad, they clearly cannot be defended, and the moralist wins his case. But the point is that, if there had been no antecedent prejudice, the qualities would never have been selected for attention. To an unbiased observer they are not the really significant qualities; to an unbiased observer the higher qualities may stand out in bold relief, and defects here and there do not seriously disfigure the general picture, unless attention is consciously and emphatically drawn to them. But like all emotions jealousy imperiously demands expression. It seizes upon the defects of others and finds expression in the respectable form of moral indignation. Not only in the case of jealousy, but in the case of all emotions, we select that aspect of the world which conforms to our emotions, and neglect the rest. The world presents to us an infinite number of possible aspects, but our minds are limited and can only grasp a few of the aspects. Thus for each of us what the world appears to be depends more on our mental constitution than on external factors. If severe moralists are generally unpopular, it is because men recognise half consciously that harsh strictures are often a mere cloak to disguise the expression of antecedent rancour.

The disguise may be thin, but is often very deep. The school of Freud has shown the vast importance of the unconscious mind. Men have desires and motives buried in the depths of the unconscious, of whose very existence they are unaware. Often such desires tend towards vice or light conduct, which, being firmly repressed, never reach the conscious mind.



But they work their effect all the same by circuitous routes. When the tendency to light conduct does not find relief in appropriate action, it is transmuted, and very often into jealousy—an unconscious resentment directed against those who do not repress the tendency to lightness, but allow it free expression. In such cases the moralist is jealous at the sight of enjoyment from which he is cut off either by physical circumstances or by genuinely moral motives. He is of course totally unaware of his jealousy ; we usually are unaware of our own deepest motives. At all events this jealousy wreaks itself in the form of moral indignation on the heads of those who perform the prohibited actions. Social purity crusades, teetotal campaigns, etc., derive much of their force from this subterranean origin. The impassioned nature of the oratory by which they are supported is greater than would be the case if the subject were viewed “ on its merits ” by an indifferent outsider. A deep-rooted and unconscious jealousy is the *vera objurgandi causa*. Extremes meet ; impassioned virtue is nearer to vice than either is to indifference. The saint and the sinner are near akin, and often change places ; the indifferent outsider, whose mind does not run in those channels at all, is immune from infection on either side.

Politics offer a wide field of illustration for subconscious jealousy. Let us consider, for instance, the democratic principle of “ equality.” The real question, logically at issue, is as to whether human happiness is best promoted by a régime in which all men are of equal status, or by one in which inequality of status exists. To obtain a rational answer must obviously be exceedingly difficult, and perhaps



impossible. The scientific method of procedure would be to compare different societies, which were as nearly as possible alike, except that some were characterised by equality and some by inequality. It might then be possible to form an opinion as to which régime was the more satisfactory.

But in point of fact the argument never is conducted on this principle. The current argument of democracy may be summed up as follows :—" A is just as good a man as B ; it is unfair that B should have every worldly advantage, while A passes his life in hard and dreary work with small returns." Now that argument is nothing more nor less than an expression of jealousy. The inequality between A and B may promote the general happiness, or it may detract from it. That is the true problem ; but it is not the question to which demagogues commonly address themselves. Their arguments for equality are mere vehicles for draining off the sentiment of social jealousy. The movement for equality has in the past derived most of its impetus from this source. Whether the resultant social rearrangements are advantageous or the reverse is a pure hazard.

Jealousy exhibits the same principles as the other major passions. It is readily transformable into other passions. In particular it is allied to sorrow, with which it is very quickly interchangeable, for both emotions are due to the same kind of origin. If a man falls in love and the love is unrequited, the sentiment may either continue in the form of love, or it may transmute into grief or into jealousy according to his egoistical development. Like the other passions jealousy is drained off by expression, and its natural



expression is by active measures of revenge. Revenge therefore relieves jealousy, and where sorrow transforms into jealousy revenge affords a ready means of relief for sorrow also ; and, notwithstanding that it is an indirect means, it is usually very efficient for the purpose, on account of the close connection between the two emotions.

“ Be comforted :

Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.”

“ Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe.”

A jealousy that is deprived of any means of expression, direct or indirect, is likely to grow into a very formidable passion ; and if opportunity is suddenly afforded it may wreak itself with pent-up fury on the head of the victim. Moreover, it happens that means of expression often are inadequate ; the emotion is in general held to be discreditable, and its repression is imperatively demanded. Hence, it rises to a high pitch of intensity. It so imperiously demands relief that the subject will stoop to the most unworthy subterfuges, and if occasion arises it will strike with many times its natural force. It approaches like a murderer from behind ; it strains so madly for expression and relief that all sense of proportion and moderation is lost. Backbiting, anonymous slander, the poisoning of reputations, murder itself : these are the instruments that a repressed jealousy will not hesitate to use, even in an individual of otherwise passable disposition.

Jealousy is to some extent relieved indirectly by rancour directed against unoffending persons in the environment. These persons generally assume that



the rancour is directed personally and intentionally against themselves, and fail to realise that the case is merely one of an overflow of malicious sentiment, with which they are in no way connected. Much of the rudeness in the world is in this sense unintentional, and is a mere automatic energy-escape, though it is rarely taken as such by the recipient. This mode of relief, however, is ineffective in proportion as it is indirect.

On the other hand, a jealousy which finds easy and prompt expression soon dies out. The petty slanders of society act like an escape-valve; they protect a victim from worse things. Our political governors are subject to bitter criticism in the press, but they are not murdered. In countries where criticism is not permitted they often are murdered.

Sometimes jealousy is not merely expressed, but over-expressed. It then happens that the emotion is not only drained right off, but is actually inverted, giving rise to friendly sentiments towards the former victim. Sudden manifestations of friendship coming from a known enemy are apt to follow an excess of slander or some other hidden blow. Crimes of furious jealousy, altogether out of proportion to the offence caused, generally give rise to deep remorse.

Like all other emotions jealousy is a growth strengthening with time, and once thoroughly established, time is necessary for its eradication. If the cause of jealousy is a momentary event not repeated, the jealousy may be very violent but will not be lasting. If, on the other hand, the cause is one involving permanently renewed offence, the jealousy becomes chronic, and secures a strong root in the nervous constitution. For persons of naturally



jealous disposition, the emotion is more durable than among other men. As a whole, the emotion is far more developed in age than in youth. In old age most of the higher egoistic qualities lose tone: timidity, lack of confidence, emotional debility, accompany physical debility. Love obviously declines, as also do the social feelings. All these are replaced by emotions of lower type, and jealousy grows *pari passu* with selfishness.

No further justification is needed for the inclusion of jealousy among the prime motive forces of mankind. In greater or less degree it is almost ubiquitous; and the appreciation of its high importance is essential for the understanding of men and women. In many spheres it is thoroughly vicious and anti-social in its effects. It spares no one, and least of all the best.

“ . . . Men that make  
Envy and crooked malice nourishment  
Dare bite the best.”

It drags down those who rise above their fellows, thus tending to smooth away natural inequalities among mankind. It reduces the admiration felt and the homage yielded to superior merit, thus giving rise to the opinion entertained in every age that degeneration has overtaken the world. For men cannot recognise greatness in their own age; they can recognise it only in generations that have passed. They are constitutionally unable to admit the high superiority of other living men to themselves, and they are least of all able to perceive it in spheres where they themselves are competitors. This is why a prophet is usually without honour in his own land. In a foreign land honour is accorded less



grudgingly ; and if the prophet lived in past times the sentiments of jealousy become almost inoperative. Jesus Christ, the greatest of all prophets, was without honour in his own age, and was executed as a common criminal. Among his own race he has remained comparatively without honour even to the present day. Divinity of character was not ascribed to him till centuries after his death, and then only among races to which he was a foreigner. It is thoroughly in accordance with psychological principles that the greatest fame ever acquired in the history of the world should belong to a foreigner of high antiquity.

It is useless to hope for any measures by which the operation of this powerful passion can be circumscribed. In individual cases, here and there, its effects can be to some extent mitigated, but jealousy is so intimate a component of human nature that its eradication is a totally impracticable undertaking. Men can be adjured to repress the baneful sentiment, but that is of little use. They may succeed in driving it deeper into the unconscious mind ; but it is still there : and it still works the same effects, if somewhat more indirectly and in somewhat more elaborate disguise. More might be done by encouraging it to expression, and even to over-expression if some comparatively innocuous channel could be found. The expression of jealousy is always in the form of active injury attempted on the victim. It may therefore be possible to guide the shafts of malice, so that they strike the victim where he is least vulnerable. Thus the passion is relieved or exhausted with the least amount of damage. An open fight always clears the air. The most immediate and efficient relief of jealousy is provided by the infliction of



physical injury. A fight with fists or with weapons is the most potent method of restoring equilibrium, and may permanently eradicate sentiments of malice. The practice of duelling has a good psychological foundation, though it may be reprehensible on other grounds.

Short of physical combat, intellectual controversy, or open abuse, relieves the situation. Wherever there is hidden malice, let it by some means or other be brought out into the open, and there express itself freely and without disguise. An open enemy is less dangerous than a disingenuous friend. Passions that find free exit in acts or words are less formidable than those pent-up to bursting point by silence and concealment. These latter strike from behind, and strike with poisoned darts.

On the other hand, a passion not dwelt upon and not adequately nourished dwindles in course of time by inanition. Jealousy often does dwindle and die out; and if this seems likely it may be wiser not to feed it with active measures of hostility. Human character is the resultant of numerous different forces, interacting with immeasurable complexity; and in any given circumstances the most rational line of action can only be decided upon by an accurate and instinctive appraisal of the relative strength of the forces to be dealt with.

Finally it may be remarked that "projection" is often well exemplified in the sphere of jealousy. A man of jealous disposition is apt to attribute the motives of others to jealousy. Thus if A thinks he has cause to be jealous of B, he will often misread the situation, and imagine without warrant that B is jealous of him. These obscure interactions of the unconscious mind are often hard to disentangle.



## CHAPTER VII

### RELIGION

RELIGION is entitled to be regarded as one of the major passions of mankind. Since it is not an immediate biological endowment, it must be dependent for its existence on one or more of the three primary instincts already noted. It is thus a derivative emotion, arising by transformation of the primary emotions. Moreover the transformation is extremely indirect ; it is often not very easy to see how it is affiliated upon its biological origin.

The emotions hitherto dealt with are all essential and universal—part of the nerve-structure of the human race : it is impossible to conceive the entire absence of any of the three primary instincts ; lacking them, a human being would no longer be a human being. Religion, however, is not in the same way essential or universal. It may be regarded as an adventitious emotion—a derivative sentiment transmuted from one or more primary instincts by the influence of suggestion or education. Many persons and groups are totally devoid of religious emotion, and there is immense variation in the strength of its hold upon mankind. In classical antiquity it was widely prevalent, but not very deep. In the Middle Ages it was enormously powerful, often the most dominating of all the passions. In our own times it has again become comparatively weak. It fluctuates from one individual to another, from one society to another, from one age to another. At the highest



extreme it rises to as great a pitch of intensity as the human frame can support ; at the lowest extreme it sinks away and vanishes entirely. It is therefore no essential part of human structure. It is a transmuted emotion, determined into a conventional form.

That the form is wholly conventional is shown by the fact that belief is always the essence of religion ; and by the further fact that the nature of the belief is determined for each individual by the environment in which he is born. In other words it has to be taught. Egoism, love, social feeling, jealousy do not have to be taught ; they are there, as part of our constitution, and can neither be taught nor untaught. Doubtless the capacity for being taught implies a strong emotional foundation towards religious sentiment, quite independent of any teaching, and we shall have to inquire how that emotional foundation arises. But given the raw material of religious emotion, it can be twisted by education into almost any form of concrete belief : and thereafter the belief is the paramount element. In modern times the force of religion has so greatly declined that it is not easy to disentangle purely religious motives from the secular motives with which they are so intimately associated. To study religion in its purest form we have to go back to the Middle Ages, where it ruled with the most rigorous sway.

We at once see that dogma is the essential feature. Wrong actions are less obnoxious to the pure religious sentiment than wrong belief. Heresy is the greatest of all crimes. Theft, murder or rape might be punished with death ; heresy was punished, not merely with death, but with the most exquisite



tortures that ingenuity could devise. Sexual levity has always been strongly condemned by the Christian church, but the condemnation was far milder than that meted out to doctrinal delinquency. Religion ran at great height in the eighth century, and in that century an abbot's exhortation to a monk ran as follows:—"Rather than abstain from adoring Christ and his mother in their holy images, it would be better for you to enter every brothel and visit every prostitute in the city."

Religion usually inculcates morality; it always inculcates doctrine, and offences against morality are always subordinate to offences against doctrine. In the Bible many crimes are enumerated, but only one is stated to be unpardonable; that crime is no moral sin; "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." During the height of religious domination sects broke off from the main body of the Church in all directions and maintained themselves with the utmost fortitude against relentless persecution. But they did not break off on questions of moral principles; they broke off always on questions of doctrine. The points at issue seem so slight as to be almost inappreciable to the faded religious sentiment of our own times. Yet over these points generations waged war and persecution upon one another. With the renaissance came the spirit of religious toleration, but it was accompanied, and indeed caused, by a decline of religious fervour. The new outlook upon the world, the new philosophy, slowly and unconsciously permeated through the people, and drafted off into a new sphere that emotional energy which had previ-



ously flowed bodily into the channel of religion. And when, finally, toleration became very wide, new sects almost ceased to be born. The decline of religion is illustrated on the one hand by the growth of toleration, and on the other hand by the softening of dissent. Indifference is the key to both.

Now the question arises, what are these religious emotions which wax and wane so capriciously? What is their biological origin? From what original forces of the mind do they derive their stupendous power? The answer appears to be that they derive their impetus from all or any of the aboriginal instincts: first, from egoism; secondly, from love; thirdly, from social and moral feeling. Let us deal with each of these in turn.

When the human intellect rose above the level of the brutes the mind began to stretch forward into the future, and backward into the past. Man no longer lived like a brute purely in the present; the consciousness of time developed, and with the consciousness of a future came the desire to make provision for the future. At first this desire was no doubt limited to the very near future; but later on, thought became more adventurous, until at length the question would arise, "Whence have I come? Whither am I going?" The latter question at least touches on a deep egoistical chord. In general the imagination of mankind is far too limited to entertain any idea much removed from what obtains in their immediate environment. Their conception of the Universe is based, and necessarily so, upon that environment in which they happen to find themselves. Now there could scarcely be any alteration in the



environment so extreme as that of its total obliteration. The sense of being a living personality is so real and so vivid that no feeble imagination could realise its discontinuance. The state of affairs would be too remote from present experience to enter the mind. Further, if it did enter the mind, it would be in strenuous opposition to the strongest egoistic sentiments. Egoism is the feeling which ensures the survival of the individual ; it is implanted by evolution for that specific purpose. The idea of annihilation is in flat contradiction to egoistic instinct.

Now, as we propose to show in dealing with belief, a strong emotion rejects from the mind all suggestions incompatible with it, and receives readily into the mind all suggestions which are in conformity with it. We have here to deal, not merely with a strong emotion, but with one of the strongest in the whole range of human nature ; and we are referring to a time long before logic or reason had any recognition. Psychologically it is altogether inevitable that a belief in a " future life " should be widely or even universally cherished. Thus one of the great tap-roots of religion passes straight down to draw nourishment from the mighty force of egoism. In so far, religion is a transmuted egoism. It *is* egoism, and its force is egoistic. Natural selection has moulded the egoistic instinct from the start of animal life. It worked upon creatures which had no imagination and no philosophy. But when imagination and philosophy grew to such a point that men could visualise a future and a past, there were no instincts developed to cover this new sphere of life. Egoism was evolved to meet the needs of life, before any question ever arose as to an " after-



life." But once this question had arisen egoism most naturally and easily transcended the functions for which it was evolved, and applied itself to the new world which the rising powers of human imagination had created. In short, egoism compelled belief.

But unfortunately there was no evidence to support this belief. It had therefore to be supported by "theory" as opposed to "observation." Egoism lays down that the belief is true, and since it is not confirmed by observation, the psychological result is that believers depreciate the value of observation, and lay the whole stress on "theory," or, in other words, on dogma. Hence the profound importance attached by religion to "faith," and the deep-seated hatred of heresy. From the point of view of logic, a God would not be offended if anyone were to profess atheism. As Plutarch remarked, if anyone were to say there was no such person as Plutarch, he would remain unmoved. But the belief in religion is rooted, not in sense-observation, but in faith, arising from egoism, and denial brings down the full fury of outraged egoism.

Religion is not based purely on egoism, however. Its appeal to mankind is too wide to admit of the supposition that it rests on one only out of the three primary instincts. It is based on all three, and appeals to different persons in quite different ways, according to which side of their character is predominant. For many it is mainly transmuted egoism; for others it is transmuted love, and we now turn to its consideration under this new aspect.

The Christian religion has always been greatly occupied with problems of sex. True, the general



attitude of the Church has been consistently opposed to loose conduct in such matters, and total abstinence has been held up as the ideal. From the psychological point of view, however, the point of interest is, not what attitude the Church has taken up with regard to sex, but the fact that it has very emphatically adopted *some* attitude. This fact rules out the hypothesis of sexual indifference; it proves that attention has been powerfully orientated on matters of sex. It matters not psychologically whether the result of this pre-occupation is in condemnation or in praise. The mere fact of close pre-occupation with the subject shows that sexual sentiments are deeply rooted in the religious emotion, and according to the principles of character already laid down, we know that it is irrelevant whether they express themselves *for* or *against*: what is relevant is that they express themselves with great energy and force.

In short, religion is largely a transmuted sex-impulse. Deep sexual feelings may convert bodily into religious feelings, and the strength of religion is largely due to the strength of the instinct from which it arises. In so far as religion is based on sex, it is sapped by any direct expression of the sexual instinct. Such expression drains off emotional energy which would otherwise be available for conversion into religious emotion. Hence we have an obvious explanation of the high regard which the medieval Church entertained for celibacy, and of the fact that those whose lives were specially set apart for religion—priests, nuns, etc.—were definitely enjoined under threat of severe penalties to maintain chastity.

Further, the doctrines of the Church were such as



to render the transition from sex-emotion as direct and facile as the circumstances would permit. Everywhere we find emphasis laid on the duty of love and adoration. All the more spiritual manifestations of sex are embodied in religion, and the love of women can, without too much dislocation, be transmuted into the love of God. In many portions of the Bible may be observed the similarity of the language to that used by human lovers. With human lovers there is not only the same demand for love and devotion ; there is the same feeling of reverence ; there is the same attachment to photographs or "images" ; to articles specially associated with the other partner ; there is the same concentration of emotion on one object, and peremptory exclusion of any competitor. Doubtless this aspect of religion is more prominent among women than among men. The reaction of a deeply religious woman towards the image of Christ is almost identical with the reaction of a woman deeply in love towards a portrait of her hero. Praise of God, praise of her human lover ; in each case that is her main delight. Hostility towards either is the surest way of exciting her wrath and enmity.

Among men religion does not so often seem to be of this character. Direct sexual expression is much easier for men than for women, and there is not the same necessity for transmutation and indirect expression. Nor is this element of religion seen so much among married women as it is among the unmarried. When an intensely religious woman marries, her religion is apt to lose much of its intensity. It does not change in form, but it sinks (altogether unconsciously very often) to a comparatively subordinate



position in the mind. The same ceremonials as before are practised, but they no longer have the deep emotional atmosphere as of old.

The association of religion with sex is shown in many other ways. In mania, religion and sensuality are constantly found together, and sexual crimes are relatively frequent in religious paranoia. Apart from insanity, sexual and religious feelings are very readily interchangeable. These transformations have been ably described by Havelock Ellis in his *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*.

There is the further truth that similar causes may lead alternatively either to religion or to moral levity. On the one hand, "les grands désordres jettent aux grandes dévotions"; on the other hand, the history of pestilence shows that moral levity is a "usual product of the constant imminence of danger and death."

But religion is still not adequately accounted for. We have shown how it derives its power from two of the great pillars of the human mind. We have still to show that its power is based also on the third great pillar—the social and moral feeling. Indeed the association between religion and morals is far more generally recognised than either of the two associations already referred to; certainly not because it is a more intimate association, but because it is more obvious and more often insisted upon.

The strong moral instincts of mankind create a powerful bias in favour of any belief which is in harmony with them. The sentiment of justice, for instance, is a deeply-rooted moral instinct, and the whole weight of this massive sentiment is thrown into the scales in favour of any theory which represents



the Universe as governed ultimately by a principle of justice. The moral sentiments tend in this way to crystallise into rigid theories and commandments, which are forthwith believed—not because there is any scientific evidence in their favour—but because deep sentiment compels belief. The ten commandments are expressions of moral sentiments, hoisted up, as it were, from the recesses of the unconscious mind and formulated in objective and concrete language. But the association between religion and morals is too obvious to need emphasis or illustration. As a rule, men imagine that morals are dependent on religion; the truth of course is the reverse of this: religion is dependent on morals. The moral sentiments are buried deep in the unconscious mind, where their presence is not easily discerned. The religious sentiments—intensely new as they are in a biological sense—float upon the surface of the conscious mind, where their presence is patent to everyone. And men naturally assume that the true cause is that which is most conspicuous. Far more often in the study of character it is found that the strongest motives are those which are deeply sunk in the mind, and therefore the least accessible to observation.

Religion thus has a triple basis in the human mind. Its energy is derived by transmutation from egoism, from sex, and from morals. Hence its wide and all-embracing appeal to the most diverse minds. For some, it is based more on one of these impulses; for others it is based more on another. Religion is not the same thing for all men. What some see in religion is altogether different from what others see in it. Its strength in one mind is derived from a very different source from its strength in another mind.



Since religion is derived by transmutation from one or other primitive emotion, it follows that when such primitive emotion finds a more direct route of expression, or is transmuted in some other way, it no longer supplies the same energy to religion; and religion accordingly weakens. A weakening of this character set in, as already mentioned, at the time of the renaissance. New ideas were then opened up as to the nature and destiny of the Universe; a great quantity of speculative energy was drafted off in new directions, instead of flowing along the channels of religion. Philosophy draws its energy from the same well as religion; hence philosophy has always weakened religion, in so far as religion is based on the profound sentiment of the mystery of nature. Conversely, religion saps the spirit of inquiry. The antagonism between science and religion is psychologically fundamental.

Free expression of sex-instincts is no less injurious to religion. The more freely these instincts are expressed, the less sustenance can they provide for religious emotion.

Free expression of the moral sentiments is likewise injurious to religion. Surveying the history of Christianity at different periods, and disentangling the purely moral from the purely religious (or transmuted moral) elements, we find that in general the one varies inversely as the other. In the eleventh century, "As the manners of the Christians were relaxed, their discipline of penance was enforced." The Puritan movement in later times was characterised at once by intensified moral expression, combined with extreme relaxation of religious cere-



monial. In this case the moral sentiment was actually over-expressed ; hence it was inevitably followed by a period of licence and a revival of religious forms.

Seeing that religion and morals dip in the same spring, there reigns occasionally a contrast and rivalry between them, which gives rise to certain sinister traits of human character. The intensely righteous man, totally deficient in charity and in moral and social feeling is a type frequently exploited by novelists. The moral side is here eviscerated and exhausted by extreme transmutation into religion.

“ ’Tis too much proved—that with devotion’s visage  
And pious action, we do sugar o’er  
The devil himself.”

Or, as Goethe wrote,

“ Ja für die Frommen, glaubet mir,  
Ist alles ein Behikel.”<sup>1</sup>

Where the moral character is congenitally strong, it is likely to appear both as morals and as religion ; but where it is weak a high religious transmutation leaves an enfeebled moral stamina. Religion, on the other hand, often promotes morals, by means of the promises of future rewards and punishments which it holds out. The appeal in these cases is to egoistic sentiments, and is not moral in the real sense ; but through the medium of religion, egoism may be diverted to serve the purposes of morals, and it is often urged that on this ground alone religion is a necessity for social life. This intellectual motive for right conduct, however, is shallow by comparison with the instinctive motives. The injunctions of religion, as

<sup>1</sup> “ Yes, for the pious, I suspect,  
All instruments are fitting.”



such, have scarcely any real weight with its votaries. The Christian religion, for instance, enjoins peace and meekness.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

“Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.”

Yet at the time when these doctrines were subscribed to with the most implicit and absolute faith, Ammianus the historian relates “that the enmity of the Christians towards each other surpassed the fury of savage beasts against man.” In short, religious precepts are virtually powerless except in so far as they constitute a vehicle for the expression of the major emotions.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MINOR EMOTIONS

THE main activities of life are determined by the major passions, but the minor details of conduct and behaviour which fill up so large a portion of life are inspired by feelings of far less depth and intensity. All actions, except those that are purely reflex and automatic, are expressions of emotion. When the emotion is powerful, it imperiously marks out a certain line of activities for the individual which are very dominant and not susceptible of much modification. When the emotion is weak, however, the corresponding activities have not the same driving force. The weak emotions are easily displaced by others, and the minor details of life are susceptible of easy variation according to the nature of the environment and the circumstances in which the individual happens to find himself.

For the human mind rarely consists of one homogeneous emotion. It consists rather of tiers of emotions superimposed upon one another, of which the uppermost is most easily visible. Take, for instance, the case of small matrimonial differences of opinion. For the moment, mutual irritation is the dominant feeling. On the surface, disruption is more obvious than co-operation. But this disruptive appearance is merely a transient wave on the surface of the sea, and affords no clue whatever as to whether the tide of marital love is high or low. At dinner parties, husbands and wives are never seated together. It is realised that on such occasions a husband prefers to converse with other women, and a wife with other



men. But no one imagines that the recognition of such preference involves the least aspersion on marital relations. The one emotion is powerful and endures for a lifetime ; the other is weak and endures only for an hour or two.

The human mind is like the ocean, in which smaller waves are superimposed upon greater waves. The greatest ocean wave is the tide which travels round the earth once in about every twenty-four hours. It is too great a wave to be seen by the eye. We become aware of it only indirectly through observing the rise and fall of the waters. What we do see is the minor waves, the rise and fall of which are instantly perceived, and which break upon the shore in a manner to compel our attention. So it is with the human mind. What we see on the surface is usually the minor emotions, which regulate activity in most of the passing details of life. But those deeper emotions which determine the broad principles of life are not so often seen on the surface, and we become aware of them mainly by indirect observation extending over a period of time.

The minor emotions are not qualitatively different from the major passions. We still have to do with egoism, love, social feeling, etc. The difference is not one of quality but of quantity. Hitherto we have described these feelings when fully mobilised. We have now to consider them when only partially mobilised, or when, perhaps, merely the fringe of them is touched. There are, however, greater differences between the major and minor emotions than that of mere driving energy.

A minor emotion does not dominate and fill the



mind like a major passion : it is therefore capable of co-existing with other minor emotions, and it is capable also of co-existing with intellectual processes. A major passion is a blind and massive force, expressing itself with energy but without refinement. These passions are, in fact, common to the lower orders of mammals and to men : and they express themselves in men after the same method as in other mammals. But the minor emotions do not thus enthrall the mind, nor do they exclude the operation of intellect. Their expression, therefore, may be highly refined. Art and literature are the expression of minor emotions. "A good poet is a bad lover" : for intense feeling cannot be reduced to refined expression ; it is too blunt and heavy. Similarly humour is a product of minor emotions ; it is totally incompatible with the major passions : for humour always involves intellectual discrimination.

In most other respects the minor emotions resemble the major passions, though on a smaller scale. They may be deep or shallow, they become confirmed with time, they may be strong or mild in expression. Friendship for an individual person is normally a minor emotion. It never approaches the craving of love. It touches the fringe of the social feeling, but only the fringe ; for that feeling has reference to society in general rather than to any individual member of it. The death of a friend occasions sorrow and regret rather than overwhelming grief. Friendship cannot sustain the rivalry of a major passion. If it conflicts with egoism it is likely to collapse.

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be :

For loan oft loses both itself and friend."



Friendship, as a rule, is not strong enough to permit of any extensive draft upon the egoism of another, and a friendship which is opposed to the personal interests of one party is very unlikely to endure. If, for instance, a person goes down in the world and ceases to be a creditable companion, though through no fault whatever of his own, he is sure to lose many friends.

“Through tattered clothes small vices do appear.”  
The powerful emotions of egoism swallow up the minor emotion of friendship, for

“Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly.”

Friendship can no more be matched against love than it can against egoism. Rivalry in love will speedily destroy almost any friendship. Nor does friendship endure if it comes in conflict with the social and moral feelings. Men of different moral standards, of different social position, etc., are not likely to become friends. A certain community of social feeling is an essential basis for friendship, and many friendships are wrecked by the insufficiency of such community. Hence the saying, that a man may be known by his friends.

Apart from such limitations, a minor emotion like friendship has the same characteristics as a major emotion. It takes time to develop, and is durable only when it has grown up gradually. It often happens that persons newly acquainted take strongly to one another, and speak of each other in terms of enthusiastic praise. Acquaintances so begun rarely ripen into friendship, and a very short time is usually sufficient to dispel the illusionment, and set up a



reaction. On the other hand, a friendship which has arisen by degrees over a long period may become very strong and resist many impacts with the major passions. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

Egoism comes out as a minor emotion in many different ways, as in the lesser manifestations of greed, vanity, pride, *amour-propre*, etc. Social life is largely governed by minor egoism; one element in social popularity comes from skill in avoiding small wounds to the susceptibilities of others, and from judicious flattery. An unrestrained egoism, on the other hand, is the main cause of social unpopularity. The egoist in social life endeavours too much to dominate his environment; he spreads himself out, airs his views and, in short, takes up more than his share of the available space, thereby treading on the toes of his fellows. The bore is always disliked in social life, for the bore fastens upon others with endless stories and reminiscences, quite regardless of whether his victims wish to hear them or not. These stories and reminiscences are merely the expression and relief of the egoism by which the bore is dominated. The egoistic emotions find vent in a torrent of words, which have much analogy with other more purely physiological processes. The bore tells you a story, not to please you, but to relieve himself, and you are but an instrument for the satisfaction of his psychological wants. Such a character always implies emotional degradation and coarsening. The bore has lost all sensitiveness of social touch; he is not abashed by an ordinary "snub," and he will tolerate a severe rebuff with equanimity, for his hide is too



thick to suffer much from it. Just as a vain man will accept exaggerated flattery that would disgust another, so the bore may safely be treated with a rudeness that would offend a more sensitive person. His victims do not usually realise this fact, and the ease with which they may escape ; for they assume that the feelings of others are like their own—the most widespread of all fallacies in the interpretation of character and motives.

In the case of love, minor emotions come out in the form of flirtations, and in a lesser degree in the code of politeness with which it is customary to treat ladies. A flirtation is not a normal friendship ; it touches the fringe of love, and the emotions which it awakes are the love-emotions in a minor degree. The conventional civilities meted out to ladies spring from the same emotional origin. Less emphasis is laid upon them as love grows more intense, for then it expresses itself in other and stronger ways. The sexual instincts are of such a nature that, quite apart from any specific falling-in-love, women in general produce mild and unconscious emotional velleities in men in general. This slight raising of emotional tone, which on the average women occasion in men, needs expression like every other emotion : the expression has become canalised by certain accepted conventions of civility, such as taking off one's hat or opening a door for a lady. These conventions are intrinsically irrational, and are sometimes objected to by those who seek a reason for all that they do. Their true significance is as a channel for the expression of minor emotions ; if they were not expressed in that conventional and apparently unreasonable way they



would certainly be expressed in some other way. It is noticeable that, as a rule, old men attach more importance to these conventions than young men. In old men love is generally reduced to the status of a minor emotion, whereas in the young it has the characteristics of a major passion. We have already had occasion to note that a decline of love is often accompanied by an increase of politeness :

“ When love begins to sicken and decay,  
It useth an enforced ceremony.”

Turning to the social feelings, it has been shown in Chapter V. that our moral code is one form of their expression. As a minor emotion, the social feeling gives rise, not to the ordinances of law and religion, but to the less imperious injunctions of convention. “ That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,” nevertheless fulfils a real and necessary function in life : it expresses the minor emotions which cluster round the social feelings. Departure from convention offends these minor emotions and brings retribution, though less severe in character than that brought by an offence against a major passion. Neglect to observe convention may either arise from dissent on logical grounds or from a deficiency of social instinct. The latter is the more common of the two and an eminent philosopher has observed that “ disregard of custom and decency always betrays a weak and ill-regulated mind.” In laying down maxims of human character, the word “ always ” is rarely justified, but in the main the statement is true. Custom is a minor form of morality, and the German language has but one word, *Sitte*, to express both.

A marked difference between men arises from the extent to which their lives are governed by the major



or minor emotions. The major passions absorb the mind, leaving little energy available for other matters. They confer strength and power, but involve narrowness. They are difficult to raise, and when raised they are difficult to set at rest again. Dominion of the major passions give rise to an essentially heavy type of mind, with small appreciation of humour, narrow in its interests, and often slow, but strong and energetic in its own sphere. The minor emotions give rise to a type of mind just the reverse of this. They have less weight and inertia ; they come and go more quickly ; hence they give rise to a lighter and more versatile type of mind, but with shallower convictions, and less energy in any one sphere. This type of mind is more versatile (other things being equal) because a minor emotion does not occupy the entire mind, but leaves it free for the play of other minor emotions, and also more capable of supporting the additional tax of intellectual refinements. Further, the minor emotion is more readily established and more readily displaced than the major emotion, so that the mind is more plastic and more susceptible to environmental influences. What is lost in weight is gained in speed and adaptability.

“ Light boats sail swift, though greater hulks draw deep.”

It is, of course, futile and meaningless to affirm that one type of mind is “ superior ” to the other. The distinction does not depend on a different endowment of vital energy, but on a different mode of its expression. Either type may reach great worldly success. The contrast may be illustrated in politics by Gladstone and Disraeli ; in literature, by Victor Hugo and Balzac.



## CHAPTER IX

### THOUGHT

THE pioneers of psychology divided mind into intellect, feeling and will ; and most of them attached pre-eminent importance to intellect. This, no doubt, was partly due to the fact that intellect is far the easiest to study, and would naturally be the first land to be explored in the new realm which was opening up before them. But it was also due to the natural assumption of pre-evolutionary times, that the key to human nature would be found in that department of the mind which specially marks off men from brutes. The discovery of evolution has altogether upset this opinion. We now perceive that the deepest traits of human nature are, and must be, those which have a remote biological origin, and not those which have been acquired in comparatively recent times. The most interesting developments of modern psychology have been in the investigation, not of intellect, but of feeling. As far as human character is concerned, the diversities among mankind are due almost entirely to emotional and not to intellectual differences.

Intellect, or power of thought, is, however, not without its effect upon character, and this circumstance is due to the fact that thought is itself an emotion. No doubt it is other things as well, but primarily it is an emotion, and as such follows every one of the laws already indicated for emotions. It differs from other emotions in that it has scarcely



any driving energy, but in place of this it has high refinement of discrimination. The massive force of passion is gone ; it is transmuted almost beyond recognition into a delicate sensibility, which for some purposes is a far more valuable acquisition. When we pursue some goal and find a closed door blocking our further progress, passion and thought behave quite differently. Passion bursts the door ; thought picks the lock. They arrive at their ends by very different methods—the one with much expenditure of muscular energy and no refinement of touch ; the other with little expenditure of muscular energy and much refinement of touch.

Thought, like all emotion, expresses itself in action, but the action is never vigorous. The form of action in which it issues is often that which we call language, and may be either written or spoken. Language is a form of muscular activity of a very gentle character, but, on the other hand, involving a high degree of co-ordination among many small muscles. Since language is the natural expression of thought, thought could never develop far without the power of speech, and deficiencies of a language are serious impediments to intellectual progress. When thought is very deep and elaborate, it may barely have sufficient motive power to move any muscles at all ; it then finds adequate expression in a half-conscious formation of words that never rise to the point of utterance. The vocal muscles are stimulated, but not enough to produce full contraction, and it is not till the intensity of concentration has subsided that speech issues. On the other hand, language by no means necessarily implies thought.



“Gewöhnlich glaubt der Mensch, wenn er nur Worte hört,

Es müsse sich dabei doch auch was denken lassen.”<sup>1</sup>

A great deal of pseudo-philosophic literature appears which is actually little more than words, with no genuine underlying thought. In all walks of life men of moderate intellectual powers, but highly endowed in the power of active expression, use words and sentences which literally have no meaning either for their hearers or for themselves.

Intense thought involves concentration of the whole mind, and is therefore antagonised by any other form of mental energy in operation at the same time. The mind at any one moment is producing a certain quantity of energy, and the more of that energy is used up in emotion, the less is available for thought, and *vice versâ*. An antithesis thus arises between thought and emotion, and thought can only reach its height in a state of complete emotional calm. A man's delicacy of judgment is always vitiated to some extent in matters in which he has a strong personal interest. A doctor, suffering from illness, does not treat himself, but goes to another doctor. In difficult situations of life, fraught with importance, we seek the advice of a solicitor or friend. All passions blunt and deaden the faculty of judgment.

“ . . . For pleasure and revenge  
Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice  
Of any true decision.”

The rational pursuit of personal interest is often disturbed by gusts of passion or of milder emotion.

<sup>1</sup> “Man usually believes, if only words he hears,  
That also with them goes material for thinking.”



Similarly, intensity of emotion is reduced by thought proceeding simultaneously. We have already enlarged on the fact that to be wise and love exceeds man's might. When a lover begins to analyse the qualities of his lady, his love begins to decline. *Plus on juge, moins on aime* is just as true as the converse, *plus on aime, moins on juge*. The pleasure taken in art, music or literature is not proportional to the degree of expert knowledge. The expert is a person in whom the intensity of feeling has been sacrificed to refinement of discrimination. Analysis of our pleasures detracts from their intensity.

"That sport best pleases that doth least know how."

Art and literature spring from the minor emotions, because the strong intellectual element which they contain inhibits a strong emotion. Poetry expressive of profound passion does not spring from profound passion in the author, or, if it does, it is likely to be indifferent poetry. Shakespeare has acknowledged that "the truest poetry is the most feigning."

Watching a surgical operation may cause most painful emotion and nausea in one who does not understand the procedure, while to another it will cause great intellectual interest and little emotion. Vivisection occasions most distress to those who understand it least ; where interest in the experiment is very high, sensibility to pain almost disappears, even in warm and sympathetic natures. Men whose lives are totally given up to thought are rarely capable of much emotional exhilaration. The philosopher may be proof against the vicissitudes of life, but in so far as he is anaesthetic to the pains of life he is also anaesthetic to the pleasures. His life is emotionally flat.



As a matter of fact, lives devoted to thought very commonly fail in their purpose. They lack driving energy, and the power of thought itself wanes on account of inadequate pressure and stimulus. The emotion of thought, like any other emotion, has to be cultivated indirectly. Courage is not developed in a child by permanent exposure to danger ; timidity is more likely to be the result. Love is not developed by permanent seclusion with the partner, nor is the power of thought developed by the mere process of incessant thinking. Goethe went so far as to say that "all thinking is useless for thought." No doubt the faculty of thought has to be trained ; the training is a condition *sine quâ non* ; but power of thought is something different. It does not come from the training, but from outside mental endowments. Education can make the machine, but it cannot supply the power : for that we have to look elsewhere. A student whose mind is made solely for study does not travel far.

"Small have continual plodders ever won."

"So study evermore is overshot."

While it doth study to have what it would,  
It doth forget to do the thing it should,  
And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,  
'Tis won as towns with fire, so won, so lost."

The philosophers of the Middle Ages led cloistered lives, devoted exclusively and entirely to study. But what did they ever achieve ? "They read, they praised, they compiled, but their languid souls seemed alike incapable of thought and action." Excessive reading clearly confers no power of thought ; often



it does just the reverse, but what perhaps is more paradoxical is that it does not even confer corresponding knowledge. The philosopher Hobbes used to say that if he had read as much as other people, he would probably have known as little—an aphorism of which Herbert Spencer was also fond.

How, then, does the emotion of thought arise, if not by direct cultivation? It arises in the main by transmutation from other emotions which have more "body" in them. Love, egoism, jealousy, etc., can all be transmuted into thought. Their powerful motive force transforms into delicate intellectual sensibility, and the degree of sensibility is proportional to the intensity of the passion from which it is derived. Here we come upon an apparent difference between thought and the other emotions. We have previously seen that, when one emotion transforms into another there is no change of intensity. The new emotion is a psychological equivalent of the old, and is experienced with the same force as that from which it has been transformed. In the sphere of thought intensity is measured—not by active energy—but by delicacy of intellectual discrimination. Extreme refinement of sensibility is the mark of intellectual intensity, and it is that which corresponds to the energy of the passion from which thought has been generated.

In short, intellect is strengthened by the pressure of external circumstances. Self-interest, love, religion, etc., supply deep motives for the attainment of certain objects. They supply an incentive to thought, as the means of attaining such objects. The intellectual processes are forced into activity, and the more active they become the less is the original



emotion felt. At length a means is devised to the desired end, and thought is replaced once again by the emotion which caused it.

The intellectual penetration of mankind is exceedingly sharp when their emotions are aroused. Thought thus grows by the attainment of objects against difficulties: the driving force, which it lacks itself, being supplied by some outside emotion. Thought is often shallow among those who have never had to contend with difficult situations. *On acquiert rarement les qualités dont on peut se passer.*<sup>1</sup> It is not true that poverty and struggling are essential to genius, for genius may be based on many different emotions. But poverty and struggling are undoubtedly one stimulus to genius, and often develop the powers of thought.

Power of thought, as in the case of all other emotions, grows only as a slow process, and cannot be suddenly implanted in one who does not possess it. The process of developing it is what is commonly called education. The small driving energy of the emotions of thought require the aid of some external emotion to supply a stimulus. In the older methods of education, this stimulus was supplied by fear: in the newer methods it is supplied by arousing interest and curiosity. Curiosity or surprise is indeed of all emotions that which is most readily transformed into thought. The natural expression of the emotion of surprise is by attention and concentration upon the object which causes the surprise. This concentration—the careful examination of the object and a mental comparison of it with other objects previously known

<sup>1</sup> We rarely acquire the qualities that we can do without.



—is already the rudiment of thought. The highest manifestations of thought—as, for instance, philosophic thought—are based on the emotion of curiosity—which appears capable of more complete conversion into thought, than any emotion of self-interest. The main point is that for intellectual cultivation, some extrinsic emotion is necessary.

“No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en.”

Thought tends to increase when there are obstacles to its expression. Genius is apt to develop in solitude. When every passing idea is promptly expressed in words the power of thought never becomes very deep. *Vir sapit qui pauca loquitur*. Prevention of expression fortifies thought up to a certain degree, though if the prevention is too absolute the faculty dwindles and decays.

Thought is antagonised, not only by other emotions, but also by activity. Thought and action stand in strong contrast to one another, for thought essentially involves passivity, and any orientation of the mind towards activity gravely interferes with intellectual processes. Dante describes his philosophers as

“Genti v'eran con occhi tardi e gravi,  
Di grande autorità ne'lor sembianti :  
Parlavan rado, con voci soavi.”<sup>1</sup>

Decision and resolution are active qualities which stand in marked contrast to power of thought.

“And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pith and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action.”

<sup>1</sup> Men with eyes slow and grave, of great authority in their demeanour : they spoke seldom, with soft voices.



The energies of thought do not run to definite action along some specific channel, but to the refined discrimination and comparison of a large number of different channels. Thought thus often has a very small influence on the activities or conduct of an individual. It cannot compete with the more vigorous emotions in controlling behaviour. It is often noted how impotent mere knowledge seems to be in restraining men from irrational conduct: how little protection from a career of folly is given by study and learning. The intellectual speculations of mankind have roamed far into every possible field and arrived at the most diverse conclusions; but these conclusions have never much affected the conduct of society, nor even of the individuals who have set them forth. Atheism does not lead to immorality: a believer in scientific mechanism or in philosophic determinism is not a fatalist. These traits of conduct are determined by the stronger emotions already described, and are little affected by the theories which may be entertained with respect to them. Man is a reasoning animal, but he is not governed by reason. The institutions of social life may or may not be justified by logic, but it is certain that their existence is due, not to logic, but to the fact that they represent deeper and more obscure instincts.

This truth is forcibly brought out if we listen to arguments on two sides of some question where emotion is present, as for instance in politics. Each side produces arguments in favour of its belief, and genuinely imagines that its belief is based upon the arguments. Yet it is exceedingly rare for either side



ever to convince the other. The real cleavage is not due to conflicting arguments, but to conflicting emotions ; the activities of each side are determined by its emotions, and not by its overt reasonings. Here, as always, reason stands apart as a sort of impotent deity to which both sides pay homage in theory, but which is of no weight on either side in practice. Yet the fact of thought and reason is obvious to all ; the fact of instinct or emotion is less easily discerned. Thought is a comparatively recent acquisition of the mind. It lies on the surface, and its presence or absence constitutes a conspicuous difference. But instinct lies deep ; we all have it in common ; its universality and familiarity have made us almost unconscious of its presence, just as we are unconscious of the air we breathe. It is natural to assume that human motives are those which appear on the surface. But the more we study character the more convinced we become that men's activities are much less purposive and intelligent than they appear to be on the surface, and far more the mere product of blind emotion or instinct escaping along its normal channels, though outwardly refined and decorated by the veneer of reason and intellect.

The older psychologists showed that thought is a process of association :

“ E come l'un pensier dell' altro scoppia,  
Così nacque di quello un altro poi.”<sup>1</sup>

Association by similarity, association by contiguity, and the rest, have been worked out in admirable detail. What these psychologists so truly described

<sup>1</sup> As one thought springs from another,  
So from this one was yet another born.



was, however, the form of thought, and not the substance. The substance of thought is emotion. It is emotion that determines what associations shall take place. Thought may be based on many different emotions, but its form is always the same—it is always association. For the study of character it is not the mode of association that is important: it is the emotional body which makes the thought a real live existence instead of a mere geometrical diagram.

Thought may display itself in very diverse forms. Philosophy, logic, mathematics, art, poetry, business, all imply different methods of intellectual association, and each represents a combination of emotion and thought. But the more the mental energy is trained on to one branch of thought the less is there available for other branches. Mental energy is a limited quantity for each individual, and if it is used up in one way other ways are neglected. For this reason versatility is antagonistic to depth of thought. A very good philosopher or man of affairs can only make an indifferent poet. With a very high endowment of mental vitality distinction may be achieved in several spheres of intellect, but the highest flights will not be reached unless the whole mental forces are concentrated in one mode of thought. The weaknesses of genius are proverbial, and are indeed a necessary factor in genius. Men of science are usually more appreciative of music than other forms of art; and music is that form of art which has the smallest intellectual ingredient. The Bacon-Shakespeare controversy can be settled straightway by reference to this principle. It is a physiological impossibility that the writings of Bacon and of Shakespeare should



be the work of one man. The Baconians allege in support of their theory that Shakespeare had little intellectual cultivation or education; but this, if true, strengthens the probability that he wrote the plays which bear his name: for the author of those plays cannot have been a man who possessed rival interests, either intellectual or emotional, competing for his nervous energy. Limitation of mental energy makes it certain *à priori* that the man who wrote the *Novum Organum* did not write *Hamlet*.

Deep thought, as in the case of all strong emotion, is characterised by extreme concentration in one sphere, accompanied by comparative neglect of other spheres. Thought is an eclectic concentration, involving not only that certain factors are brought into strong relief, but that many other factors are lost from sight. A good memory, therefore, is apt to be a drag on thought. The things remembered litter and encumber the ground, diffusing the attention over a multitude of details, and preventing close concentration on the few essentials. A man with a very good memory often cannot see the wood for the trees. His mind is too diffuse. Thus, as Montaigne pointed out, we often find that "excellent memories accompany weak judgments," and Locke insists in his *Human Understanding* that wit and memory do not go with reason. This generalisation has to be qualified by the remark that the memory may be very good for certain limited classes of fact, relevant to the main sphere of thought, without any detriment to thought. It is a diffuse and versatile memory that interferes most with intellectual processes.



## CHAPTER X

### ACTION

ALL mental processes tend to set up some action of the muscles or glands of the body. From the biological point of view, the production of movement is the *raison d'être* of the nervous system, and therefore of the mind. Emotions, intellect, etc., are not mere empty manifestations; they have only been evolved because they lead to activities on the part of the organism, which favour the preservation of the species. All emotions, therefore, lead to some specific form of action; and the description of an emotion is incomplete without a description of the bodily activities which arise from it. On the other hand, not all action is necessarily due to emotion. Reflex and automatic actions, like the knee-jerk, take place as the direct result of a stimulus with scarcely any intermediation of mind.

With these kinds of movements we are not now concerned. We are interested only in the movements which arise out of mental activity. An emotion is a state of strain or pressure which is relieved by appropriate action. Anger is relieved by blows; fear is relieved by flight or by other measures for security; love, jealousy, hate, etc., are each relieved *more suo* by specific kinds of activity. The more appropriate the action, the more effective is it in draining off for the time being the emotion from which



it springs. Action is expiring emotion ; it is the drainage or expression of passion.

When action is very strong and vigorous, it tends to exhaust its parent-emotion. Vehement expression indicates shallow feeling, not deep feeling. As a French writer has remarked, "*Plus l'émotion abonde, plus l'expression s'appauvrit.*" The normal expression of grief, for instance, is by lamentation and tears: where these come freely the emotion is immensely relieved. But when it is not so expressed, it may become overwhelming. Herodotus relates that "Psammetichus of Egypt wept at the lesser and was silent at the greatest of his calamities."

"Deep sounds make lesser noise than shallow fords,  
And sorrow ebbs, being blown with wind of words."

This truth is recognised in the proverbs of many countries. "Still waters run deep." "*Eaux tranquilles, eaux profondes.*"

"Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep."

In the lower animals, emotion is expressed by crude muscular activity ; in man, it finds an additional mode of expression by speech—for speech is no more than a highly refined and co-ordinated muscular activity, and a great deal of human emotion is drafted off in speech. Inarticulate cries also serve for emotional relief. Pain is felt more severely if supported in silence. Before the days of chloroform, surgeons used to encourage their patients to cry out. "Grief would have tears, and sorrow bids me speak."

The natural expression of jealousy or malice is by activities calculated to injure the subject of the jealousy.



“ D’ogni malizia, ch’odio in cielo acquista,  
Ingiuria è il fine, ed ogni fin cotale  
O con forza o con frode altrui contrista.”<sup>1</sup>

But malice, in common with all other emotions, can be poured out in words, which no doubt are most effective in the form of vituperation of the victim, but are still effective by the indirect channel of merely reciting to others the occasion of wrath.

“ I was angry with my friend :  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry with my foe :  
I told it not, my wrath did grow.”

These lines represent more than one psychological truth. A mild anger is expressed in words : a deeper anger is silent. An anger expressed in words evaporates : that which is not expressed strengthens.

If every feeling that begins to generate in the mind is immediately expressed in words or other action, no strong or deep feelings are ever likely to develop. The mental energy is dissipated, as fast as it accumulates, in a multitude of little runnels, which keeps the level of emotion at a low standard. Loquacious people are not usually capable of a sustained and consistent course of activity, for this requires a deep fund of emotion to support.

“ We do not act that often jest and laugh :

’Tis old, but true—Still swine eat all the draff.”  
The constant leakage of energy involved by incessant talking, inhibits action of a more pronounced and more potent character.

<sup>1</sup> Of every malice that incurs hatred in heaven, the object aimed at is injury, and every such object either by force or fraud aggrieves others.



For a similar season, as attested by the proverbs of many countries: "Barking dogs do not bite." "Can que abbaia non morde." "Canes timidi vehementius latrant." If the animal dissipates its hostile energy in latration, it has no longer sufficient to inspire it to morsure.

Among men, a strong and consistent purpose is therefore not generally compatible with loquacity. This truth is so obvious, as to be universally recognised in fiction, even apparently of the lowest type. When a person loudly proclaims to all and sundry that he is about to perform some difficult task, it is very probable that the task will remain unaccomplished. The determination is exhausted, not in actions, but in words. A man who is just starting down the inclined plane of some vice or crime, is often most vociferous in his condemnation of that vice or crime. One struggling against the temptation to drink is apt to be most severe in his strictures upon drunkenness. This is not mere hypocrisy, as commonly supposed, nor is it an attitude affected in order to disarm suspicion. Knowledge of his danger has aroused his resistance; and that resistance is expending itself in fiery protestations. Resistance of women to attempts at seduction appears often to be dissipated in the same way: as is well described in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* of Choderlos de La Clos—a work which, however scandalous, exhibits a profound knowledge of human character.

"Elle use trop de force à la fois; je prévois qu'elle les épuisera pour la défense du mot, et qu'il ne lui en restera plus pour celle de la chose." It is generally true that when some course of action



needs the acquiescence of a person reluctant to give it, his opposition is much more likely to be overcome if he receives the suggestion with a wordy and argumentative excitement than if he receives it with a brief and unemotional negative. In the former case his resistance is exhausted by argumentation and words, which leave the mental energies in that channel debilitated, whereas in the latter case they remain strong and intact.

While over-expression exhausts an emotion, under-expression very often increases it. Of this we have already seen many examples. It is recognised in a speech of Bertram in *All's Well that Ends Well* :—

“ She knew her distance, and did angle for me,  
Madding my eagerness with her restraint,  
As all impediments in fancy's course  
Are motives of more fancy ; . . . ”

Not only do obstacles to the expression of emotion increase the emotion, but even the fear that there may be obstacles has a similar effect. The mere fact of not being able to get something often increases the desire for it. Forbidden fruits taste sweetest. Conversely a person may be quite ready of his own free will to perform some action ; but if an attempt is made to force him to perform it, he may discover an extreme reluctance thereto. For that reason, if a person is to be persuaded to take some action, it is always important to avoid any appearance of exercising constraint. Interference with individual freedom upsets the balance of desires and emotions in many different ways.



Everyone has a certain fund of vital energy, which expresses itself more or less continuously in action. The degree of activity of an individual is therefore more or less determined by his physical and mental constitution ; it can neither be greatly increased nor diminished. But just as one emotion can be transformed into another, so one kind of activity can be replaced by another ; in fact this is the same proposition as the first ; and human life depends far more on the direction of the activity than on the amount of it. If activity is extreme in one direction, it is inhibited in every other direction. This truth applies, not only in the higher manifestations of the conscious mind, but even in reflex nervous action. The stimulation of a nerve often causes, not only the contraction of one muscle, but a simultaneous relaxation of another.

The relation between action and inhibition is shown in every sphere of life. Two common forms of activity, for instance, are walking and talking, and if either is very intense the other becomes difficult. If we are walking with a rustic in the country, and broach some subject of conversation in which he is interested, he will generally stop walking and stand still for as long a time as the interest of the subject is retained. The narrow scope of his mind cannot simultaneously furnish the energy both for walking and for vigorous talking. It is related also of Socrates that when walking in the streets of Athens, he would sometimes become lost in profound thought, whereupon he remained standing wherever he happened to be, oblivious of his surroundings, until the concentration of thought had passed away. For



all men, walking accompanied by active conversation is apt to be very exhausting.

As in the case of the transformation of emotions, one activity which transforms into another retains, little altered, the same amount of energy in its new form that it had in the old form. Activity however is of two different types : it may be crude and violent, or it may be refined and mild. It appears that the mental energy needed for these two opposed types is much the same ; that is to say a refined and intellectual activity, although involving little bodily movement, requires as much mental energy as a crude and purposeless activity, involving much bodily movement ; and the one can readily transform into the other. The law of the conservation of mental energy is therefore very different from the law of the conservation of physical energy ; it is based on different principles, and has altogether a different significance. Supposing for instance that an emotion of jealousy causes malice to be entertained towards a certain individual. That malice may be relieved by either of two different types of activity ; by the crude type of physical violence, or by the more intellectual type of well-adapted slander. This latter involves thought, discrimination and judgment, and may be carried out with no muscular energy except the utterance of a few words at a well-chosen moment. Yet both methods are equally potent for relieving the tension of jealousy ; they are psychological equivalents, although far from being physical equivalents.

Persons with a high degree of mental energy are always intense in their activities ; the intensity



taking the form either of deep feeling, or of vigorous movement, or of intellectual refinement. Such people are thorough, and likely to make their mark in whatever line they enter. This fact is true, not only of individuals, but of different states of society and different periods of history. Some periods indicate mental lethargy, and others mental energy. When mental energy abounds, it comes out in all spheres alike. An age of great military exploits is an age where great achievements also occur in other spheres. Literary eminence is not achieved in pusillanimous or decadent countries. It is not a mere coincidence that Shakespeare was approaching his greatest power in the year when the Spanish Armada was defeated ; nor is it a coincidence that the inauguration of that great literary epoch is usually set down as 1579—the year that Drake took the first English crew across the Pacific Ocean. “The energy of the sword is communicated to the pen, and the tone of history rises and falls with the spirit of the age.” So also an individual who is strenuous in one direction will tend to be strenuous in all that he takes up. It is a tendency, however, that is not always realised in practice owing to the interference of another principle of character. If the forces of the mind are deeply concentrated in one direction, incapacity is certain to result in many other directions, on account of excessive diversion of energy along the main channel of preoccupation. Similarly, if a nation is *totally* consumed with military endeavour, it can rise to no heights in other spheres. If Shakespeare and his literary contemporaries had been subject to military conscription (as they would have been, had



they lived during the recent war) that great age of literary genius would probably never have come to fruition ; the energies available for literature being diverted into militarism. Among individuals, the highest achievements are usually wrought by men of great vital energy, strongly concentrated along a single channel. But such cases are rare, and appertain more to pathology than to normal physiology. "We have seldom an opportunity of observing, either in active or speculative life, what effect may be produced, or what obstacles may be surmounted, by the force of a single mind, when it is inflexibly applied to the pursuit of a single object."

High and continuous concentration on a single object cannot be attained as the result of "will," or purposive effort. It depends on the natural structure of the mind ; that is to say, it depends on the presence of an emotion of such force as to maintain close and continuous concentration, and upon the absence of other emotions to compete with it. Action typically springs from native emotion, not from forced effort. But since the individual is often unaware of his own emotions, while he is fully aware (sometimes painfully aware) of his voluntary efforts, a general belief is in existence that action arises—not from emotion—but from will. This belief is widely entertained, and serves to vitiate on a large scale the comprehension of human motives.

Let us be clear about our terms. Here is an individual of a naturally lazy disposition and with no natural talent for the work which he has to do. Being well-intentioned, however, he forms good resolutions. He determines to overcome his idleness



and to gain proficiency at his work. Accordingly he makes an effort, which at first is painful, but may cease to be so if he acquires a direct interest in his subject. *Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte.* Or on the other hand, the pain continues, and the effort then usually subsides. This is what is commonly meant when the "will" is spoken of. What really happens is this. The will is itself an emotion—an artificial emotion generated from the abstract desire for proficiency. But being a new creation, and not a gradual development of time, it is a very shallow emotion, disappearing as fast as it came, and entirely inadequate to maintain any continued course of strenuous action. It can, however, initiate the action; and the action may arouse the emotion which is proper to it. The effort of will may then die away, leaving the newly mobilised emotion to inspire permanent continuance of the action initiated. In this case, the talent for work was really present, and needed only a stimulus. Where it is absent, no effort of will can be made to take its place. All the most dominant of human activities are, strictly speaking, involuntary; they come straight from deep instincts and emotions. The voluntary actions of men are relatively few and relatively feeble. We do this, that, and the other, not for the reasons that we imagine, but because our nervous constitutions are so fashioned as to give rise spontaneously to this, that, and the other action. Man is much more of an automaton—much more spontaneous—than he generally imagines. Where he is not spontaneous, but driven only by an artefact will in a direction



contrary to his natural disposition, his achievements are relatively small and insignificant.

Since action is the relief of emotional strain, it naturally follows that pleasure is more associated with action than with passion. Intense love, for instance, is not pleasurable, if it is wholly cut off from expression or the prospect of expression. All the emotions when their natural outlet in action is blocked become painful; but when they can vent themselves in expression, the pain is relieved, and satisfaction or pleasure supervenes. Since pleasure appertains, not so much to feeling as to the expression of feeling, it follows that most pleasures are ephemeral

“ But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
 You seize the flow’r, its bloom is shed !  
 Or like the snowfall in the river,  
 A moment white—then melts for ever ;  
 Or like the borealis race,  
 That flit ere you can point their place ;  
 Or like the rainbow’s lovely form  
 Evanishing amid the storm.—”

The possession of a desired object, the fulfilment of an ambition, give pleasure so long as they are new, but the pleasure fades away with use.

“ . . . . . All things that are,  
 Are with more spirit chased than enjoy’d.”

Schopenhauer conceived life as a continuous and painful struggle, which, if the highest success were reached, was finally crowned with *ennui*. The struggle is no doubt painful to a sickly constitution, but to a robust constitution it may be quite the reverse. But to neither does the attainment of the goal bring the anticipated satisfaction; for the action



is then past, and can be revived only in the feebler shape of memory.

“ Things won are done : joy’s soul lies in the doing :

. . . . .

Men prize the thing ungained more than it is.”

Just as pleasure consists in action, so mental depression is greatest in inactivity. Adverse circumstances lose much of their sting, if vigorous measures are taken to remedy them. If no remedy is possible, vigorous action of almost any kind still relieves pain, if more indirectly and therefore less effectively.

“ The labour we delight in physics pain.”

We have already remarked that crying out brings relief to pain.

The perception of this truth has led some philosophers to the conclusion that work is the main object of life. The motto of Pasteur was “ *Travaillons.*” Voltaire observed that “ *Le travail éloigne de nous trois grands maux : l’ennui, le vice, et le besoin.*” The Romans used to say, “ *Labor omnia vincit.*” For some people, their work is at once their life and their main pleasure ; but this can only be possible when the range of interests is narrow.

We have frequently insisted on the fact that speech is a form of action, or relief of emotional tension. The earliest method of communicating ideas was probably by gestures, including the emission of cries and vocal sounds. Gradually the vocal sounds became systematised into a sort of language ; but so long as the language is imperfect, it continues to be eked out by gestures. Persons with a poor command



of language still endeavour to increase the comprehensibility of their remarks by gesticulation ; and gesticulation is greatly resorted to between persons of different countries, who imperfectly understand each other's language. But generally an inverse ratio exists between gesticulation and efficient speech. If the emotion or interest flows out fully and adequately in language, it is not simultaneously expressed by bodily gesticulation. If the emotion is high however, it is likely to escape along both channels together ; it cannot then be sufficiently carried off by speech alone.

As a general rule the deep and crude instincts, which men share in common with other animals, are not expressed by speech, but by a grosser form of physical activity. Speech is a refined form of activity, adopted to the expression of refined or intellectual interests rather than blunt passion.

The efficacy of speech in relieving emotion can be seen conspicuously by watching a heated conversation between two foreigners in a language which we are unable to understand. As emotion rises, the tendency to speak becomes stronger, till at last expression may become so urgent that each breaks in upon the other, unable even for a few moments to remain silent. At the same time the increasing body of emotion is indicated by the greater energy and louder voices, with which the conversation is carried on. If we do not understand the language, we can gauge the rise and fall of emotion very accurately by the force of its vocal expression. One disputant succeeds in establishing himself : his words come quicker, his voice rises higher, his hands and arms



begin to move, as his excitement increases. After a short time it begins to wane again, and his remarks gradually tail off (if he is not interrupted) with obviously diminishing energy in a sort of parabolic curve. At length he ceases, but only for a moment ; the emotion, remaining unexpressed for a minute or two, has gathered force and again bursts out, but this time the manifestation is of shorter duration than before. Again and again this may happen, but each outburst of words is shorter and less energetic than the last, until finally quiescence prevails. At the conclusion of each bar, the speaker sinks back with an obvious feeling of relief. These features are not so well observed if we understand the language ; for our attention is then distracted by the sense of what is said, and is not so fully available for the purely physiological aspects of the speaker.

Sometimes the feeling rises too high for successful vocal expression. It then escapes spasmodically by short and sudden outbursts at frequent intervals, and not till the tension has been somewhat relieved, does it settle down to continuous speech.

“ For raging wind blows up incessant showers,  
And when the rage allays, the rain begins.”

The form of action by which any emotion is expressed, is that best adapted for reducing the tension of the emotion, whether pleasant or unpleasant. Hence it follows that opposite emotions are often expressed by opposite modes of activity. Darwin has pointed out, for instance, that the expression of good spirits is diametrically opposed to the expression of sorrow,



Yet frequently there is no such close connection between expression and emotion that the one can necessarily be inferred from the other. The following passage describes an expression which might arise from many different emotions :—

“ . . . . Some strange commotion  
Is in his brain : he bites his lips and starts ;  
Stops on a sudden, looks upon the ground,  
Then lays his finger on his temple ; straight  
Springs out into fast gait ; then stops again,  
Strikes his breast hard ; and anon he casts  
His eye against the moon : in most strange postures  
We have seen him set himself.”

Many kinds of activity are merely the expression of excitement, and are common to various emotions. Laughter may express many different kinds of feeling. It is also the specific reaction to physical tickling. It is moreover the specific channel of escape for the light emotions of humour, which may be regarded as a sort of mental tickling. In both these cases, it is quite likely to be replaced by annoyance or disgust ; and it is often not possible to say which reaction will occur in a given individual. Laughter is only adapted for the carrying off of the minor emotions. It occurs in states of joy and happiness, as a mere overflow of good spirits. Among men scabrous stories often provoke laughter, though with some the same stories may provoke disgust. Here the fringe of the sexual emotion is touched, and it is that which escapes in laughter or by expressions of annoyance. Laughter also occurs as an overflow of painful emotion in hysteria and an overwrought nervous condition.



Tears similarly serve as an escape for different kinds of minor emotions. We have tears of sorrow and tears of joy, tears of relief from anxiety, etc. Tears are a potent relief from the emotion which causes them; they are much commoner in the young than in the old, and in women than in men. This form of activity arises from nervous action, not on muscles, but on glands.

Many minor emotions, with no one specific mode of escape, are trained by custom and convention to express themselves down some arbitrary channel. Kissing is one such arbitrary mode of expression, unknown to some races, and in others so fixed by early custom as to appear perfectly specific and natural. Clapping the hands to express approval is more obviously arbitrary. All that the sentiment psychologically needs, is *some* form of emission of active energy. If it happens to express itself by laughter, there is usually no hand-clapping. Hand-clapping does not appear to have existed among the ancient Roman soldiers; they applauded by striking their shields against their knees. The nearest approach to hand-clapping was by striking their shields with their spears; but this was a sign, not of approval, but of anger and sorrow.

Where an emotion is very powerful, its action upon glands and muscles may be, not as stimulus, but as inhibition. The normal secretion of the salivary and other glands is arrested by very strong emotion. In extreme terror, muscular paralysis occurs, and the subject is incapable of crying out or of moving.



“ And extreme fear can neither fight nor fly,  
But coward-like with trembling terror die.”

Trembling is the indication of loss of muscular control, and is found in various forms of paralysis.

Self-consciousness is an emotion sometimes expressed in odd and unusual ways. It often causes paralysis of speech, as in the ordinary form of shyness. On the other hand, it sometimes produces inept and excessive speech—also a common form of shyness. Many normal physiological processes are affected by a sudden raising of self-conscious emotions. If a person is about to sneeze, the action can usually be inhibited by suddenly drawing his attention to it, as by betting him sixpence that he cannot sneeze. The sneeze is the active expression of a small nervous irritation, homologous to a minor emotion ; and if the action be prevented, the irritation may transmute into a feeling of petty annoyance, or even into one of amusement ; either of the two being expressed in the manner normal to them.

Weeping is another form of activity, which is apt to be affected by invoking self-consciousness. Telling a child not to cry is an excellent method of making it cry. Possibly the fact is due to a slight increase in the emotion, created by a slight obstacle to its expression. On the other hand, if a child is already crying, it can often be induced to stop by telling it to continue, for it will feel much better afterwards. The same method applies even more forcibly to adults, and is sometimes useful to physicians desirous of terminating a painful scene in their consulting-rooms.

The main principle emerging from this chapter, is that action may most profitably be regarded as an



automatic expression of emotion—the word emotion being here used in a very wide sense, to include a number of unconscious cerebral conditions, which have this in common with recognised emotions, that they are states of excitement. Action is the necessary outcome of nervous excitation: without nervous excitation there is no action, and the process is fundamentally the same, whether the action is that called voluntary or that called automatic and involuntary.

Finally, it may be observed that men can be broadly divided into two groups of those with greater and those with lesser physical activity. The distinction is not entitled to priority over many others that may be established; but it is nevertheless a genuine distinction. In some men physical activity is so great that they can scarcely remain still. They are permanently restless, and for ever seeking change. Every passing mental excitation runs straightway into action. This group usually has a robust physical constitution, though it may not always be very stable mentally. The excess of activity is always accompanied by deficiencies elsewhere: deficiencies of thought, or of emotion, or very often of sensibility and refinement—such individuals being then overbearing in manner, but pushing and hard-working.

The other group is under-developed as regards activity. Feelings do not vent themselves readily in action, but revolve round in the mind, constantly transmuting, and leaving a state of hypersensitiveness and irresolution. Sometimes the divorce between feeling and action is so marked as to justify the medical title of *aboulia*. Endless



reflection and discussion take the place of action. Idleness and inefficiency in practical life then coexist with high powers of thought and feeling, which are rendered partially impotent by failure to translate into action.



## CHAPTER XI

### BELIEF

WHEN the mind is totally concentrated on some particular story or hypothesis, that story or hypothesis is believed to be true. The belief may not last long ; as soon as the story ceases to monopolise entire attention, the question of its truth may arise, and disbelief may immediately ensue ; but so long as the mind is exclusively dominated by a particular aspect of events, the reality of that aspect is believed. Belief is not an isolated psychological function ; it is an attribute of mental concentration.

In a mind of narrow range, therefore, belief follows immediately upon suggestion. If we tell a story to a child, that story is implicitly believed, however great its inherent improbability. A mind of small amplitude accepts forthwith any suggestion that is made to it. A state of disbelief is more complex ; for it implies first that the story is accepted into the mind and its meaning realised, and secondly that other thoughts and considerations enter, which lead to a critical attitude and to disbelief. Disbelief demands a wider amplitude of mental activity ; it assumes not only that the story is received into the mind (which, if nothing else happens, constitutes belief *per se*), but also that a critical process takes place simultaneously in the mind, resulting in disbelief. Disbelief is therefore more entitled than belief to be regarded as an independent mental faculty, and it is based on a more complex mental state.



Further, belief or credulity in general, requires no special explanation. It is the original attitude of the primitive mind towards whatever is suggested to it. Disbelief is an independent later growth, which stands in greater need of explanation.

While a mind of narrow range is certain to be credulous, a mind of wider range becomes credulous when some extraneous factor enters, to reduce its width. The most conspicuous of such factors in ordinary life is emotion. Emotion is a mental state where intensity is compensated by narrowness. In strong passion, certain facts or events are very vividly present in the mind, and all irrelevant facts and events are rigidly excluded. With a state of heightened sensibility in one mental department, there is a state of anaesthesia or blindness in other departments. In short the mental current flows with torrential force between narrow banks. The constriction of vision, so brought about, is very unfavourable for the development of disbelief. Whatever occupies the mind in a state of passion is believed in with a warmth corresponding to the intensity of passion, and there is no mental field left outside in which disbelief can raise its head.

Belief therefore is profoundly affected by any kind of emotion. The belief generated is that which harmonises with the point of view of the emotion. Fear, for instance, tends to produce a belief that the things feared are true. Fear generates objects of fear, and is a rich breeding-ground for superstition. Hope produces a belief in the reality of the things hoped for. Inventors believe that they will grow rich by their inventions, and this belief is not upset



by the knowledge that the vast majority of inventions that are patented are commercially unsuccessful. The new author believes that his book will find a market; yet nine books out of ten that are written never even find a publisher, and of those that do many are failures. A very large proportion of new business undertakings come quickly to grief. The gambler always thinks he is going to win, notwithstanding a past experience that he has usually lost. In these and many other ways do we see how the emotion of hope generates a false belief in the reality of the thing hoped for. Bossuet remarked that "*Le plus grand dérèglement de l'esprit est de croire les choses parce qu'on veut qu'elles soient.*" It is nevertheless a universal characteristic of mankind, in greater or lesser degree.

The major passions profoundly affect belief—or, as might be more correctly stated, profoundly inhibit disbelief. Egoism promotes many erroneous opinions about oneself. It paralyses the judgment of a man about himself; for we cannot "see ourselves as others see us."

"Men's faults do seldom to themselves appear." Men see their own good qualities much more readily than their bad qualities, and they misinterpret their own actions, the motives of which are obvious enough to others. A man will embark upon some public career in the genuine belief that he is actuated by philanthropy, while others see in it little but self-interest. What others call obstinacy, he takes for firmness of purpose. What others call pusillanimity and dilatoriness, he takes for prudence and caution. Everywhere, he tends to lay flattering unction to his soul.



Love is proverbially blinding to the judgment. The lover ascribes to his lady virtues invisible to others. The more deeply he loves, the more tenacious does his belief become, the less capable is he of forming a rational judgment.

Social and moral feeling equally generates strong fixed beliefs, not based on reason. A patriot genuinely believes that his own county is superior to any other. In a war every belligerent is firmly convinced that he is in the right, and the enemy in the wrong. Every belligerent is firmly convinced of his own pacific intentions ; and as Gibbon remarks of a medieval war, " The war was preceded, according to the practice of civilised nations, by the most solemn protestations that each party was sincerely desirous of peace." Voltaire makes a similar observation :—  
" Il est parfaitement vrai que les hommes se pillent et s'égorgent, mais c'est toujours en faisant l'éloge de l'équité et de la douceur."

The moral sentiment, appearing in the form of religion, generates belief in the existence of deities, spirits, angels, devils, etc., which provide a concrete framework for the emotion. These beings are supposed to lay down the moral law, to punish the guilty, and reward the righteous ; this belief being imperiously dictated by the strong moral emotions. Those emotions do not seek for evidence : they are strong enough to compel belief without evidence, and even against evidence. The belief is not in the least shaken by facts which appear directly to contradict it ; as for instance that calamities and misfortunes in this world fall impartially upon the righteous and the sinner. If pure logic were to prevail, this



fact might set up a presumption that there is no objective moral standard ; but such an opinion does not commend itself to the moral instinct and is therefore not capable of being entertained. The facts are interpreted in a manner more harmonious to sentiment, by affirming with a true conviction that the calamities which fall upon the righteous are trials, while those which fall upon the wicked are judgments. An evil conscience often brings its own retribution in the superstitious terrors which it drags in its train.

“ I'll haunt thee like a wicked conscience still.

That mouldeth goblins swift as frenzy thoughts.”

Just as love, friendship, etc., prevent us from seeing a person's bad qualities, so jealousy or malice prevent us from seeing his good qualities. Emotion governs belief also in our general outlook upon life. Disappointment and failure generate the opinion that the world is decadent ; and great philosophical questions of this character are rendered almost impossible to deal with, owing to the loading of the logical scales by emotion, either on the one side or the other.

Grief, melancholy, etc., have a powerful influence on belief. In a state of mental depression, the world seems full of evil, and dangers hover on every side. The brighter aspects of life are unperceived ; the darker aspects loom out with exaggerated blackness.

“ Oh hateful error, Melancholy's child !

Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men

The things that are not ? ”

A sense of mystery is an emotional state, that is potent in determining belief without evidence. Mysterious sounds for instance are readily attributed



to ghosts, and an expression of disbelief in ghosts often raises annoyance by contradicting the emotion. Table-turning, spirit-rapping, etc., are all defended on an emotional basis, and not on logical inference. Spiritualism is deeply infected by emotion; with many people, so deeply infected, as to paralyse all logical discrimination, and engender a profound and unshakable belief. Mystery hangs specially round the past; and strange events are much more readily believed, if they are alleged to have occurred in the past, than if they are alleged to have occurred in the present. Thus it happens that alleged miracles, which at the time and on the spot were not credited, are received with implicit faith at a convenient distance of time and space.

If emotion can procure ardent belief in direct antagonism to evidence, it is but natural that where there is no evidence one way or the other emotion implants the firmest and most ineradicable convictions. Logically, when there is neither any evidence nor *à priori* presumption, the mind should have no opinion, but should take up a purely agnostic attitude. Such an attitude however is scarcely ever adopted, if any emotion or sentiment attaches to the problem. Emotion governs belief and the belief goes unquestioned with no fear of contradiction by experience or logic. Some of the firmest convictions of the human race seem to be of this nature.

Summing up, it may be said that a belief is the result of a suggestion in the presence of an emotion. That is to say, if a person is in an emotional state, and some suggestion is made to him or some story told him that harmonises with his emotion, he will in



general believe it. He may, of course, be animated by the emotion of the love of truth, and in that case his beliefs are likely to accord well with facts. But the emotion of truth rarely holds a higher status than that of a minor emotion, and its vigour cannot be compared with that of the major passions. Hence no one is well-fitted to form a rational judgment on a matter in which passion enters at all deeply.

For the welfare of mankind, the perception of truth is of fundamental importance. Credulity and superstition not only lead to great material inconveniences, but they debase the mind and weaken the character. Superstition is usually found to be most confirmed in persons of weak and neurotic tendency—persons whose emotions, though not strong, are ungovernable and creep in where a stronger mind would exclude them. They harbour a copious store of false beliefs—a danger to themselves and others. What is needed is a stronger development of the emotion of truth, for no accumulation of thin logic is competent to over-ride a dominant emotion. The feeling for truth, like all other emotions, is a product of time and slow development. It cannot be inculcated by direct methods or by any intellectual instruction ; and for many people, it is very difficult to inculcate even by the indirect methods best adapted for the purpose. What is chiefly important to note, however, is that belief, like almost every other attribute of character, depends far more upon the bent of the emotions than it does on intellectual acquirement or intellectual education.



## CHAPTER XII

### BOVARYSM

WE have ventured to adopt the word Bovarysm from the French of M. Jules de Gaultier, who himself framed it in the course of a critical study of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. The coinage of a new word is only justifiable when no existing word can possibly be used to express the conception which it is desired to communicate. M. de Gaultier thought that he perceived in Flaubert's portrait of Madame Bovary a new and important principle of human character, and he set forth to expound and justify this principle to the complete satisfaction of most readers qualified to judge. A study of bovarysm now seems indispensable for the comprehension of various important and peculiar traits of character.

The term can be sufficiently defined in a few words. To each of us, the world is a somewhat different place from what it is to anyone else. We each play a certain part in our own world. We not only play our individual part, but we form a kind of philosophy or general idea of life, with ourselves taking our part among the rest. We see the world, and we see ourselves as part of it ; and from that we acquire some opinion as to our proper place in the world. We come to think of ourselves in some particular light, which we believe corresponds to that which we actually play or ought to play in the world around us. But this estimate of our own position in life may be very different from that formed by impartial observers.



Hence there may arise a very serious discrepancy between the opinion which we entertain of ourselves, and that which is entertained of us by other people. The discrepancy may give rise to highly inappropriate forms of activity, following upon a false notion of our own position. It is this misunderstanding of our true position in life that is designated by the term *bovarysm*. A few illustrations will complete the definition.

Here is a junior clerk who sits all day at a desk in the back office of an accountant, adding up figures. That is his real life, but it need not be the life which soaring romance weaves in his feeble and uneasy brain. Perhaps he imagines himself as having the qualities of a soldier. He grows a formidable moustache ; when he is out of the office, he carries himself as he thinks a soldier would. He gives himself military airs, and fancies he is admired by the ladies. If, as often happens, he is of puny development, timid nature and wholly destitute of every warlike quality, the contrast between fact and imagination may become ridiculous. That is *bovarysm*—*bovarysm* of somewhat extreme degree.

Or there is the case of Madame Bovary herself. The wife of a small shopkeeper, she conceived herself as a lady of wealth and high degree. As far as external circumstances would allow, she lived according to her own conception of herself. She spent money recklessly ; she posed as a lady ; she gave parties, and of course went on to "*tromper son mari*," because she thought that this was the custom of high society—so different from the dull respectability of the *bourgeois*. As far as objective facts would



permit, she lived the life of her imagination ; she endeavoured to fill the sphere which her imagination pictured ; and of course she came to grief, as nearly always happens to those who cannot see the world as it is. And from her name is derived the appellation of Bovaryism.

Bovaryism of a highly exaggerated degree is characteristic of certain forms of insanity, as for instance the early stages of general paralysis, when the patient thinks he has enormous wealth and power. It seems also to be developed in youths by cinematograph shows. The vivid presentation of a melodrama with its heroes and villains dominates a person of weak mind, and leads to the fancy that he himself is just such another character as one which he has witnessed in the show. The bovaryism may become so strong as to drive the individual to crime or violence.

All the foregoing illustrations depict bovaryism in a more extreme form than is commonly met with, and are selected with no other end in view than to emphasize the meaning of the term. Its more normal manifestations are far less conspicuous, but on the other hand they seem to be very nearly universal. Everyone has some opinion with regard to himself and his place in life ; and in so far as this opinion differs from the actual state of affairs, he affords an illustration of bovaryism.

Bovaryism works on nations as well as individuals. The average Englishman sums up the English national character in the conception of John Bull. The conception is probably accurate in some particulars, and inaccurate in others. The English people are industrial rather than agricultural, and



there are other elements of bovarysm in the picture as usually drawn. But in so far as an Englishman is swayed by this idea of himself, he behaves in the way that he thinks would be appropriate in a prosperous middle-class farmer, honest, kindly, and energetic, if narrow and rather stupid.

The idea that a person forms of himself often becomes deeply rooted in his mind ; it then works after the manner of an obsession or *idée fixe*, and is a governing factor in the conduct of life. Youths soon after the age of puberty commonly acquire some general outlook upon the world and their own proper position in it, which may rule their activities for the rest of their lives. A young man for instance may find an absorbing interest in politics. Statesmen of one party or another appeal to him like the heroes and villains of a melodrama. He soon conceives of himself as acting a part in this great political romance ; he fancies himself as a statesman—a hero fighting the villains ; and the foundations are thus laid for a political ambition, which may carry him far, if he happens actually to be well-adapted to the rôle which he has selected. But if he is not well-adapted, we have a case of bovarysm. He fails, because the conception which he has formed of himself does not correspond with objective fact. The failure leads to disappointment, and often to jealousy and other unhappy traits of character ; but the bovarysm remains unshaken. He is still convinced that he is cut out by nature to be a statesman, that he has all the needed qualities, and so on. If he fails, then, it is not his own fault : it is not due to any natural deficiency on his part ; it is the world which is at fault : the



times are out-of-joint ; public life is dishonest and self-interested ; politicians are anathema ; he does not doubt that if healthy political conditions prevailed, he would play the leading part which he imagined to himself. In the vituperation of politics and politicians which we so often hear on many sides, we can not infrequently perceive the ruins of a bovarystic political ambition.

For bovarysm is a very firm and obstinate conviction. It soon becomes clear to the individual that he is at cross-purposes with the world : either he is wrong, therefore, or the world is wrong. Now under any cold estimate of reason, it is far more likely that the world is right, than that some chance individual is right and the world wrong. It is not always so indeed, as history abundantly proves ; individuals have often been right, where the rest of the world has been wrong. But such cases are exceptions, very rare exceptions, so rare as to deserve permanent record in history, where they are always read with interest. In the huge majority of cases, in ordinary practical life, it is the individual who errs, and not the world. But bovarysm is a firmly-anchored persuasion. It cannot realise the possibility of its own shortcomings ; and without hesitation attributes failure to a disordered and unwholesome condition of the world at large.

Bovarysm does not necessarily work harm ; on the contrary it has great potentialities for good. When for instance, a weak suggestible person thinks of himself as endowed with high moral qualities, upright and incorruptible, he is likely to live up to those ideals, where nothing else but bovarysm could



have saved him from demoralisation. Self-respect is a moral asset of the highest importance, and may lead to a mode of life which commands the respect of others, however little adapted for such a life the individual may naturally be. Self-confidence also has high utilitarian value: a low opinion of one's own capacities is a severe handicap in the competition of life. Further, bovaryism may be the only happiness in the life of an individual. Bound down by long and tedious labour, many persons would find little of value in life, were it not for their castles in the air, their romances of imagination, where there can be no romance of actuality. To deprive them of their illusions is to deprive them of their happiness. The pleasures of the drama and the novel are partly based on the illusions of a mild and passing bovaryism.

In short, we all have our philosophy of life, consciously or unconsciously, and it tallies with real life more accurately or less accurately according to the individual. And here we come upon another broad dividing line between men; those who have a strong sense of reality and those who have not. In some, the imagery of the mind conforms closely to external nature, in others it is widely different. For the first group, practice and theory are the same. For the second group they are totally distinct. We often see a person doing things which are foreign to his constitution—adopting an unusual or surprising line of conduct. He is merely acting according to his philosophy—according to ideas which have penetrated into his head, and form part of his outlook on life, temporary or permanent. Many people seem to pass their lives doing things not natural to them—



things that they do not really want to do, but only think they want to do. The motive for such actions is not part of their ingrained constitution ; it is part of their theory or philosophy of life. Thus the lives of many people are unconsciously governed by theory—not by practical considerations of good and ill, of happiness and unhappiness. They are living up to the theories which have got into their minds ; theories about right and wrong, theories about the purpose of life, theories which may have some relation to facts or may not. When the theories happen to be false, the individual lives in an unreal world of his own imagination, and he behaves as people would behave if it were a real world. He lacks spontaneity : he is a child of art, rather than a child of nature. His utterances, and his activities, do not come as it were straight from the heart ; they spring from a theory of life, which may be deeply and carefully thought out and accepted after long consideration, or may on the other hand be the fortuitous and unconscious fruit of early habit and suggestion. The conflict between the natural man and the artificial man is sometimes acute, and then induces various hysterical symptoms, as has been luminously shown by Freud. Theory now rarely dominates the mind to the extent that happened in the Middle Ages, as illustrated in the Christian ascetics. But it does give a cast to the minds of a great many people to a lesser degree. Where it is in extreme opposition to the natural mind of the individual, it may be suddenly hurled off with great force ; a mental revolution taking place, and the



natural sentiments of the mind asserting themselves with the violence bred of long suppression.

Public school education in England has for its special feature the implanting in a boy of a particular view of himself in relation to the world. In most cases, this view is probably harmonious with the boy's natural instincts, and no bovarysm results. But often it is somewhat out of harmony, leading to self-consciousness and awkwardness of behaviour. If it is very widely out of harmony, a revulsion of feeling is likely to occur. On some minds the public-school theory of life makes so deep an impression as to persist permanently, after the boy has become a man and acquired the new instincts and experiences of adult life. The grown-up schoolboy is a familiar type in social life.

Education, as usually practised, endeavours to impress certain ideas and principles of life upon the child's mind. The ideas and principles are those arising out of the instincts of his adult teachers, and are very often entirely inharmonious with childish instincts. Hence bovarysm is almost universal among children. Modern methods endeavour to avoid this result, by training the emotions in the desired direction, by drawing out the mind, and not by stamping it as it were with a die and aborting the natural instincts. This latter method must lead to an untoward result. Either the die leaves its permanent impression, in which case there is a general loss of emotional vigour, or the mind rebels against authority, and domestic dissension supervenes.

For it must be noted that bovarysm always implies a great loss of mental energy. To speak metaphori-



cally, the motives and conduct of life in a case of bovarysm spring from some theory of life—a theory of which the individual is himself probably unconscious—but still a theory. They do not spring from the depths of the soul, and are not the spontaneous expression of emotion. Now the greatest fund of mental energy lies deep down in the mind. A mode of conduct, not prompted from the depths, is shallow and lacking in power. The energy below undergoes unconscious repression, and makes it escape in all sorts of unsuspected directions, where it is either useless or deleterious. At all events it is lost for the practical service of life ; and if the repression is severe, it may go whistling through the safety-valves in fantastic and irrational lines of conduct. When life is orientated with reference to theory, power is always lost ; and one who has not learnt to be himself can never compete for long with those whose activities are energised with the whole strength of the natural mind. The bovaryst does not see the world as it is : he lives in an unreal world and is himself an unreal person—not what nature made him, but a copy of something else that has taken root in his mind. For him at least it is true that

“ All the world’s a stage,

And all the men and women merely players.”

He merely acts a part, and is not a real and genuine individuality. Even his morals are shallow and liable to be subverted under pressure ; for they grow out of academic adhesion to a creed, or a principle or theory ; they are not the spontaneous issue of native feeling, trained and developed by years of healthy exercise.



“ He who seems virtuous does but act a part ;  
And shows not his own nature, but his art.”

Bovarysm is a source of weakness to the individual in two ways. On the one hand, his conduct is inspired from a more superficial region of the mind instead of from the deeper forces ; his conscious mental life is on a shallow level. On the other hand, the deeper forces being left out of gear are lost for the practical service of life. They escape, as shown by Freud and his followers, in a freakish and often an untoward manner. They are uncontrolled and undisciplined by the conscious mind ; yet they are not effectively suppressed. They become a store of mental energy that grows rank and unhealthy in its enforced confinement. Egoism, love, social and moral feelings deteriorate under such conditions ; the weeds flourish where the ground is left untended. Jealousy, malice, vice spring up, too strong to be suppressed by the shallower forces of the bovarystic ideal ; and these colour the outlook of the individual upon life. Further, they are “ projected ” by an individual into others with whom he has relations. That is to say, the individual attributes to others motives that resemble his own. If he bears malice against another man, he is almost certain to assume that the other man is actuated by malice against him, and that the other man is desirous of doing him an injury. A bovaryst cannot read his own subconscious emotions ; he may read them however by the motives which he attributes to others, for in their minds, he sees not what is really there, but the reflection of his own mind as in a mirror. His own suppressed emotions are distorted, crude, exaggerated



and irresponsible from long confinement, and the motives which he will impute to others are in a corresponding degree unbalanced and twisted. Strange and almost incredible suspicions take root, grotesque misinterpretations of the actions of others; for extreme bovarysm passes the limits of physiology and enters the sphere of pathology.

“Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:

Filth savour but themselves. . . .”

Now and again we meet with a man or with a woman, who passes for high-principled, and who is in fact high-principled as regards all *conscious* thoughts and actions; a person who would sternly repress illegitimate sentiments, and does suppress them successfully during the greater part of life. Yet one day, we suddenly become aware of different feelings deeper down: an unguarded phrase, a word, a glance even, may suffice to betray him; and we know henceforth that a corrupt residue of rank emotion lies stifled in a deep recess at the bottom of the mind; we know that we are dealing with a case of successful bovarysm. A little excitement is often enough to permit the suppressed feelings to surge upwards through the barrier of an accepted doctrine: whence the saying *In vino veritas*. The excitement of joy may be the occasion of betrayal.

“It is the bright day that brings forth the adder.”

It does not appear to be necessary that bovarysm should invariably overlies a residue of unused emotions. These emotions in exceptional cases may be totally transmuted, and serve the ends of the bovarystic ideal. The life of the individual is then not deficient in power, but merely misdirected and based on artificial



assumptions. The glamour of a military career, for instance, exercises a strong fascination on certain minds. The individual is very often not particularly suited for that career ; but it fills his mind and may become so intense an obsession as to transmute the entire mental energies towards its fulfilment. Thus we have the soldier,

“ Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the canon's mouth . . . ”

This passage describes bovarysm. The courage which it depicts is not that of a powerful, spontaneous and lofty egoism, but is based on an artificial theory of life and of the duties and purposes of life.

As regards morals, bovarysm is nearly universal, because morals are commonly taught to children as a doctrine enforced by authority. Morals based on an artificial foundation have rarely the stability or strength of the normal moral instinct. But since the ordinary method of education neglects to train the moral emotions, emphasising in their place a dogmatic moral code, the moral emotions of most people are inadequately developed, and if the dogmatic code is thrown off, demoralisation is very likely to be the first result. Bovarysm cannot be established or rejected in a day.

In ordinary life, bovarysm is met with in numberless different forms. Here is a man who is obsessed with social distinctions, and exhibits the bovarysm of snobbery. He classifies men according to the length of their pedigree ; and his own idea of himself is essentially bound up with his own pedigree and the achievements of his ancestors.



“ He that hath learned no wit by nature nor art  
may complain of good breeding.”

Wit and “ esprit ” have also their own bovarysm, when the individual thinks of himself in special reference to these qualities, and endeavours to manifest them on all occasions. They are then no longer spontaneous effervescence, but represent a conscious attempt to live up to a particular standard. As a famous author once remarked: “ Surtout point de Beaux Esprits ; ils aiment plus à briller qu’ à rire.”

Eccentric habits and methods of life are usually due to bovarysm : that is to say, the individual conceives some theory, and consciously adapts his life to conform with it.

Since bovarysm implies a false notion by the subject of his relation to the world, life is *pro tanto* unreal. A false idea of himself involves a false idea of the world at large ; for these two ideas are relative to one another. Hence bovarysm is most easily reduced, by exposing the individual to pressure from the realities of life. It flourishes most luxuriantly in those who are protected from too harsh a contact with reality ; for their theories are then sheltered from the shattering impact of external facts. Men whose prosperity in life have placed them above the restrictions and anxieties, which fall to the lot of the less fortunate majority, often develop a false notion of life. They become accustomed to minor forms of flattery, and to special consideration, from those with whom they deal. All their surroundings conspire to magnify their sense of their personal importance ; and a bovarysm slowly becomes established,



in which the individual conceives an erroneous view of his own position in the world. He finds little check anywhere on the accomplishment of his desires ; his will is permitted to prevail, and his opinion is accepted, where others differ from him, till at last he loses all sense of restraint in social life. Then comes the tragedy. Finding that in all things he can do what he likes, free from restraint or criticism, he one day oversteps the mark, and commits some act which outrages the sentiments of his friends, or of those in authority over him, or sometimes even the law itself. His enemies close in upon him ; and once again the ever-recurrent tragedy repeats itself : that of a brilliant mind reduced suddenly to social bankruptcy and ruin. Such disasters are most apt to occur about the age of sixty. The mind has begun to fail, but the individual is not yet conscious of his gradual weakening. He accepts with increasing complacency and diminishing reserve the overt respect of his environment. He ceases to discount it as he should, while at the same time his slowly-waning mental activities are less capable of justifying or supporting it. From this cause arise periodical scandals which we read in the newspapers, other scandals far more numerous which are successfully withheld from publicity, and also extremely frequent incidents, which fall short of being scandals, and which are sometimes comparatively insignificant, but which involve the individual in retirement or at the least in some loss of his former functions and position. Though the age-incidence of these minor catastrophes is greatest at about sixty, they may occur at almost any age, where the individual is hedged



around by artificial protection from the vicissitudes of the environment.

“ And you all know security  
Is mortal's chiefest enemy.”

Bovarysm may indeed bring happiness for those to whom reality gives none ; but it is fraught with danger for all. It is best avoided by going straight to the realities of life, by “ roughing it,” by taking and giving knocks, and by the perpetual realisation that the dreams of our imagination are dreams and nothing more. Among children, this process is sometimes referred to as “ rubbing off the corners,” and is acclaimed as the special advantage of public-school life. The public schools undoubtedly break up much bovarysm, though they may replace it by another form of bovarysm, which in most cases, but not in all, is probably less damaging than the original form. But corners tend incessantly to grow afresh, and there are few who can afford to dispense with the discipline of going down into the realities of life, and there fighting the battles of existence which, whether gained or lost, confer a true idea of the world as it actually is. What is true of individuals seems also to be true of nations. The great world-war brought infinite suffering and was a calamity far greater than a finite mind can conceive. Yet few evils are unaccompanied by some good, and the war has swept away many artificial theories of life, and left behind it a greater sense of reality than prevailed before.

So, too, in an individual, minor flaws of character bring their own compensation. No one can be perfect; but if anyone thinks he is perfect, and is universally believed to be perfect, he acquires a false notion of



himself in relation to his surroundings. He acquires a tendency to bovarysm :—

“ . . . To some kind of men

Their graces serve them but as enemies.”

If he has faults, of which he is conscious, his imagination can no longer soar in the treacherous atmosphere of self-conscious superiority to other men. He is anchored to earth. He figures himself more accurately for what he is, not as superior to all others, but as one among a vast community of others. “ Our virtues would be proud, if our faults whipped them not.”

Complete flawlessness, if it were possible, would create too much security in a world where security is a danger.

“ I stumbled when I saw ; full oft 'tis seen,  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities.”

We have dealt with bovarysm only in its larger manifestations, because these are the most important, but minor forms of bovarysm crop out in the most insignificant details of common life. Here is a man who has failed in an attempt to achieve some small object. The failure is probably due to his own inefficiency ; a little more effort or a little more intelligence would have secured it. But he is not ready to accept this true, if unflattering, view of himself. He attributes his failure to “ luck ” ; he imagines a shaft of fate directed against him, and he consoles himself with the hope that he will have better luck next time. In fact he takes a false view of the position, and of his own rôle in producing it, because it is more pleasant than the true view. Thus



do men usually attribute their misfortunes to any cause but their own inadequacy, whereas misfortunes are more often due to the ignorance or other inadequacy of the individual than to any other single cause.

“ Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,  
Which we ascribe to heaven ; the fated sky  
Gives us free scope ; only doth backward pull  
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.”

A deficient sense of reality carries with it a deficient sense of responsibility. It is common to hear persons express the most extravagant and crude opinions about events with which they have no direct connection. The expression of political opinion often exhibits this peculiarity. Individuals will insist that the Government ought to do this, that, or the other—proposals are made of the most absurd character, the impracticability of which would appear to be obvious on a moment's consideration. Nevertheless extravagant and impossible suggestions are launched with the utmost seriousness ; Governments are bitterly criticised for their failure to accomplish things that are not in the power of any Government to accomplish. All this attitude springs merely from a deficient sense of reality. If these irresponsible politicians come into office, as they often do on the strength of promises palpably incapable of fulfilment, they are at once confronted with real facts ; and no sooner are they face to face with reality, than they become responsible and sensible men. The wildest social schemer out of office becomes tame when he is installed in authority. The theory of life in which he previously basked is rudely shattered by the facts



with which he is now confronted. Some people never visualise reality, unless they are plunged in it; and one of the greatest dangers of democracy arises from the fact that government is determined by the masses who are under no necessity to realise the situation as it is, and who to that extent are irresponsible. Not only in politics, but in every walk of life, men work for ends, which if they could but realise it from a distance they would see to be undesirable. But they do not become aware of the undesirability until they have got what they strove for. It is a small minority that can estimate the real value of some object, while yet they are far from it, or that can forecast truly what degree of satisfaction they will derive from it when they have attained it. In short bovarysm is ubiquitous and fundamental; and one of the great distinctions between men depends on the degree to which they possess the sense of reality.



## CHAPTER XIII

### SUGGESTION

THE human mind presents a continuous succession of ever-varying thoughts and feelings. But the human species is gregarious, and in all gregarious animals, a common life is only possible when the thoughts and feelings of an individual are capable of being communicated to others, so that they can all be actuated by a common will. This communication of sentiments from one individual to another is not in the first instance intentional ; that is to say, it does not arise primitively from any conscious desire to convey one's own sentiments to another person. What we have to recognise is that an emotion in a gregarious creature is not usually confined to one individual ; but that it has some subtle qualities of infectiousness, whereby other individuals in the neighbourhood come under the influence of the emotion which has been aroused in one of them.

Such transference of emotion may of course take place through the medium of speech. But that is not the normal or typical method. Speech is an attribute only of human beings ; among all other gregarious animals emotion is conveyed by other means. Moreover, even among human beings, speech is best adapted for the conveyance of the minor emotions, and particularly of the intellectualised emotions ; it is ill-adapted for the transference of the deeper passions and instincts, which spread by methods of far greater biological antiquity than that



of speech. How then does the transference of emotion take place?

We have already seen that emotion tends to express itself in action. That is to say, all emotion tends to set up some specific form of muscular contractions. We have hitherto considered mainly the chief ensuing activity; but the emotion irradiates along numerous nervous channels, causing many small muscular contractions in addition to the major system of contractions which guide the activity of the animal as a whole. Among human beings, these small muscular contractions affect especially the face. The numerous small muscles of the mouth for instance, and of the eyes, are stimulated in quite a different way by each different emotion. Hence most human emotions have a definite facial expression corresponding to them. Joy, sorrow, terror, etc., can be instantly read in the face of the subject; and if they are strong, they can be read in his face far more effectively than by any verbal communication to the effect that he is under the influence of one of these emotions. Such expression is purely physiological and independent of the will.

Among other animals, emotion is expressed by different muscles. A dog for instance has much less capacity of facial expression than a man; but his emotions are expressed in great degree by means of his tail. Joy, sorrow, pugnacity are as obvious in a dog's tail, as they are in a man's face. In a horse, various emotions are expressed by the muscles of the ears. And in most animals, vocal sounds of some kind or another are potent methods of transferring emotion.



In short, emotion causes some physical alteration in the individual—an alteration perceptible to other individuals; that is to say an alteration that is visible or audible or recognisable by one or other of the various senses with which the animal is endowed. Usually these alterations are severally very minute; but for gregarious creatures they are of high significance; and natural selection (or some other factor of evolution) has determined that individuals shall be extremely quick in perceiving and recognising them. Evolution has likewise determined that the perception of them automatically produces the same emotion as that which first caused them.

Conveyance of emotion from one individual to another comes about therefore through the capacity of one to perceive the physical signs of emotion in another, and through the effect of this perception in immediately raising a corresponding emotion in the perceiving individual. It appears probable that individuals are far more prone to read the physical signs of emotion in their own species, than in any other species. We can interpret much more readily the emotions of another man than we can those of an ape; and the emotions of an ape more readily than those of a dog. But it is probable that dogs are infected by each other's emotions far more readily than they infect a man; they are quicker to perceive and to respond to the signs of emotion in their own species than a man would be. A man only partially perceives the signs of emotion in an animal of a different order from himself. In an animal of different class, he scarcely perceives them at all. He recognises academically that the singing of birds is an



expression of emotion, which in another bird probably raises the same emotion. And he recognises the same fact in the croaking of a frog ; but biologically he is too far off to be affected himself by the causative emotion. When in the stillness of the night, something happens to induce excitement in a dog, the animal barks. That sign of emotion is instantly caught up by other dogs in the neighbourhood ; they become infected with the original excitement, and that makes them bark also. They do not know what they are barking about, because for dogs as for men life is not mainly a voluntary and intelligent pursuit of an end, but an automatic system of reactions, in which the will plays little part. Yet we are sufficiently allied to the dog to realise the fact of excitement, and possibly even to be slightly affected by it ourselves.

On the other hand, if in the daytime we watch a flight of birds, wheeling to the right or left as though animated by a single will, we are at a total loss to understand by what process this apparently instantaneous transference of sentiment is carried out. We are too far removed from birds, in the biological sense, to appreciate the minute physical signs which to them are so promptly perceptible and so instantly significant ; so far removed indeed, that we sometimes attempt to cover our inability by preposterous and ill-formed guesses.

The only method by which intellectual conceptions can be transmitted is through the medium of language. Language is an elaborate system of physical signs, reduced to system by convention. It probably originated in cries and sounds expressive of emotion.



Increasing intellectual capacity conferred very delicate power of discrimination between vocal sounds. When dealing with action, we saw how the expression of emotion may be determined by habit and custom into conventional forms, which then have a significance for any race of men which has become habituated to them, but not for any other. In the same way, vocal sounds become canalised, so that particular shades of sentiment or idea come to be automatically expressed by some arbitrary or conventional sound. Thus words arise ; and from words a language develops. Language is founded upon the psychological law that all feelings must express themselves by *some* form of physical action. That is innate ; and the *precise* form adopted is acquired. The nervous constitution supplies the energy for active expression. Education, habit, etc., fix the exact paths along which that energy escapes. Thus language affords an extremely refined and sensitive means of expression, and with this at our command, it ultimately comes to supersede various other and more primitive means.

But language still remains too refined and too delicate a medium for the expression of the heavy major passions. It may indeed assist in their expression, but they are more typically relieved by cruder, stronger, and more instinctive modes of action. A man in slight pain may find relief in speech ; as the pain increases, his sentences become less coherent ; if it is very great, the speech degenerates into loud and inarticulate cries. Velleities of love may similarly give rise to beautiful language ; with a stronger love, the words become less expressive ; in



the full throes of the passion, they cease altogether. Even in ordinary conversation, emotion is conveyed by the speaker's manner, his expression, and the modulation of his voice as much as by the actual words which he uses. Language is adapted for the transmission of ideas rather than emotions, knowledge rather than feeling. The words themselves may give no indication whatever of the feeling lying behind them ; for language is under control of the will. It may not be a spontaneous expression at all ; it may for some purpose or other be consciously selected, without any reference to the actual feelings ; it may be, and very often is, such as to disguise the true feelings or to give an impression that they are the reverse of what they are. Manner and expression are not so easily controlled however. In common life, one may often see a slight change come over a person's face—such for instance as that sometimes described as the face falling. We know immediately that some sensitive chord has been touched, though the continued conversation of the subject may betray not the slightest clue to the emotional change that has occurred. The *involuntary* expression, although barely perceptible and quite undefinable, tells us more about emotion than the *voluntary* expression, represented in fluent discourse.

This *involuntary* expression comes out also in the manner of speaking, the modulation of the voice, the gentleness or energy of tone, quite apart from the words used. Thus we very often find that in social life, the emotions animating the social circle for the moment are not in the least being transmitted in the words which they utter, but by the numerous



accessories of speech. The same words may give pleasure or offence to the hearer, according to the manner and circumstances of their utterance. The same lines of poetry which if well read, inspire profound emotion, may, if read without feeling or intelligence, leave the hearer unmoved.

Now emotion through these various modes of expression is intensely infectious, being conveyed partly by speech, partly by the elaborate congeries of small physical signs, which is usually called suggestion. Whatever the *modus operandi*, the result is in any case the same: namely, that persons in social contiguity soon infect each other, and exhibit a common emotion.

“ Passion, I see, is catching ; for mine eyes,  
Seeing those beads of sorrow stand in thine,  
Began to water . . . ”

Weeping is always infectious. Just as a dog barks on hearing another dog bark, so a child cries if it sees another child crying.

Laughter is proverbially infectious. These gross physical signs cannot be missed by anyone. Courage is infectious :—

“ Ma vergogna mi fer le sue minacce,  
Che innanzi a buon signor fa servo forte.”<sup>1</sup>

Love is infectious :—

“ The sight of lovers feedeth those in love.”

Grief, joy, egoism, patriotism, religion, jealousy, all spread with ease from one person to another by means of the trifling physical signs, of which no one may be actively conscious. The minor emotions are

<sup>1</sup> His reproofs aroused in me that shame, which in presence of a valiant lord makes a servant bold.



equally contagious. Any ordinary social gathering soon becomes dominated by a common emotional tone, which shows itself in the faces and voices of nearly everyone present. A glance is usually sufficient to show whether the prevailing tone is one of gaiety, boredom, serious discussion, or any other sentiment. The point is that, whatever the sentiment, it has for the time being captured the minds of all.

The fact remains true, even though the individuals are animated by hostility towards another. Here are two men arguing some crucial point. The tenour of their conversation is mutually contradictory; they speedily infect one another, however, with identical emotions, possibly those of anger and hostility. There may be no hostility visible in the words used by either, but the growing hostility is speedily communicated by suggestion from one to the other. The arguments on either side are put more and more forcibly, but they do not carry conviction; they carry the emotion of hostility, which makes conviction less and less practicable. Hostility and *amour-propre*, then dominate the situation, and the sense of the arguments loses all its efficacy of persuasion. At length perhaps, the hostility breaks through its verbal reserve, and manifests itself in some remark which passes the limit of civility. If a rupture ensues, the blame will be placed on him who first broke reserve, though it should rightly rest on whichever of the two was more instrumental in promoting the atmosphere of hostility.

In such a case, however, neither party is usually altogether innocent. Everyone knows that "a soft



answer turneth away wrath." Wrath grows to a climax by mutual infection ; and if one side steadily resists the infection, and maintains a calm emotional tone, the other side will tend to be similarly affected. Calm is no less infectious than anger. Thus a robust mind can usually dominate a feeble mind, by determining the emotional atmosphere in which their mutual dealings shall be carried on. If the atmosphere is one of hostility, agreement will never be reached, however convincing the arguments used may be. If it is one of friendliness, agreement may be reached notwithstanding a wide divergence of view. In all social relations, it is the emotional atmosphere that counts, not the ideas that are enunciated. It is not possible to make a man do what he does not wish to do ; but it is quite possible to establish an atmosphere in which he does wish to do it, and therefore does it. Action flows automatically from emotion. To procure a desired action, it is but necessary to enthrone the emotion which would lead to it ; and this is done by maintaining that emotion and irradiating it by suggestion, with strong resistance to infection by the opposing emotions of the other side. Once again we have reached the truth that human motives always come from emotion, not from intellect.

There are other modes of transmitting ideas besides that of speech. Painting, for instance, is a form of suggestion. A drawing or a painting in the abstract is not in the least like the subject which it represents. A few lines drawn on a piece of paper have not the smallest intrinsic resemblance to a human countenance ; but those few lines may be so skilfully



combined as to suggest to the perceiving mind the image of a real face. This suggestion only affects the human mind ; nothing for instance could make a dog or an ape see any resemblance. Art does not consist in faithful copying, but in selecting from the multifarious detail in the subject one or two significant features which are interpreted by certain lines or certain colours, not intrinsically resembling the original, but calculated to touch emotional chords which themselves awake in the mind an image of the original. In some kinds of impressionist or cubist art, the suggestion fails to take effect in many minds, and they thereupon deny that it is art. For such as do not respond to it, it is indeed not art ; but for those who do respond it is art, for the worker succeeds in transmitting a vivid image or feeling by a few slender threads of suggestion. Real intrinsic resemblance, so great as to do away with suggestion, is not what is commonly called art. A waxwork, for instance, or a painted statue may be a far more faithful image of the original than a drawing or a marble statue ; but it is not usually a work of art, because it fails to suggest the emotional atmosphere that the live person would produce.

So it is with literature. Good writing carries far more than is borne upon the surface of the mere words. Words have an emotional significance, as well as a literal significance ; and a literary artist so chooses and arranges his words as to produce the emotional atmosphere in which they will be most effective. The connotations of words are often more significant than their denotations. The French literary movement known as symbolism may be cited



as an example. Here the words are calculated to raise a strong emotional effect, and they are selected with comparatively little reference to their actual meanings. To a person with a purely literal mind French symbolism is totally unintelligible.

The case is no different with rhetoric. The orator moves his audience much more by suggestion than by the literal sense of his words. Demosthenes insisted that action was the first, the second, and the third essential for good oratory. If an orator can convey his emotions to his audience, it matters little what his arguments are ; but if he cannot, or if he inspires them with the wrong emotions, the most perfect chain of reasoning will leave them unmoved or hostile.

An audience, or a crowd, is notoriously susceptible to suggestion. A successful speaker transmits his emotions to the individuals who listen to him. They manifest the emotions by the physical signs of expression. The emotion thus comes to be irradiated on all sides. Everyone feels it, everyone by his unconscious movements suggests it to everyone else ; and the superabundant suggestion soon works up the emotion to a high pitch. But, as we have already seen, a violent emotion suddenly aroused by a non-persistent stimulus, is always short-lived. The effect soon passes away, and crowds are as notoriously fickle as they are suggestible.

In short, all forms of society, from the greatest to the smallest, are governed by emotional tone. A different tone prevails in a church, in a theatre, in a club, in a drawing-room, in a school, in a public-house ; but they are each characterised by their own



atmosphere, and they draw to them those whose normal emotions are in harmony. Each has its prevailing tone, and each draws out and encourages the individuals most in unison with that tone, while operating repressively on those out of unison. The prevalent tone of the nation during the late war was quite different from what it is now ; and quite a different set of people then came to the fore. The tone of Elizabethan England was such as to bring out literary genius. The tone of the revolution brought out men of a very different character and interested in very different matters from those who flourished during the restoration. Politics must always be an uncertain profession ; for with every shift of political sentiment, a new crop of statesmen come out who represent that sentiment ; and success depends upon the chance whether or not the native sentiments of the individual are or are not those which happen for the moment to predominate in the social life of the times.

Having dealt with the general nature of suggestion, we may now pass to the consideration of some special points in connection with it. To begin with, the effect is most powerful at the time when the suggestion occurs. The emotion normally begins to fade when the outward source of infection is removed from immediate perception.

“ The present eye praises the present object.”

Compassion for misery may run high when the misery is immediately perceived, but quickly pass away when it is no longer under the eyes. But if the misfortunes are similar to our own, they are not so readily forgotten ; and in point of fact, our sympathies



are most forcibly excited by the misfortunes to which we ourselves are liable. Humanitarian sentiment is apt to be driven more by immediate impulses than by remote considerations, and sometimes errs in consequence. Giving money to an itinerant beggar generally does not work for the advantage either of society or of the beggar ; but the beggar is present before our eyes, and his miserable plight excites us to action which more likely depresses him farther than raises him. Sympathy with prisoners is of a similar nature. Those who have seen his crime, and the degraded mental process which produced it, demand that he shall be punished. But those who see only the unhappy lot of the convict are moved in quite a different manner, and are not similarly affected by a deed which is not brought directly before them.

“ And where 'tis so, the offender's scourge is weighed,  
But never the offence. . . . ”

The more often a particular emotion has been experienced, the more liable is it to be raised by suggestion. Physical signs indicative of emotion in another person are lost upon us if that emotion is foreign to our experience. The rich man sympathises more with the misfortunes of others in his own class than he does with those of a different class ; because their sentiments are more easily appreciated and understood. Those who are always strong and well cannot appreciate the sufferings of those who are weak and ill, and often seem unsympathetic in consequence.

“ He jests at scars that never felt a wound.”

Those who pass uneventful lives, amidst the same kind of surroundings, thus tend to be narrow in their



sympathies ; and their minds are dense to all forms of suggestion that overstep the limits of their particular experience. One who has undergone many vicissitudes, on the other hand, can enter into a far greater variety of human feelings, and is quick to appreciate many different kinds of emotion. For a similar reason,

“ The strongest plume in wisdom’s pinion  
Is the memory of past folly.”

Personal experience is more instructive than information derived at second-hand. A child may be informed of the danger of playing with fire, but it is very likely to persist in playing with fire, notwithstanding the information. If on the other hand it burns its fingers, the lesson is learnt for all time. The example shows that bare information or commands fail in their purpose, when they do not raise the desired emotion.

Many people, however, have little capacity of learning by experience. The glamour of the present moment is for them all-powerful, and constitutes so intense a suggestion that all remoter considerations are excluded.

In short suggestibility constitutes a great difference between individuals. The minds of some veer hither and thither, quickly responsive to the least external suggestion ; the minds of others are less mercurial : they are less at the mercy of their environment and more at the mercy of their innate constitution. Societies, or nations, have very little capacity for learning by experience. The experience as a rule does not come home sharply enough to the individual, and it is soon forgotten, leaving him with no adequate



resistance to the next great wave of social suggestion.

As already pointed out, the normal course of events in the mind is for an emotion to give rise to action. An association is thus established between a particular emotion and particular forms of action ; but it sometimes happens that by the influence of suggestion, the normal course is inverted, and instead of emotion causing action, action then causes emotion. Of this curious feature of character, several examples may be given.

Normally hatred tends to expression by injury inflicted on the person hated. But it sometimes happens that a person for reasons of his own injures someone whom he has no cause to hate, and whom in fact he did not hate at the time. The mere infliction of injury, however, commonly results, not in producing sympathy with the person injured, but in producing personal dislike of him. As Fielding wrote, "How apt men are to hate those they injure, and how unforgiving of the injuries they themselves do." Depreciating another person occasions a mild dislike of him, just as the infliction of injury occasions hate. On the other hand, praising the merits of a person causes a friendly feeling towards him.

" Praising what is lost

Makes the remembrance dear . . . "

Another example of the same principle is seen in the effect which condolence or sympathy with a person sometimes has in increasing his grief. Everyone recognises this fact in its application to children. If a child falls and slightly hurts itself, ill-judged condolence immediately exaggerates the child's pain, and he screams the louder, the more profuse the



sympathy offered. If little notice is taken, and the fall is passed off as of no account, the child quickly recovers its equanimity. In illness, extreme condolence with a patient may cause him profound distress. This is especially the case with hysterical patients, who are exceptionally liable to be affected by suggestion. It is possible, however, to make almost anyone miserable by condoling with him on his grievances, real or imaginary; and much unhappiness is caused in the world by the injudicious behaviour of soft-hearted but stupid people. It need hardly be added that real grief may be greatly relieved by strong and intelligent condolences.

Belief, like emotion, may be caused by action. Normally, belief inspires a certain mode of activities; but if these activities are for some irrelevant reason carried out, they themselves may generate belief by inversion of the usual order. If a person, in order to please others, performs certain actions, those actions *per se* tend to produce belief in the opinions which would naturally prompt them. The performance of religious rites promotes belief in religion. The repetition on frequent occasions of some story tends to produce belief in the truth of the story. Some hysterical conditions may be improved by this method, which when applied in medicine is called auto-suggestion. The patient, being caused to repeat a formula to the effect that he is getting better, finally believes it himself; and to that extent he *is* better. People who endeavour to excite interest by telling strange stories of their past experiences, come in time to believe that they have really had those experiences.



“ . . . . . Like one,  
Who having into truth, by telling of it,  
Made such a sinner of his memory,  
To credit his own lie.”

Just as injury inflicted upon another generates hatred of him, so benefits conferred upon another generate affection for him. Parents who are fond of their children are prepared to make personal sacrifices for them. But when sacrifices are made for some other reason, as for instance from a feeling of duty or from deference to the opinion of others, the sacrifices tend to generate the fondness which might have been absent before. Giving presents generally strengthens the affections of the giver more than of the receiver.

“ It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

From the point of view of the receiver, a present is valued the more highly according to the sentiment entertained towards the donor; and the value set upon the gift alters in proportion as the sentiment to the donor alters.

“ . . . . . To the noble mind,

Rich gifts wax poor, when givers prove unkind.”

To an ignoble mind, the present is cherished merely for its material value. In families, so comfortably situated in life that sacrifices by one for another are never called for, mutual affection is often more feebly developed than in other families counted as less fortunate.

Although action and expression may, as illustrated above, give rise to the correlative emotion, the normal process of mind is for emotion to give rise to spontaneous action. The conduct of an individual, the whole character of an individual, is determined by his



emotional tone. Emotional tone governs his actions, his thoughts, his beliefs. If the emotional tone is depressed, the thoughts and ideas which gain admittance to his mind are of a gloomy type. The brighter thoughts and ideas are excluded. An extreme illustration may be taken from dreams. If indigestion, or overheating, or some other cause induces a disagreeable bodily condition, the dreams will all be of painful subjects. A nightmare may take many different forms. The things dreamt of are of the most diverse description ; but they all have this in common, that they are of a highly disagreeable character. That common element is based upon a strained nervous condition. Given the strain, all the dreams are correspondingly gloomy, notwithstanding their diversity of form. Cheerful subjects find their entry barred : gloomy subjects alone can enter—exactly what subject being a matter of hazard. Its admittance to the mind does not depend upon its ideas or its intellectual elements, but upon its emotional tone which is determined purely by the nervous system. A sort of natural selection takes place among ideas. Innumerable different ideas *may* enter the mind, but only those in conformity with the emotional condition *do* enter the mind—which of them being a matter of chance.

So it is to a lesser degree in waking life. Our thoughts, ideas, beliefs, activities, etc., are derived from our emotional tone ; and not, as often supposed, *vice versâ*. The fear of impending ruin makes us miserable ; but very often it is the misery that comes first, and opens the mind to all ideas connected with impending ruin. A cheerful emotional state would



not so easily have admitted these ideas ; others more harmonious to the mind would find easier access, and jostle out those that are inharmonious. And there is great difference between mankind in the liability to emotional fluctuation. In some, a petty misfortune causes exaggerated sorrow, and thenceforth none but grievous thoughts pursue their career through the subject's mind. Anticipations of evil often bring their own realisation ; for the subject resigns himself to his ill-luck, and does not fight against what his depressed mind holds to be inevitable.

“ To mourn a mischief that is past and gone,  
Is the next way to bring new mischief on.”

Some, on the other hand, are capable of maintaining an even emotional tone, not unduly depressed by adversity, nor unduly elated by prosperity. A misfortune is soon forgotten ; the native emotional tone is unshaken, and the subject proceeds on his way undeterred.

“ The robbed that smiles, steals something from the thief.”

There are thus two orders of men :—those who retain the same personality through many vicissitudes of environment, and those whose personality is unstable—the thoughts and feelings veering about in harmony with every suggestion offered by their surroundings. Some men, and still more some women, are extraordinarily susceptible to suggestion. They have no colour of their own ; they take all from their surroundings of the moment, and they throw it all off as easily as they took it on. A character such as this is wholly at the mercy of chance. If their companions are bad, they will inevitably be bad—



not through any vicious instincts, but through incapacity to resist suggestion.

“ A knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.”

Others on the contrary are so confirmed in their instinctive mentality, as to be deaf to all the milder forms of suggestion. They are usually unconventional and often eccentric, by reason of inability to absorb from the environment. The two types are not hard to distinguish. The mere clothing they wear is often sufficient to base a guess on ; for the one type is in strict conformity to fashion, while the other may furnish evidence of personal idiosyncrasy.

Yet no mind whatever can be free altogether of the influence of suggestion. The most unyielding of minds will bend slightly where more pliable minds bend sharply. Suggestion carefully worked up and multiplied by constancy and repetition is so powerful a force as to be almost irresistible. The human mind is not a thing of cast-iron. There is no one alive, who would not become insane under certain highly exceptional conditions of environment : *â fortiori* there is no one who might not yield to suggestion, if it were applied with all its possible rigour.

“ . . . It is meet

That noble minds keep ever with their likes ;

For who so firm, that cannot be seduced ? ”

The difference is merely one of degree. A gentle breeze suffices to move the one : a violent hurricane is needed to shake the other.



## CHAPTER XIV

### OBSESSIONS

IT has already been remarked that the older psychologists regarded intellect as the key to the mind, while modern schools of thoughts recognise that intellect is a trivial factor by comparison with emotion or feeling. It followed naturally from the tenets of the older writers that man was in the main a reasoning animal, and that his activities were directed towards the attainment of pleasure or happiness, and the avoidance of pain or unhappiness. We have endeavoured on the contrary to show that activities are a spontaneous expression of emotion—a draining off of emotion; and if that is so, there seems to be no particular reason why it should always be associated with the pursuit of pleasure or the avoidance of pain. There is no doubt a good reason why it should usually be so; for if the activities of an animal were totally irrelevant to pleasure and pain, natural selection would soon determine the extinction of the species. But in many directions, natural selection does not weigh heavily on mankind. His environment is often highly artificial, and survival depends on factors very different from those prevailing elsewhere in the animal kingdom.

At all events there are two kinds of human motives between which a sharp distinction can be drawn. On the one hand, there are the reasonable motives—*i.e.* those which in some way or other serve the interests of the individual, the species, or the group.



On the other hand there are the unreasonable motives, which do not appear to serve any of these interests, but which may be very powerful and dominate the life of the individual. When they are thus powerful, they are usually termed obsessions. The individual is driven forcibly along some line of conduct, which is neither in his own interests nor in the interests of anyone else ; and argument or reason can do little to deter him from it. An *idée fixe* has taken root in his mind and compels him relentlessly along the path which it prescribes.

Minor obsessions are almost universal. Everyone is a slave to habit ; and nearly everyone has habits which are meaningless or deleterious, though when they refer to very insignificant matters they excite no attention. It would, however, cost the individual a struggle to relinquish them. Many people have obsessions on a larger scale, which then exercise a profound influence upon their lives.

Obsessions are at once an indication both of weakness and of strength. They imply weakness, because they dominate the individual, lead him to irrational conduct, and are beyond control of his normal will. They become established in the first instance by suggestion, and very often at an early age when the mind is highly susceptible.

They imply strength, on the other hand, because, once firmly established, they drive through every kind of obstacle, and are extremely resistant to any attempt at modification, or to any influence of reason or environment. Pierre Janet has pointed out that most of the great works in the world have been wrought by persons of mental instability. The



reason is that these persons have been driven by obsessions. An obsession carries far more driving power than the normal conscious will. It is not affected by obstacles, not weakened or deterred by set-backs ; it is blind, deaf, and anaesthetic to the environment. It drives the subject along with an unnatural force : it may drive him to his death, or it may carry him to achievements that no mere voluntary effort could ever compass. It has nothing to do with reason or logic, and is very unlikely to promote the happiness of the subject.

We have already seen that great mental energy directed along a certain channel necessarily implies deficient energy along other channels. The subject of obsession combines great strength with great weakness. Anaesthetic and deaf to suggestion in one sphere, he is hyperaesthetic and the easy prey to suggestion in other spheres. More "nervous" and sensitive than normal in the ordinary walks of life, he seems to be bereft of sensation and of doubt in his own special province.

The domination of life by a single obsession is however comparatively rare. The more usual obsessions are ephemeral ; they persist for a time and then pass away. In this common, every-day form, they are part of the normal make-up of every mind that is much susceptible to suggestion. A suggestion, strongly brought home, is almost certain to give rise to an obsession. Many people, for instance, have an exaggerated fear of cancer or other disease. A layman, who reads a medical work, will, if his mind is readily suggestible, discover in himself the symptoms of which he reads ; and it may not be altogether easy



to shake his conviction. Anxiety often weighs far more heavily on weak minds than it should, according to an intelligent estimate of the probabilities. Anxiety may indeed become so acute, as to be actually more painful than the feared eventuality would be, if it were realised.

“ . . . Present fears

Are less than horrible imaginings.”

In point of fact, the most grievous misfortunes in the world usually come unexpectedly, and are not those which we have been accustomed to anticipate and dread. It has been said, in consequence, and possibly with truth, that more suffering in the world rises from the anticipation of evil than from evil itself. The anxious, timid, man suffers many times over from the calamity which he fears, and each time may be worse than the reality, which after all could only happen once and may not happen at all. For it is the nature of obsessions to be violent and intemperate, uncontrolled by reason or by intelligent assessment of the case.

Belief is very often governed by obsession. Just as an obsession drives a man relentlessly into some particular line of conduct, so it drives him into a particular belief that is equally divorced from reason. Many common superstitions are obsessional in character. They are first implanted by suggestion ; they have no relation to reason ; but they are harboured with a conviction that may be impossible to shake. They resist displacement with altogether unnatural energy. Where the mind is under any stress, its liability to suggestion is increased, and its liability to obsession follows suit. Thus we remember



the importance which in classical times was attached to omens when great interests were at stake. The greater or more dangerous the enterprise, the more ready is the mind to pass under the influence of obsession ; for it is weakened by the strain and less resistant to spurious suggestion.

But the strongest mind may *in extremis* be shaken by suggestion ; the strongest mind is to an equivalent extent liable to fall prey to obsession. There is scarcely anyone who has not some beliefs which are due to obsession in defiance of reason. Where suggestion is conveyed in strong emotional atmosphere, belief is almost certain to follow the suggestion, unless the mind is singularly free from susceptibility. The beliefs of crowds are nearly all of this nature. A crowd is highly suggestible : highly liable therefore to obsession ; and what a crowd thinks has usually scarcely any relation to the truth.

The purpose of this chapter is to emphasise the fact that a great deal of human activities and human beliefs are by their very nature irrational, and subserve no purpose of the individual, the species, or the race. If they do subserve such a purpose, it is no more than a fortuitous coincidence. These obsessions are very widely spread, and range from the smallest to the greatest of human actions. On the small scale, we may notice trivial peculiarities of speech—the conscious and voluntary mispronunciation of a word, a mispronunciation which the subject persists in without any reason whatever, except that it costs him an effort to relinquish it. All men have their little peculiarities—for the most part extremely



trivial and perfectly harmless—but which they do not willingly let go.

Then there are the people with hobbies which they ride to death, people who will always sleep with their windows shut no matter how hot the weather, and people who will always bathe in the Serpentine no matter how thick the ice. Here the obsession is contrary to natural feelings. There are men who grow their hair long, and women who cut their hair short, though the ridicule and *gêne* in which they are thereby involved must far outweigh any advantage which they can reasonably hope to derive from it. Many political movements are of this character. The suffragette movement in England was obviously based on obsession; for it was carried on with a fury altogether disproportionate to the advantages pressed for.

Finally, on a still greater scale, there are the large dominating obsessions of life, dealt with in subsequent chapters:—fanaticism, genius, vice, insanity. All that has here to be noted is that obsessions are a weakness, that they occur most readily in persons who are most suggestible, that they are not founded on reason, and that they are intemperate in expression and little capable of modification by environment. They are a sort of paralytic contracture of the mind—a spasm, beyond control of the conscious will. As they grow in strength, they indicate increasing mental debility; and they lead up finally to the various phobias, or to insanity, or to suicide. In so far as an individual is liable to obsessions, he has not full control of himself; he is not a free agent.



“ . . . Boundless intemperance  
In nature is a tyranny.”

Obsessions work great evil in the world ; but they may also achieve great good. Their driving power is immense and unnatural, in whatever direction it happens to turn. We may now pass to a consideration of some of the forms which they adopt.



## CHAPTER XV

### FANATICISM

THE normally constituted individual has many different interests in life. Many different feelings pass through his mind, giving rise to their proper expression in action. The mental energy is thus split up and flows out along many different channels. Exceptionally, however, we find that an individual possesses an abnormally narrow range of interests. Instead of exhibiting many different feelings, none of which are pre-eminent over the others, he exhibits to abnormal excess one feeling, which is pre-eminent over the rest, and which takes a much larger share in guiding his conduct than would be the case in a person whose feelings are more normally distributed. The mental energy is less divided than usual; it tends to flow out through one main conduit, and since, for each individual, the sum-total of mental energy is a constant quantity, all other channels are correspondingly starved. When the predominant interest which has thus eaten up all rival interests is concerned with matters of public or religious interest, the state of mind resulting is usually termed fanaticism.

A fanatic is essentially a person of uneven emotional distribution. His energy, instead of flowing with impassive calm between wide banks, is constricted to a narrow channel of exit down which it rushes with great violence. Hence come the two main character-



istics of fanaticism—immense driving-power along one channel, drought and insufficiency along all others. In contrast with the exuberance or extravagance of ideas in one direction, there is a paucity of ideas in every other direction ; these two traits being indeed two sides of the same thing—one an inevitable correlate of the other.

Fanaticism, when it happens by chance to be directed towards some object of genuine public advantage, may be of inestimable value. Political progress has been largely carried out by persons with some fanatical ingredient. Those who are wholly free from fanaticism can scarcely possess the driving force to break through the obstacles of inertia and established régime. Fanatics are the people who make the world move. On the other hand, it is a mere chance whether fanaticism does happen to coincide with the public advantage or the reverse. It is never based on reason, though it always endeavours to justify itself by reason. It is in fact a huge blind force—a force which is certain to set things in motion, though the direction of the motion is purely fortuitous. Unfortunately there are many more ways of going wrong in the world than there are of going right. The established social order is the result of long ages of social evolution, and consequently has a better justification than can usually be seen on the surface. At all events, it works, even though it may not be the best possible ; and we have no guarantee that a different system would work. Thus fanaticism, notwithstanding its potentiality for good, is a very dangerous social element. The laws of probability indicate that it is bound to do far more harm than



good, and history in this respect abundantly justifies the *à priori* expectations.

Although fanaticism has usually been the immediate cause of political progress, it does not follow that without fanaticism there would have been no progress. On the contrary, the progress would certainly have occurred without it, though more peacefully and more gradually. The social system is no more than a concrete expression of the social instincts of mankind. As those instincts slowly change, so does the social system change :—by steps so slow and small that few individuals may even be aware of it. But the summation of these slow small steps amounts in the end to a far greater revolution than was ever achieved by the isolated strides of the fanatic. A nascent sentiment taking root in society will in itself develop gradually until at length it becomes embodied in the social order by the natural process of birth. But long before this time arrives, the fanatics usually set about to induce a premature delivery. The change is brought into being before the people are yet ripe for it. It comes with violence and disorder instead of by gradual evolution.

In short, fanaticism viewed as appertaining to the social organism, represents the violent expression, which we have already seen to indicate a shallow emotion. If an emotion is deeply planted in the people, its expression comes naturally and inevitably, without any need for fanatics. If on the other hand, it has as yet only a shallow basis of emotion, its expression is violent and unstable. The desired change may be compassed by the fanatics ; but it has no deep root, it is still impermanent, it carries with it



sundry unexpected drawbacks. In short it will not work, unless or until it is in harmony with the prevalent sentiments among the society to which it is applied.

Fanaticism very commonly coexists with some ascetic tendency. Being of the nature of an obsession, it has no direct relation to pleasure or pain ; hence it is natural that many forms of fanaticism will be such as to bring pain upon the subject. Asceticism is no mystery, except to those who conceive human character as governed by logic. If action is the spontaneous expression of emotion, then there is no reason to wonder that it is often antagonistic to the interests of the individual. If, as generally supposed, it were the expression of conscious and rational will, then self-mortifying acts would be unintelligible. Doubtless such acts are often explained as being dictated by obedience to some precept—religious or other. That, indeed, is the ostensible motive—but no precepts would suffice to produce asceticism in a mind not attuned for it. The true cause of asceticism is not to be sought in this or that religious precept, but in the general emotional constitution of the mind, by which it is predisposed to ascetic practices. External precepts then work as fruitful suggestion, but their only real influence is in determining what form shall be assumed by the innate asceticism of the mind.

But in point of fact, practices which appear to others to be painful are not necessarily so to those who indulge in them. The mind of a martyr or an ascetic is abnormal ; and if we judge its feelings by our own, we are likely to be led very widely astray. Over-



development of one side implies under-development elsewhere. Such a mind exhibits a tropical abundance of feeling in one part, and is a barren desert in other parts. Voluntary martyrdom destroys sensibility both of mind and body. Fanatics who torment themselves are capable of little affection for the rest of mankind. "A cruel unfeeling temper has distinguished the monks of every age and country." Fanaticism preys upon the natural emotions of the mind ; it transmutes and adapts them to its own end, growing at their expense, and reaching its greatest intensity where the transmutation has been most complete, and where the mind is most highly endowed with vital energy. It saps the social and moral feelings in common with the rest. "Whenever the spirit of fanaticism, at once so credulous and so crafty, has insinuated itself into a noble mind, it insensibly corrodes the vital principles of virtue and veracity." The mind of the victim then becomes one huge obsession—a cancerous growth drawing to itself nourishment at the expense of every other quarter of the mind. Not only are irrelevant feelings destroyed, but irrelevant ideas are also inhibited. A fanatic is often a recluse, for he has few ideas or sentiments to communicate, and the social feeling is highly debilitated.

It must not be supposed, therefore, that a fanatic suffers from his conduct in the way that a normally constituted person would suffer. Any strong mental concentration destroys the capacity for feeling pain. Soldiers in the excitement of battle are often unaware that they have been wounded. When the concentration is abnormal—when it is an obsession, especially



a strong obsession—we cannot infer from our own normal feelings any clue whatever as to the feelings of the person obsessed. They are totally and radically different. Stories are related of martyrs “who exasperated the fury of the lions, pressed the executioner to hasten his office, cheerfully leaped into the fires which were kindled to consume them, and discovered a sensation of joy and pleasure in the midst of the most exquisite tortures.” In such cases the capacity for feeling physical pain is so nearly abolished that it is secondary to the pleasure experienced by ministration to the obsession. So when we read the stories of Simeon Stylites, who remained on the top of a column for thirty years, or of Benedict Joseph Labre, who gave up his body as a breeding-ground for lice, we have to guard ourselves from the supposition that their feelings resemble in the remotest degree what our own feelings would be under such circumstances. This conduct was probably not particularly disagreeable to them. That they suffered from it is certain ; but the suffering is less due to the acts themselves, than to the deterioration of physical health which such conduct involves.<sup>1</sup>

It may be remarked in passing that, while fanaticism involves paucity of ideas and deficiency of feeling, the converse proposition has been sustained by the philosopher De La Mettrie, who said, “Plus on a d’esprit, plus on a de penchant au plaisir et à la volupté.”

At all events, fanaticism is a form of abnormality

<sup>1</sup> Simeon Stylites, for instance, suffered from an ulcer on his thigh, attributed by ancient scandal to a kick received from the devil when he was surreptitiously descending from his column.



fraught with great danger for social life. It leads to wars between nations, to persecutions and tortures, to crime, social and individual. Its existence justifies the saying that man has more to fear from the passions of his fellow-creatures than from the convulsions of the elements. It is a matter of importance to consider what methods are best adapted for the alleviation of a fanatical spirit. Essentially fanaticism is a disease of mental narrowness, and it seems best combated by any method which tends to enlargement of the ideas—that is to say, to a more general development of all parts of the mind. The infusion of a philosophic spirit is the only true antitoxin for fanaticism. Philosophy, using that word in its widest and most general sense, confers breadth of mind ; it confers the one essential quality, the absence of which creates fanaticism. Experience of many diverse feelings, knowledge of many diverse opinions ; these possessions shed upon the mind a steady light, where the deadly germs of bigotry and intolerance cannot long continue to live.



## CHAPTER XVI

### GENIUS

GENIUS implies a very high development of one department of the mind, and, as we have repeatedly pointed out, this necessarily implies a low development of other parts. The genius is a man in whom mental energy is distributed unevenly—great strength in alliance with weakness. To this extent he resembles the fanatic, but the resemblance proceeds no farther. In every other respect he is altogether different. Many kinds of character exhibit abnormal distribution of mental energy; but of these many kinds only one—and that a rare one—is correctly designated as genius.

For genius involves intellectual capacity, as well as emotional abnormality. Those who have never considered the subject are apt to imagine that genius is sufficiently defined as exaggerated intellectual capacity *tout simple*. This idea cannot stand examination. Intellect alone can accomplish nothing; it is the emotional force pushing from behind that is the prime agency; but the emotional force does not constitute genius unless its expression is of a highly intellectualised character. We have seen that emotion may be expressed by two different forms of action: either crude, violent, torrential action or else refined, mild, discriminative action; the one being just as efficient for relieving emotion as the other. In the case of fanaticism we had to do with a crude and extravagant form of expression. In the case of



genius we are dealing with an extremely refined and discriminative form of expression. In each case there is present an abnormal accumulation of mental energy demanding expression. The way in which it vents itself is quite a subordinate matter from the psychological point of view, though it is all-important from the point of view of its practical effects. That genius is a great deal more than mere intellectual discrimination was recognised even by Herbert Spencer, who remarked of his *Autobiography* that it brought out "one significant truth," namely, "that in the genesis of a system of thought the emotional nature is a large factor ; perhaps as large a factor as the intellectual nature." This is a remarkable admission for the period when it was written, but from our present standpoint it still underrates the emotional element in genius.

In short, genius is not, like ordinary thought, the expression of a minor emotion. It has far more in common with the major passions—not expressing themselves as usual by crude and forcible action, but by highly intellectualised and gentle action. Genius implies great emotional power, not capable of being produced by voluntary effort, but dependent on a special congenital singularity of the mind. The particular emotional cast, necessary to genius, is probably a much rarer quality than the intellectual refinement which renders its expression possible. Genius seems, therefore, best interpreted by analogy from the major passions. Like them, it is totally outside control of the will : like them it drains energy from other regions of the mind : like them, it grows strongest in solitude and is weakened by all ex-



traneous demands upon the mind. Further it is extraordinarily sensitive. The hyperaesthesia of genius is homologous with the anaesthesia of fanaticism. Rousseau was a typical genius, and his intense sensibility led the philosopher Hume to remark: "He has only *felt* during the whole course of his life. . . . He is like a man who was stript not only of his clothes, but of his skin, and turned out in that situation to combat with the rude and boisterous elements." The pin-pricks of the world are felt as spear-thrusts; any loud noise may, as Schopenhauer remarked, be unendurable. The life of a genius is a fragile and usually a painful one. Yet this extreme sensibility to pain is accompanied as usual with relative insensibility in other directions. The mind of a genius is made up of mountains and valleys.

Though genius is a rare quality, it is probably more abundant than might be supposed, for the reason that in the majority of instances it never comes to fruition. Success in life is only partly due to individual qualities; for the rest, it is due to a favourable environment.

It is quite clear that Shakespeare would never have acquired renown if he had happened to be born among an illiterate or uncivilised people, nor if he had never been taught to read or write. A favourable environment is essential for the fruition of genius. Literary genius can never become established among a people inappreciative of literature. Military genius rests undeveloped in obscurity unless wars provide a favourable environment for its expansion, and not even then unless the individual is favoured by opportunity. The most consummate genius in art will languish in obscurity if the individual happens to



be brought up as a coal-miner. It will likewise languish in obscurity, even if it is able to find expression, but is not appreciated or understood by the social environment. For all forms of genius the environment must not merely be favourable, but must be highly favourable. It seems certain that the amount of recognised genius is a very small proportion of the existing potential genius, which does not come to fruition because it is not suited to the times. As Gibbon has remarked, "It is an obvious truth that the times must be suited to extraordinary characters, and that the genius of Cromwell or Retz might now expire in obscurity." The spirit of the age operates eclectically in the production of great men. From the considerable mass of potential material it selects here and there those few who happen to be best attuned to their times. Very slight modifications of this prevailing social atmosphere suffice to alter entirely the selection of individuals. Literary genius often gives a history of severe struggles in an unappreciative environment, crowned by ultimate success. It is only heard of because the environment happens to take a favourable turn. More often the struggles are not crowned with success. Whether successful or not the reputation of an author fluctuates in different periods. Scott or Dickens are appreciated at one period and depreciated at another. Shakespeare, in his own lifetime, was considered inferior to Ben Jonson, and has passed through various stages of neglect and acclamation. Had he lived half a century later, after the rise of the Puritans, his plays could never have been written. He might then have been a prosperous merchant or a dissipated idler.



If Napoleon had lived in times of peace he would merely have been an eccentric artillery officer, and if Gibbon had had no independent means, his history would have remained unwritten. Herbert Spencer would not have acquired fame if Darwin had not fixed the public mind on evolution. Under other circumstances other individuals would have captured public attention and become famous—individuals whom we have never heard of.

Prehistoric races of men were very likely more highly endowed with genius than our own race. The cave paintings of palæolithic times suggest that if men of those ancient races were to live now they might produce the greatest works of art that have ever been known. Their brains were often larger than ours ; but accomplishment was limited by lack of material and ignorance of technique. Where the disabilities are not present we show no superiority over older races. The ancient Greeks have never been rivalled in the sphere of art, and Galton has estimated that the mind of the average Athenian in the time of Pericles was as superior to that of the average Englishman to-day as the latter is to the mind of a negro. In all probability the greatest genius that the world has ever produced has been one that the world has never heard of. It is not great men that make the age. It is the age that makes great men.

We conclude, therefore, that the efflorescence of genius involves two factors (1) that the individual should have the character of a genius, and (2) that his environment is adapted for its development. Of these the second is probably the more important. Environment brings many persons into fame who



have none of the essentials of genius. On the other hand, their reputation is likely to be short-lived ; it is based on opportunity rather than greatness and passes with the conditions which brought it out. Durable reputations are based on an appeal to some deeper chord in the human mind ; some chord less affected by the superficial changes of sentiment and opinion. If we were to compare Shakespeare with a popular modern novelist we should find that the latter appeals to superficial sentiments of the moment, while the former appeals to the deeper sentiments that are less changeable. And if the popular novelist is a " better seller " than Shakespeare it is because the majority of men live more in their shallower emotions than in their deeper emotions. Those shallow emotions soon change and are succeeded by others ; the novelist who touched them falls into oblivion, to be succeeded by others whose career is equally ephemeral. The greater genius delves deeper in the human mind. His reputation reposes on elements far more permanent, though less generally mobilised at a given time.

Our subject, however, is the character of genius rather than the conditions under which it may succeed. Though we deal with genius of all kinds, yet we shall be limited in our illustrations to genius that has become famous, for the rest are unknown. But the description will apply to many more persons than are overtly recognised under the title.

One of the most notable features of genius is its astonishingly frequent association with disease, insanity, or some other form of debility, physical or mental. Havelock Ellis found from an analysis of the records in the *Dictionary of National Biography*



that 15 per cent. of men of letters and 16 per cent. of poets suffered from ill-health during the active part of their lives. So frequent indeed is the association of genius with disease that, under the headings of many of the most terrible diseases, long lists of famous names may be compiled.

Take, for instance, tuberculosis. Among the names comprised under this heading are those of Sterne, Novalis, Keats, R. L. Stevenson, J. S. Mill, Leopardi, Chopin, Rachel, Heine, John Addington Symonds. In many of these cases the disease cannot be regarded as a mere fortuitous accompaniment of genius. It is so closely associated as to force the belief that a causal connection existed between the two. Heine's genius rose higher as his disease progressed. J. A. Symonds, who wrote books while slowly dying from consumption, clearly perceived the connection, for he wrote: "The colours of life have been even richer, my personal emotions even more glowing, my perception of intellectual points more vivid, my power over style more masterly than when I was comparatively vigorous. It seems a phase of my disease that I should grow in youth and spiritual intensity inversely to my physical decay. It is almost pain to grasp the loveliness of the world with so much intensity when the body is so dragging."

Stevenson's case is even more remarkable. Of him it is stated that, "while prostrated by a pulmonary haemorrhage he wrote out in three days the first draft of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*." On another occasion his wife wrote of him: "After a terrible haemorrhage he fell a victim to sciatica, and was temporarily blind from ophthalmia. All light was



excluded on account of his eyes, and his right arm was bandaged to his side on account of the hæmorrhage. To circumvent fate he had a large board covered with paper laid across his bed, and on this, on a large slate, he wrote out with his own hand most of the poems in the *Child's Garden of Verses*." As his health improved his literary capacity diminished. He found himself "unfit for imaginative writing."

As to the facts there can be no doubt. Tuberculosis is, under certain circumstances, definitely favourable to manifestations of genius. The explanation rests on the principle, already so much emphasised, that the mental energy of an individual is a limited quantity. This proposition is, in reality, a partial statement of the truth, and holds good only when we are considering the mind, independently of the body. But bodily processes require much energy for their accomplishment; the more energy they consume the less is available for mental processes. The true constant is not mental energy in itself, but vital energy as a whole, and any excess of energy expenditure in mental activity implies a draft on the energy available for physical activity, and *vice versâ*. Conversely, a depressed condition of body is very apt to accompany an exalted condition of mind; while mental depression is a frequent concomitant of physical amelioration. This proposition will be more fully expounded later on. At present we need only note that tuberculosis is a disease characterised by alternations between somewhat feverish excitability with mental exaltation and periods of mental dejection, and that this peculiarity of the disease is



associated with a corresponding peculiarity in manifestations of genius.

Another terrible disease which has attacked many famous men is syphilis. Under this heading may probably be included Francis I. of France, Charles V. of Germany, Henry VIII. of England, Barbarossa, Cardinal Cesare Borgia and Lucrezia Borgia, Erasmus, Pico della Mirandola, Schopenhauer, Schumann, Nietzsche, and Guy de Maupassant. The last three died of general paralysis, the morbid influence of which can easily be recognised in their works. Benvenuto Cellini, in his *Autobiography*, describes symptoms which are obviously those of syphilis, and remarks upon the favourable effect which it seemed to have upon his artistic production.

Gout, which has sometimes been called the "disease of statesmen," comprises a long list of distinguished men, including Chatham, Sydenham, Milton, Rochefoucauld, Gibbon, Samuel Johnson, Henry Fielding, Congreve, Walter Savage Landor, William Morris and Sydney Smith. Among painters there are Rubens and Claude Lorraine; among actors Charles Kean. In these instances their artistic production is characterised by a robust virility, in striking contrast to the nervous exaltation of tuberculous genius. Gout appears to promote intellectual activity, principally when it attacks the joints, but a general gouty diathesis, marked by alternations of physical condition, seems to stand in some general relation to genius. Other diseases believed to depend on uric acid, such as rheumatism, gravel and stone, are often found in conjunction with genius. Instances include Luther, Montaigne, Harvey, Leibnitz, Bossuet, Mor-



gagni, Buffon, d'Alembert, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Voltaire, and Benjamin Franklin. The bilious temperament of Carlyle is evident in his literary style.

It is well known that insanity is often associated with genius. Pascal, Rousseau, Cowper, Tasso, Auguste Comte, Lamb, Swift—to name only a few—were all insane during a portion of their lives. An evil nervous heredity is common. The parents of Turner and of Bacon were insane. The father of Beethoven was a habitual drunkard, and his mother died of consumption. Other nervous ailments, short of insanity, frequently occur. Gustave Flaubert was an epileptic, and the same disease is attributed to Caesar, Mahomet and Napoleon. The influence of epilepsy on character, apart from genius, will be illustrated in a future chapter. As regards Napoleon, his military genius has been ascribed to various causes—notably to hypopituitarism. He died of cancer of the stomach, which is also said to have influenced his mentality. There seems no real evidence for believing, however, that cancer has any relation to genius.

Many other instances come to mind exhibiting the relation between genius and disease. Augustus was a valetudinarian ; Luther was constantly ill ; Calvin has been described as a "pathological museum." Richelieu was ailing during the greater part of his life. William of Orange was a martyr to asthma ; Frederick the Great was of delicate constitution and frequently ill ; John Hunter (who inoculated himself with syphilis, in order to acquire a better understanding of the disease) died of angina. Darwin was prostrated by two hours of work, and obliged to lie on his back the greater part of the day. Herbert Spencer was a



permanent invalid. Johnson was scrofulous and melancholic. Scott dictated the *Bride of Lammermoor* during intervals of lucidity while taking large doses of opium for agonising "spasms." In early life he was the victim of infantile paralysis. Chateaubriand, among innumerable others, was a case of hysteria.

Sometimes it is possible to perceive a more direct association between fame and physical debility. Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, was noted for the furious rages into which he used to fall. His peculiarities of temperament may have been partly due to the fact that he suffered from an ingrowing toenail. Many of the more sinister figures of the French Revolution were physically afflicted. Marat suffered from a skin disease, Robespierre from his liver, Couthon from disfigurement. It seems probable that these ailments may have occasioned a bitter and cynical mentality, which rendered the subjects suitable instruments for the accomplishment of the horrible social crimes then committed. They were not greater men than others who lived at the same period, and have never been heard of. But they were more attuned to the prevailing spirit of the times: they came to the surface because their natural sentiments harmonised most naturally with those which for a brief period ravaged the French people. And as soon as that sentiment altered—which in view of the violence of its expression was certain to happen in a few years—their prestige vanished, and they suffered the retribution and eclipse which always attends those who minister to the ephemeral emotions of the public mind. In these cases the influence of disease probably determined the formation of a character of peculiar



qualities. Other abnormal traits may often be traced to a similar cause. The pessimism of Schopenhauer may have been due to his syphilis ; that of Leopardi to his tuberculosis, and that of Byron to his club-foot.

We have, at all events, illustrated the fact that genius is often in relation to disease. This opinion has been advocated in a still more sweeping fashion. Moreau de Tours, for instance, a great French alienist, used to say that all the great things accomplished in the world are by lunatics, and the opinion is partially endorsed by Pierre Janet. Dr. Charles B. Reed, of Chicago, affirms that we owe many of the literary masterpieces of the world to the action of poisons in the author's blood, urging that the poison may act as a powerful stimulant to the brain and nervous system. The present state of knowledge does not seem adequate either for proof or disproof of this theory. Undoubtedly the evocation of genius demands a stimulus. That stimulus may be provided by poverty or other circumstances of external pressure, or it may be provided by toxins in the blood. It is said to have been the stimulus of toothache which drove Pascal to solve the problem of the quadrature of the cycloid ; but the same stimulus has occurred in millions of other people, with no apparent effect towards intellectual exaltation. The character of the genius has to be present in the first instance, and when it is present its evocation may be due to any kind of curious and unexpected stimulus, either direct or indirect ; the same stimulus that is effective for one form of genius being ineffective or depressing on other forms.

There can be little doubt that a stimulus or spur, especially one inclined to be painful, tends to promote



nervous activity. One medical writer has suggested that body-parasites may fulfil a very useful function in the evolution of their hosts, by the constant nervous stimulus which they supply. It is at least significant that no animal species is known to be free from parasites. If they were harmful, current biological theories would suggest that species would be evolved immune from parasites, and it seems very probable that they confer advantages which at least equal the toll which they exact.

Where we have been able to trace a connection between genius and many grave diseases, it can hardly be doubted that there is a still closer connection between genius and minor disorders, bodily and mental, which are not sufficiently marked to designate as disease. A genius is essentially of unstable health, and his lot is far from happy.

Passing from the subject of disease, we may note that various writers have alleged some correlation between genius and sexual abnormality. Some have associated it with sexual deficiency and others with sexual excess. Dean Swift and many others are, for instance, said to have been sexually anaesthetic. The followers of Freud suggest that the sexual energies may be transmuted into emotions of social utility, and many others hold a similar view. It is very probable that this process occurs to some extent. Great demands on mental energy drain off the energy disposable for sexual purposes. The war, causing profound emotional effects among soldiers, is known to have often had a depressing effect on reproductive functions. Where emotions are highly mobilised in one direction, nervous energy is drawn upon and



reduced in all others. Many kinds of genius are said to be derived from a sexual origin. P. J. Moebius definitely lays down the proposition that artistic leanings are to be regarded as secondary sexual characteristics; and if this is true of art, it is also true of science, in so far as the worker has in him a touch of genius, and is not merely following science as a business or trade.

But if the proposition is true, it certainly has to be accepted with qualifications. Many cases of genius have been associated with high sexual vigour, so much so as often to be thought worthy of record in history, as, for instance, with Julius Caesar, Mahomet and Charlemagne. A physiologist of the calibre of Brown-Séquard actually goes so far as to recommend "*surexcitation sexuelle*" as a means of evoking genius. In art and literature instances of the association are probably more numerous than instances of dissociation; nor has any evidence been produced to show that persons of sexual indifference are, on the whole, of stronger mentality than those who are normally constituted. The truth probably is that an exceptionally high endowment of vital energy is likely to manifest itself in many different ways. All the activities are more energetic than is the case with normal people. Genius, however, introduces an element of instability, drying up some kinds of energy while leaving other kinds untouched or enhanced. As in the case of religion, genius may derive its force from sexual energies, and may therefore be accompanied by sexual anaesthesia. But it may be founded on quite different sources of energy; it may even draw to itself the energy which would normally be



used to control sexual impulses, and in this case sexual manifestations would be stronger than ordinary. In short, the association between genius and sexual anaesthesia probably refers only to special cases of genius, and is not typical of genius as such. It is a secondary and derived association, masking the primary and original association.

For genius is infinitely variable in type. It is merely a specialisation of vital energy along one channel. It always carries its hyperaesthesias and its anaesthesias, but these are different in each individual case. It all depends from what functions of mind or body the energy of the genius has been drawn. Where we have an instance of genius, we may confidently look out for deficiencies somewhere or other, but to say that genius is always associated with sex-deficiency is no more true than to say that it is always associated with tuberculosis. These are but phases among its protean forms.

Again, it has been alleged that genius is in constant association with low stature, instances given being Caesar, Marlborough, Nelson, Napoleon, and Wellington. It may be that small men, requiring less energy for muscular purposes than large, may sometimes have more spare energy available for adventitious purposes. But the human mind is of infinite complexity, and these simple correlations usually turn out altogether inadequate as a framework for the facts. All that we can assuredly affirm about genius is that it is an abnormality; of which the leading characteristic is a high endowment of vital energy, finding expression in an uneven or capricious manner.



## CHAPTER XVII

### VICE AND CRIME

WHEN the psychology of criminals was first studied there was a tendency to assume that they were physically abnormal, and inquirers industriously compiled what they called the "stigmata of degeneration." Lombroso, the most famous of this school, alleged the existence of certain physical peculiarities, by which the criminal could be differentiated from his fellows. In course of time this doctrine was discovered to be untenable. There are no physical signs by which a criminal can be differentiated from a law-abiding citizen. The belief that he must be different still lingered however, and it became the custom to affirm that criminals were to some extent feeble-minded, or at least that their general intelligence was below the average. It is now being discovered that this theory also is not in accordance with the facts.

It may possibly be true that criminals who have been captured and put in prison are, on the whole, of intelligence beneath the average. But the criminals who have not been captured have never been investigated; if they were they would very likely be found to be above the average of intelligence. The police-system constitutes a net, through the meshes of which the clever criminal can pass, while the stupid criminal is caught. If we take a sample of the population, and then pick out from among them all those of intelligence above the average, the remainder



will inevitably exhibit a degree of intelligence that is below the average. Some process of this kind is certainly in operation in the criminal world. Those who escape detection are on the average those of superior ability. The inhabitants of our prisons are not an average sample of criminals ; and the average intelligence of criminals as a whole is higher than the average intelligence of those who are put in prison. There is no evidence whatever to indicate that the criminal class is deficient in intelligence.

Those who have followed the main thesis of this book will not anticipate that there would be any such deficiency. Character is the product, not of intellect, but of feeling, and whatever peculiarities the criminal mind may present will be peculiarities of emotion, and not of intellect. The truth of this proposition is very easy to see. A man may commit a crime under very strong temptation, whereas if he had not had the temptation he would not have committed it. His criminality is then not due to lack of intelligence, which is the same in either case, but to an emotional cause. The vast majority of thieves are poor men. If they had been rich they would not have stolen. They are not thieves because they are stupider than other people, but because they felt a greater emotional incentive to theft, and this incentive became strong enough to overcome the normal powers of resistance.

This is not all, however. There may be two men, equally in need of money, and presented with the same opportunity for theft ; yet the one steals and the other does not. There is a resistance adequate to



the occasion in one, but not in the other. Whence arises this difference?

It has already been pointed out that the moral sentiment is a deep human instinct, owing its biological origin to the fact that without it society would fall to pieces. It has also been pointed out that the primary instincts exhibit all kinds of variation in different people, not only as regards the strength of the instinct, but as regards the form which it assumes. We are certain *à priori* to find what we do find, namely, that among a certain proportion of people the moral instinct is deficiently developed along one or more lines. That is to say, they do not feel to the same degree as a normal person the normal reluctance to the commission of a crime. To a normal person the commission of a crime is opposed to instinct; it needs repression of instinct, which in itself is a disagreeable or painful process. It is an act of self-mutilation, and if there were no advantage to be gained from the crime—no incentive to it—a normal person would never commit a crime, even though there were no laws to prevent it, and no risk of discovery. But when there does exist an incentive or motive, as, for instance, of an egoistic character, then the action of the individual depends purely on whether the egoistic feeling is stronger than the moral feeling or not. Persons of inadequate moral development have less innate reluctance to anti-social action, and an egoistic motive therefore leads them with little internal opposition into crime.

Now it so happens that when once a moral sentiment has been flouted, trampled upon, and defeated by a stronger egoistic sentiment, it loses much of its power;



and on the next occasion it presents a still smaller resistance than it did on the first. After two or three occasions the moral sentiment in the sphere of the particular crime in question may become almost non-existent, and the individual is ready to commit the crime at the least incentive, or the very slenderest motive. In this way the so-called criminal mind becomes established. It may be due to a succession of tremendous temptations, too powerful to be resisted even by normal moral sentiments, which have thus been gradually worn down and extinguished. Or it may be due to lesser temptations which only had a feeble moral sentiment originally to contend with.

The strength of the natural moral armour of mankind is shown by the fact that when it is broken through the breach is often confined strictly to one place, and the individual may in other spheres maintain a normal average of moral behaviour. A considerable proportion of criminals are addicted to one form of crime only. They may be sent to prison time after time for committing the same crime in the same way, and yet show no tendency towards committing any other kind of crime. By some unfortunate accident their moral armour has been pierced in a certain spot, very likely when they were quite young. In that spot, moral feeling has been permanently damaged and destroyed. A local moral anaesthesia has arisen, but it often remains local, and in other respects they may be quite normally constituted persons. The illustration shows how infinitely more powerful a deterrent is the existence of innate moral sentiment than is the strong arm of the law. The law may punish a man frequently for a



succession of similar offences: yet he still tends to repeat those offences. Another man with a stronger moral sentiment is protected from committing the offence, even though the penalties of the law never enter his head—even though, as until recently in the crime of incest—the law provides no penalty at all.

A criminal therefore need not necessarily be a person of general moral degradation. The most singular aspect of this truth is in the case of murderers, many of whom appear to be persons of kindly disposition and normal moral development in all spheres except that of taking human life. They may even commit their murders for a motive that would be regarded as creditable and laudable if the means adopted had been justifiable. Murderers tend, moreover, to repeat their murders always by the same method, with scarcely any variation. The fatal flaw in their moral character is narrowly circumscribed, and permits them to commit only one kind of murder in one kind of way, which, however, they are very likely to repeat if occasion arises. Anyone who will walk round a Chamber of Horrors, dismissing all antecedent prejudice, will be surprised to find that murderers as a class appear to be a most respectable looking set of law-abiding citizens. And so, indeed, many of them were, but for the one catastrophic deficiency in their moral character.

In short, a criminal has this in common with a fanatic or a genius, that he has an abnormal or uneven emotional development. As with them, certain regions of his mind are anaesthetic; he is lacking in certain of the attributes of the normal person. If we put aside every moral aspect of the problem and



regard it from the purely scientific or moral standpoint we perceive that a criminal is a person of greater capacity in some directions, and of lesser capacity in other directions, than the normal person. He can do things that the normal person cannot do ; he can overstep the narrow boundaries of routine and custom, and stand alone unawed against the opinion of the world. But this is just what the fanatic does, and what the genius does. They are similarly anaesthetic in other spheres, and their lack of feeling removes restraints on conduct and thought, which chain down the common man to the common path of humanity. There is this difference, however : that the deficiency of the criminal and the manner in which his abnormal sentiments are exercised, happen to be anti-social, whereas in the other cases named they are not anti-social. From the moral and practical point of view, the distinction is fundamental and all-important. From the scientific point of view—that of merely interpreting human character—the distinction is trivial and immaterial. Whether a deficiency occurs in this or that part of the mind is of minor interest to the psychologist as such, though of maximal importance to the moralist.

The criminal therefore is a person of abnormal mind and suffers from the additional misfortune that the abnormality leads to anti-social expression. The abnormality may be congenital, but its efflorescence is probably more often due to a vicious environment, and the workings of suggestion.

Emotional strain seems often to be a predisposing element towards vice and crime. The normal balance of the mind is overthrown, and an exceptional draft



on one side involves a weakening of other sides. "Moral levity is a usual product of the constant imminence of danger and death." This is not only true as regards war, as we are now all able to observe ; it is true also of pestilence. The epidemic scourges which used occasionally to ravage Europe were accompanied by a striking moral relaxation. Those who ascribe human activities to the ostensible motives on the surface may well be astonished, that in the age of most passionate religious conviction the imminence of death should produce moral disorganisation rather than lead mankind to prepare for the impending future life, in which they so firmly believed. There is in it nothing, however, to surprise those who are aware that human activities often have little relation to the motives which appear to prompt them.

The essential point is that the criminal mind is an abnormal mind, and has therefore much in common with fanaticism, obsessions, genius, and insanity. Given a mind with some inherent congenital abnormality, and it may be merely a question of environment and early training whether it turns into one or other of those channels. We have already illustrated the connection between genius and insanity. A similar loose connection might be traced between crime and insanity, and perhaps even between crime and genius. Eccentricity—a departure from custom and orthodoxy, peculiarities of sentiment—are characteristic of both. A weakly infant may, in an unwholesome environment become predisposed to insanity ; in a vicious environment it may be bred up to crime ; in an intensely religious environment it



may turn to fanaticism; and under other circumstances again the traits of genius may develop. Instability is characteristic of all—a congenital instability which is determined by environment along a given channel. In females it will run more towards insanity and less towards crime than in males.

Many people object to the doctrine that the criminal is merely the inevitable outcome of heredity and environment. They think that such a belief undermines the theory of criminal responsibility, and that there can be no justification for the punishment of crime, which, from the point of view of the individual, was the necessary outcome of the circumstances in which he was placed. As regards this, it has to be noted that all events of any sort are the necessary outcome of antecedent conditions. Not only criminals, but all men are what their heredity and environment have made them, nor is there any third factor in the process. It is a mistake to suppose that this fundamental fact invalidates the doctrine of criminal responsibility. The belief that it does arises from seeing only one half of the truth. The whole truth brings out the fact, as so often in other matters, that uneducated human instinct is a more reliable guide to conduct than half-fledged academic theories. Let us consider the matter for a moment.

Determinism is a theory of what *is*—not of what *ought to be*. Determinism has no relation to morals or to conduct; it is a statement as to how things happen in the world. Now we learn from this philosophic theory that the criminal is the inevitable outcome of antecedent causes, and here the sciolist



stops. Let us, however, go on. Determinism also shows us that the spectacle of a crime *inevitably* provokes vindictive sentiments in society, and that those vindictive sentiments *inevitably* express themselves in punitive measures against the criminal. That is all. Determinism gives us nothing more than that ; it is just a generalised record of what occurs in Nature, and therefore has no bearing whatever on criminal responsibility.

But the man *ought* not to have committed his crime : and if he did so inevitably, he *ought* not to be punished. So runs the entirely fallacious argument. The moment we get into the realm of *oughts* and *ought nots*, we are off the scientific plane altogether, and on the moral plane. Supposing we remain on the scientific plane, the whole problem vanishes. *Ought not* has no longer a meaning. If you say the man ought not to have done this, determinism has no remark to make ; you are speaking in a foreign language. So if you say society *ought* to punish him, you raise no issue intelligible to determinism. As far as the scientific plane is concerned, the matter may be summed up as follows :—the man committed his crime as the inevitable effect of previous causes, and society put him in prison because pre-existent motives inevitably expressed themselves by this action.

But now let us pass to the moral standpoint and abandon the scientific. We get precisely the same result. When you say the man ought not to have committed the crime we agree and say, “No, he ought not.” And it follows obviously that if he ought not to commit the crime, then society ought to punish



him if he does commit it. If he commits a crime, it is because he has an abnormality dangerous to society ; he is therefore likely to commit a similar crime again, and it is necessary for society to restrict his freedom for its own protection, and to take any other measures that may seem calculated to make good the deficiency in his moral character before he is restored to freedom. The truly moral motive is not easy to restore when once it has been broken up ; hence in our penal code the emotion of fear is implanted by way of deterrent. It is, of course, a low and undesirable substitute for the moral instinct, but it is often very hard to find any other substitute.

Though the penal code may, in principle, be justified in reason, it is, in fact, a produce not of reason but of blind instinct. Writers on ethics have shown that beyond question punishment is the expression of social revenge. A crime is committed ; the moral sentiments of society are outraged ; those moral sentiments are immediately transmuted into the sentiment of revenge, and this sentiment spontaneously expresses itself by punishment inflicted on the offender, the punishment being proportional to the feeling of animosity against him, and that again being proportional to the magnitude of his crime. The whole process is blind and instinctive, but natural selection has provided that our instincts shall, on the whole, be true guides : if they were not the species would perish. Hence we need not be surprised to find that our instinct accords with reason ; and when theories are advanced to show that our instincts are wrong, we are bound to entertain the suspicion that the theories are based on imperfect knowledge, which



supposes itself to be full knowledge. At all events, philosophic determinism has no bearing whatever on the doctrine of criminal responsibility, nor upon any other ethical problem.

Vice does not differ greatly from crime in its psychological aspects, but in so far as it damages only the individual, and not society, there is no occasion for society to punish it, and in fact it is not usually punished. Vice generally becomes an obsession and belongs to the same category as other obsessions. The main difference is in its practical results ; for a vice is an obsession which happens to be particularly deleterious for those who cultivate it ; in fact, it is a name given to certain obsessions of a character damaging to the individual. Vice, like other abnormalities, implies a weakness, which may be partly congenital, partly due to defective environment or training in the first few years of life. The weakness developed during that critical period may manifest itself as vice in later years. Given the weakness, it is bound to affect conduct in some way or other. So-called measures for the "suppression of vice" are utterly incapable of actually suppressing vice ; they may suppress one particular manifestation of it, but since vice is part of the nervous constitution, it cannot be suppressed by preventing its outward expression. You cannot cure a cold by preventing the patient from sneezing ; you cannot cure obesity by wearing tight garments. Vice never has been and never will be suppressed by measures tending to inhibit its overt expression. So long as the weakness is there it will be expressed ; as to that, reformers have no option : all they can do is to determine the expression to some



extent in this way or that way, to permit it to flourish openly, or force it to flourish clandestinely. And here there are good arguments on both sides. They are questions of ethics, however, which do not fall within the province of this book.



## CHAPTER XVIII

### DISEASE

THE diseases which have the most marked effect on character are those affecting the glands and the nervous system. But no doubt there is always some reaction between body and mind. Timidity for instance, is associated with certain bodily states, such as heart-disease. During the war cowardice was often found to be associated with a bad heredity—a family history of insanity, alcoholism, or syphilis. Undue optimism or undue pessimism is characteristic of various diseases. Influenza sometimes leads to profound depression. Pulmonary tuberculosis produces a hopeful as well as a despairing outlook ; and physicians have designated the former mentality with the name of *spes phthisica*.

Physical lesions often seem to have a favourable effect upon the mind. An attack of gout leaves the mind clearer and the feelings more vivid than before. Boils have the same effect in a lesser degree, and even a common cold, though depressing while it lasts, may leave a temporarily exhilarated mental condition after it has gone. Generally speaking, what we call a disease is the concrete manifestation of some obscure physical deficiency, and that deficiency, being generally a chronic state, exerts a permanent effect upon the mind as well as upon the body. This can hardly be true in cases of trauma or wounds, however. It is a singular circumstance that during the war, what was called shell-shock scarcely ever affected soldiers



who had physical wounds. The wound seemed to furnish immunity to mental ailments. The principle may be the same as that of counter-irritants, where a pain in one part of the body is relieved by irritation in another part. Many kinds of physical lesion tend for the time being to reduce nervous irritability. In railway accidents shock is a common result. But passengers who are intoxicated are immune from shock, while those who are sober suffer.

Affections of the glands have a powerful effect on character. Castration at an early age markedly modifies mental development. Graves' Disease, characterised by enlargement of the thyroid gland, produces a character of high emotional sensitiveness. The emotions are irritable, and quickly aroused, but have little depth or strength. There can be little doubt that many familiar traits of character have their physical basis in glandular rather than in nervous functions.

It is but natural, however, that ailments of the mind should produce far more striking modifications of character than ailments of the body. Insanity sets up radical alterations, too conspicuous to need emphasis. The alterations are of all kinds, and vary between wide extremes. We have, on the one hand, the profound misery of melancholia, and on the other the mad joyfulness of the early stages of general paralysis. We have the mental obliteration of dementia, and the furious though unco-ordinated mental activity of acute mania. The epileptic may be crafty and unimaginably cruel. The abominations practised by the Roman Emperor Caligula were no doubt based on epilepsy ; for the symptoms described



by Suetonius admit of no other interpretation. Yet epilepsy is not usually recognised unless the victim suffers from obvious fits. Many persons of epileptic tendencies move freely in society until one day they may perhaps commit some atrocious crime. Emotionally they are irritable, wayward, and egocentric, often with exaggerated religious sentiment.

Although only a certain number of persons are certified as insane it seems probable that a very much larger number have insane tendencies, which account for various peculiarities in their behaviour. The name insanity is only applied where the individual does or says things in sharp contradiction with the general sense of the community. Not a few persons are emotionally insane. Their sentiments may be intensely exaggerated in one direction and anaesthetic in another. They may be victims of strange delusions or phobias, attached to unimportant objects, and thus not drawing the attention of others. There is no one alive whose mind is so robust that he would not be driven insane if placed in circumstances of extreme rigour. With minds not very robust, circumstances of less rigour are sufficient to throw men off their balance. In short, we shall never understand human character if we assume that men called sane are always really sane. Some seem to be permanently insane; but if the insanity takes a philanthropic form, or exaggerates qualities essentially desirable and useful, we do not call it insanity, but by some other name.

These remarks apply far more universally if we turn to the functional nervous diseases, hysteria and neurasthenia. Hysteria consists essentially of a



cleavage in the personality. The fund of vital energy is not a single fund, as in normal persons, but is split in two ; so that the individual contains two personalities, one being the main mind, which we know, the other being subordinate and hidden, but driving the individual to peculiar actions on the occasions when it is in the ascendancy. Hysteria in its typical form is characterised by paralysis and anaesthesia : the paralytic and anaesthetic parts being those which are cut off from the main personality. The splitting-off is evident in full hysteria, but far more generally the cleavage is not absolute but only partial. The condition varies from being a mere tendency to dissociation down to complete severance of the personality. It varies, moreover, in the same individual at different times in response to environmental pressure and emotional strain.

Though the cases of major hysteria may not be very common, minor forms of hysteria are so common as to be the rule rather than the exception. Few people remain through life perfectly integrated and unitary. Many are at all times in a state of partial dissociation. They are subject to abnormal intensity of feeling in one direction, to abnormal deficiency of feeling in another. The mental current does not flow smoothly ; it is accelerated here, and retarded there. A general impression of eccentricity and of unwholesomeness is given. Further, no ailment is so protean as hysteria. It may take almost any form ; but whatever form it assumes it is relentless and hard to overcome. If it is cured in one form it immediately breaks out in another. One abnormality succeeds another ; the only constant quantity is the fact of abnormality.



In mild forms hysteria seems to be excessively common. In metaphorical language it may be said that the minds of most people exhibit small tumours here and there, areas of inflammation with extreme sensitiveness, and areas of dullness where it is difficult to evoke feeling. An intense emotional experience is liable to set up hysteria, but many people are congenitally prone to it, and suffer from it all their lives with no obvious exciting cause. In the great majority of cases it passes unrecognised. It is a common source of friction and disharmony in social life, and even when recognised is very difficult to cure.

Pierre Janet has established the fact that hysteria is highly infectious. During the Middle Ages it sometimes swept over Europe as an epidemic, such as that of tarantism. It often occurred in conjunction with religious frenzy. There was much hysteria in the crusades ; there was hysteria behind the inquisition. In modern times similar tendencies may be observed. The suffragette movement in England was rooted in hysteria. The late war brought out strong hysterical manifestations in all the nations which took part in it.

Persons living much together almost inevitably infect one another. We find entire families oppressed by hysteria. Each member of the family knows instinctively the hypersensitive areas in the minds of the others. They instinctively "rub each other up the wrong way." They get on each other's nerves, and all kinds of dissension and irritation arise, for which the outsider can see no sufficient cause. Among married people, if one is affected by hysteria it is almost certain to touch the other. We commonly



see husband and wife alike infected, though the derangement may take a very different form in each. It may be very conspicuous and external in one, concealed and internal in the other, while yet equally damaging to normal life in both. A robust mind and a delicate mind soon begin to draw together if they are in constant association. The robust mind declines in the direction of hysteria. The delicate mind strengthens and becomes less hysterical until they approach a mean between the two original conditions, while the gap between them tends continually to diminish.

Enough has been said to indicate that character will be very imperfectly understood unless we constantly consider the influence of disease, and more especially of the functional derangements of the nervous system. It appears as though the human mind had swollen so greatly and involved so disproportionate a drain upon the vital energy that it tends to fall asunder of its own weight. The force of coherence has not kept pace with the growth in size, and slight external shocks suffice to cause fissures in the mind, the cleft regions of which begin to yawn apart, giving rise to that enormously variable series of manifestations which are embraced under the title of hysteria.



## CHAPTER XIX

### YOUTH AND OLD AGE

THE human mind during the life of an individual passes through a series of changes parallel to that of the body. The body gradually increases in size, strength and efficiency, attaining its maximum power in the twenties and thirties. Thereafter a gradual decline sets in, though often a slow and almost imperceptible decline, the effects of which do not become manifest for a number of years.

The mind pursues a similar course. Mental energy is at its highest in the twenties and thirties, after which it begins slowly to be reduced. But in the case of mind another important factor has to be considered which usually delays the time of maximum efficiency until a somewhat later period of life. As we go through the world we are continually gaining experience and knowledge. Constant exercise of the mind in certain directions confers special facility for dealing with certain subjects ; and as we gain experience and facility, we can do things with small expenditure of energy which previously required large expenditure or possibly could not be done at all. In fact, our acquisitions continue to pour in throughout life. We are learning every day ; the growing fund of knowledge and increasing facility usually counterbalance the effects of declining mental energy, so as to set back the period of maximum efficiency for years after the period of maximum energy has been passed. Of course the fund of knowledge does not



increase indefinitely. As senility gradually advances more and more is *forgotten* of what was previously known, until a time comes when the losses exceed the gains, and the fund of knowledge and experience begins to dwindle. This point is not reached until long after the maximum energy has passed away. As regards mind, therefore, there are two culminating points in life, the first when the vital energy is at its greatest, the second when the fund of acquisition is at its greatest. The maximum efficiency is attained somewhere between these two points. It differs very greatly in different occupations, according to whether the demand is mainly for raw energy or for ripe experience.

It is in the sphere of emotion that the progress of old age is chiefly noticeable. The strength of emotion depends on the strength of mental energy, and as this becomes reduced feelings weaken. The power of some emotions falls off, almost to extinction, and there is a general tendency throughout to degradation. Take, for instance, the egoistic emotions. Courage, self-confidence, enterprise, are gradually sapped, giving rise to timidity, caution and selfishness. Old age is generally selfish, since the altruistic feelings of generosity have lost their motive strength. The emotions of love show a marked decline. The reproductive activities are naturally diminished, and with them passes the great realm of emotion built upon them. The natural affections no longer possess their former strength; they have a tendency to become degraded and transmute to love of self. As George Sand remarked through one of her characters, "*elle aimait le monde comme une vieille femme sans*



affections." Pride is enhanced in its bad sense, reduced in its good. An old man tends to be "on his dignity," while ceasing to be genuinely dignified. The former pride has transmuted to vanity.

The social and moral emotions undergo a similar decline. High moral principles and endeavour cease to excite enthusiasm, and the social feeling is degraded to a slavish orthodoxy. There is no longer the strength to depart from the common rut. Timidity and prudence now reign supreme, and conformity to custom is dictated partly by those sentiments, partly by the insufficient strength of any motive to act differently from others.

We have seen how readily the primary passions transmute into jealousy. As they become enfeebled the transformation is more and more constant. An old man's love is nearly always suffused with jealousy. He cannot support more than a moderate quantity of healthy love, and the excess quickly drafts off in the form of jealousy. It is easy to observe the "jealousy of age." Old men are jealous in love and jealous in egoism. They cannot endure rivalry in either sphere. They must be supreme, and neutral acts on the part of others are interpreted as being of hostile intent towards themselves. Thus old men are generally suspicious. They are more ready to attribute low motives than high motives to others, for they can do no otherwise than read into the minds of others the sentiments which unconsciously they feel in their own.

The foregoing remarks are, of course, not to be applied to every aged individual. They merely indicate the general contrast between youth and old



age ; a contrast that is only true on the average, when many old men are compared with many young men and the differences between the two groups are generalised as a whole. Among the individuals there will be many who, though old, exhibit the characteristics described to a far less extent than many who are young. It remains true, however, that on the whole old age brings a general deterioration of character. The mind slowly degenerates like the body ; it is an inevitable physiological process. The enfeebled frame cannot support the warm and ardent sentiments of youth ; and life is governed less and less by normal emotion, and more by the habits and customs of thought and action formed during periods of greater vigour.

As emotions become weaker and shallower they are more readily mobilised, and old people often *manifest* emotion far more than young. We have already noted that shallow emotions tend to violent expression and deep emotions to mild expression. When emotion is roused in an old man he has not the strength to support it. Incapable of being contained, it gushes forth in expression, often most vehement but never durable. He is easily reduced to tears and sobbing. The reading of a novel may cause him to pass through many an access of vivid emotionalism. He cannot endure the exaltation of feeling ; it imperatively demands relief by action and expression. But the emotions thus strikingly manifested are not strong and massive ; they are light, without inertia, quickly raised and quickly forgotten. It follows that old age is highly imitative and susceptible to suggestion. Old people have little resistance to external



suggestion ; they take uncritically what their environment presents to them, unless it happens to run counter to a pre-existent custom or belief, in which case nothing can induce them to accept it. Suggestibility, as always, goes hand in hand with obsessions. In old age the obsessions are usually those of past habit and belief. The opinions of the aged are no longer plastic ; they become hard and fixed, tainted like their arteries with sclerosis. As the rigidity increases, the mind elsewhere becomes more vacant and softer, easily, though only superficially, moulded by every passing influence of environment.

Delicacy of perception and refinement of feeling likewise tend to fade. Old men are apt to indulge in obscene language and crude behaviour that seems unpleasant to more sensitive minds. The intellectual powers wane *pari passu* with the emotions : in every direction the mind becomes enfeebled and its adjustments blurred.

But old age is of many different types. There is wide variation in the way in which the mind disintegrates. The only feature that remains constant is the fact of disintegration itself. The diminished flow of vital energy involves inadequate sustenance for the emotional and intellectual life. There may, in consequence, ensue an even decline in all regions of the mind ; or certain regions may decay far more rapidly than the rest—so completely, indeed, as to involve little impairment of any other functions. The analogy with the body holds good. With different persons, senile decay fastens on different bodily functions. Men die in very various ways. The point of weakness is different for each individual.



So it is with the mind. The intellectual functions may decay, leaving the affections and feelings apparently unaltered. Or particular kinds of emotional degeneration set in, while the intellect remains keen and strong. Where the decay eats irregularly into the mind, a lack of balance follows. Some functions vanish ; others stand out with unhealthy prominence. Hence old age exhibits, not merely a depression of function, but an exaggeration of function, which is sometimes much more conspicuous than the depression. Verbosity and restlessness are a characteristic feature of some types of senility. The controls have decayed and released other activities which are normally held in check. There is a medical epigram that " what is lost in virility is gained in verbosity." In this case the decline of one function releases energy for verbal loquacity. Verbosity, supervening in a person formerly quiet and reserved, invariably means decay in some mental function ; the energy formerly required for that function being thus released for other purposes.

In the same way there may occur an overgrowth of emotion in one sphere corresponding to extinction of emotion elsewhere. Thus old people sometimes exhibit highly exaggerated sentiments, often of a maudlin character. There are tumours of the mind as well as of the body. Exaggerated sentiment and exaggerated conduct may often be observed in the aged, and are always a sign of deficiency elsewhere. One single emotion may swell out to fill the mind and dominate all other feelings. Hypertrophy of an emotion is almost as regular an accompaniment of senility as hypertrophy of the prostate gland.



From the point of view of ethics, all depends on what emotion happens to become hypertrophied. Sometimes it is an emotion of vicious tendency, and the plight of the individual is then an unhappy one. It is very often of an egoistic character. Very often too it is the business or profession of the subject which swallows up all other interests. He then lives only for his work, and thinks of nothing but his work : after a time the interest becomes so intense as to be correctly designated an obsession. In this way old age sometimes bears a resemblance to fanaticism. The diminished stream of vital energy has altogether deserted many of its former channels, and flows with increased volume down the one that is still left. The mind, as a whole, becomes more barren and desolate ; but in one direction alone it is amplified and strengthened. Hence the many cases in which old age appears to be accompanied by increased energy. Titian continued to paint pictures till shortly before he died in his hundredth year. Dandolo stormed Constantinople at the age of 84.

A marked peculiarity of this senile torrent of energy is its want of plasticity, its loss of all power of accommodation and discrimination. So long as the activities required are identical with what was required in the past, senile energy may perform them most effectively. But if circumstances change and a somewhat different line of activity is needed, senile energy cannot accommodate itself to the new conditions. It continues to plunge along the old tracks, though those tracks are no longer as suitable as they used to be. The hypertrophied energies of age are therefore only serviceable when the order of activities



which circumstances require is the same as what always has been required. Usually circumstances change ; hence senile energy is commonly not very well adapted to the conditions, and it is, as a rule, to the general advantage that younger men should take up the position of the aged, even though their concentration on the subject may be less intense. But it cannot be said that this supersession is in the interest of the aged themselves. Their minds have become hardened and sclerosed ; they are no longer adaptable ; they cannot take up new interests, and if the one absorbing interest is cut off, untoward physiological effects may arise. A comparatively early retirement from the active business of life—a retirement such as is provided for in the rules of the civil service—has much to recommend it. On the one hand, the individual himself is still sufficiently adaptable to acquire new interests, and to take up a fresh method of life, less exacting than the old. On the other hand, the important business of the world is then conducted by men whose average age is lower. The result is a general increase of efficiency, which registers its effect on social prosperity. Early retirement is better, both for the community and for the individual ; but if retirement has been unduly delayed, it may then become dangerous to the individual. The change of life does not bring about the normal response in a mind become fixed and rigid, and a sort of mental aneurism may arise, culminating in premature death.

Old age, though a process of disintegration, often brings its compensations. The dying down of emotional fires produces a state of peaceful calm—a blessing to the individual and his neighbours. Angles



are worn off; the painful conflict of antagonistic emotions subsides. The stormy ocean of mental life is succeeded by a placid sea; and where the waves broke wildly upon the breakwaters, there are now only the gentle ripples of past memories. The respect paid to old age is usually well-placed.

The characteristics of infancy in some ways resemble those of old age, while in others they are profoundly different. The beginning and the end of life are alike marked by extreme suggestibility and dependence on environment. They are similar in the want of emotional depth and in the facility with which the expression of emotion is effected. A child laughs and cries at the least stimulus, but these mental states have no depth; they are as easily arrested as they were aroused. This fact is especially notable in new-born infants. Any form of pain instantly gives rise to violent screaming; the cessation of the pain is instantly marked by cessation of screams. Every fluctuation of environment is responded to immediately by a fluctuation of the infantile mind.

As regards the differences between infancy and old age, perhaps the most striking is the astonishing plasticity of the former by comparison with the rigidity of the latter. The child's mind is easily moulded on the shape of the most varied environments. The channels of emotional escape are capable of the widest modification. But year by year habits of emotion and thought become fixed. Year by year the environment counts for less and the established mental structure counts for more, until in old age the limit of extreme inadaptability is reached. Hence



it is that the first few years of life are all-important for the formation of character. Emotional habits then established are for the most part confirmed for life. If emotions have been directed in a wrong or degraded channel, the resulting debility is never likely to be repaired. It is, of course, not possible to say what form it will take in adult life ; all that can be affirmed with certainty is that some emotional shortcoming will be present and will give rise to untoward behaviour. Vice and crime in adult life may be due to dietetic errors in infancy, or to neglect, or to erroneous educational ideas and parental bovaryism. Since early infancy is usually under the control of the mother, it is no exaggeration to say that men are in great part what their mothers have made them. It is the women who make the men. Men of deserved prosperity and distinction nearly always owe their success in life to strong and intelligent mothers.

Notwithstanding the vast influence of early training, the influence of heredity is no doubt even greater. An infant with congenital mental flaws cannot be rendered sound by any process of cultivation. Early training can only bring out what is already there in a potential form. No training, however good, can confer qualities ; it can only supply the conditions necessary for their unfolding. But a bad training supplies suitable ground for the unfolding of lower qualities, leaving the inherent good qualities undeveloped. Good training alone cannot make a man, but bad training alone can very easily destroy a man ; and its effects are most disastrous where the mind of the infant is most delicate and sensitive—



where, in short, the potentialities are greatest. It is early training which decides whether those potentialities, given at birth, shall turn to good or ill. Where the congenital capacities are low, early training has little to work upon, and has less power both to make and to mar.



## CHAPTER XX

### BODY AND MIND

WE have by now become familiar with the idea that the mental energy of an individual is more or less of a constant quantity, and that the more of it is consumed in one occupation the less is available for all other occupations. We have hitherto paid little attention to the fact that expenditure of bodily energy constitutes a draft on mental energy. The true constant is vital energy as a whole. The vital energy is a permanent spring which supplies both body and mind, and if an excessive drain upon it is made in one of these departments the other will assuredly suffer.

To prevent misconception it must be stated at the outset that the term "energy" is not here used in the sense of physics. There is no evidence to show that mental operations consume any perceptible quantity of physical energy. Although there is a law of the conservation of psychical energy as well as a law of the conservation of physical energy, these two laws are entirely different, and it is not possible at present to state what relation may exist between them.

It is an obvious fact that great muscular strength is not a usual concomitant of high mental development. The scholar and the athlete are not often united in one individual. Where the native endowment of vitality is very high, there may be found on



rare occasions a combination of the two, but it will probably be accompanied by some emotional barrenness. It is likely soon to lead to exhaustion and breakdown. "Burning the candle at both ends" is proverbially unwise. It is the experience of most people that hard physical exercise is not compatible with severe mental work. More often than not, the scholar is a man of delicate physique.

"Let me have men about me that are fat,  
Sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights :  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look ;  
He thinks too much : such men are dangerous."

Thought is usually of a "pale cast" ; dominating emotions similarly give rise to pallor.

For it is not only the intellectual activities that stand in opposition to physical strength. Passions do so to perhaps a greater degree, since they constitute a still heavier drain upon the vitality. Any deep or permanent emotion of love, of fear, of sorrow, etc., tends to set up physical delicacy. The new emotions which arrive with the onset of puberty are often a heavy tax upon the physique. Young women addicted to vigorous sports and games, with strong and healthy faces, are relatively asexual ; the passions of love are still foreign to them, and may even be permanently suppressed by physical exercises. For a reason of this kind games are encouraged at boys' schools. Among women there occasionally occurs a certain structural deficiency which altogether precludes sexual activity. Such women are said to be "conspicuously healthy." On the other hand, the exhausting physical effects of emotion are well recognised. People become pale with fear or white with



anger ; amatory susceptibility is commonly pallid. We read of " pale-faced fear," " lean-faced envy," etc.

Action no less than passion is adverse to physical strength. The mere fact of exceptional activity is often indicative of a robust constitution, but many men of action have suffered from chronic ill-health. Joan of Arc lacked altogether a certain function distinctive of her sex. Doubtless high active enterprise is often attained by starvation of the feelings, with no great drain upon the physical health ; but it can scarcely reach the height of genius without some encroachment on the physique. In short, great mental energy of whatever kind, emotional, intellectual, or active, stands in general contrast to any high development of physical vitality. There are, however, many factors which disguise the operation of this general principle. The contrast is valid in the general sense only, and not in any specific sense.

Civilisation is marked by a higher degree of intellectual activity than prevails in the savage state. This additional energy must be derived at the expense of some other part of the general fund. Some of it may arise through a weakening of the passions or through a reduction of active energy. It is probable, however, that most of it comes not from other portions of the mind, but from the physical body, and in particular at the expense of the power of endurance and hardiness in the face of natural conditions. The wild savage goes naked, or nearly so, in all weathers. His food supply is irregular and of poor quality. No civilised man, plunged suddenly into such conditions, could survive in our climate for a week. We have houses and clothing which guard our bodies from



exposure to any but small vicissitudes of temperature. By regular and nourishing food, we stoke the fires within, thus setting free a large sum of vitality to flow into the channels of the mind. Our houses and all the paraphernalia of civilisation are the counterpart and prop of our intellectual development. Darwin, in his *Naturalist's Voyage*, describes the climate of Tierra del Fuego as very inhospitable. The natives, who are exposed to it without clothing or houses, are "abject and miserable creatures," "stunted in growth," etc. The negroes of Africa are notoriously tolerant of pain—a fact which strikes dentists and surgeons who have to operate upon them. In idiocy of all degrees, sensitiveness to pain is usually much diminished, and there may even be complete analgesia. Idiots have been known to sit so close to a fire as to get badly scorched, yet without attempting to move. Among highly civilised man, on the other hand, there is great physical sensitiveness even to minor discomforts such as that of noise. Schopenhauer has affirmed that all men of highly developed intellect are intolerant of noise.

Sporting records give some indication of the physical effects of mental culture. An amateur usually has wider mental interests than a professional; more of his vitality is drafted into the mental life, and there are certain kinds of sports in which, consequently, he is always inferior to the professional. Such is the case, for instance, in those sports that demand a high degree of physical endurance.

Of all modern sports, that which requires the most endurance is perhaps boxing, and it is a sport in which no amateur can ever stand up to a professional. Of



course it does not follow that the best boxer is he who has the least developed mind, for there is much science in boxing, and the mind must be highly trained as well as the body. A little science is worth much power of endurance.

Generally speaking, the amateur surpasses the professional in those sports where no special endurance is needed, and where the activities are not limited to a single set of muscles, but involve general exercise of the whole body. But the professional surpasses the amateur in sports requiring exceedingly delicate adjustment of a few muscles only. Such is the case with billiards. The magical refinement of touch, and co-ordination of eye with hand, call for a highly intensive culture which is only achieved at the expense of vital energy in other directions ; and in billiards the amateur cannot approach the professional. The same probably holds true with all forms of virtuosity. Music, singing, etc., involve excessively delicate adjustment of the vocal or other muscles, and co-ordination of sound with utterance. In this respect, they may be compared with billiards ; but they differ in that instead of being purely physical they have to convey emotion, and the mind must be susceptible to high emotional qualities. But the vital drain, due to the virtuosity, is very likely to lead to a mind lacking in many other respects—to a lack of balance as compared with more normal persons.

Mental development affects bodily development in many other ways. It involves, for instance, right-handedness : the left hand possessing a lower capacity for adjustment than the right. Where both are equally developed, there is probably some corresponding



tax upon the vital energy. About 16 per cent. of idiots are ambidextrous—a proportion far higher than found among normal people. Loss of characters is as much a feature of mental evolution as is gain of characters. Humanity have lost the tails and the body hair of their ancestors. Among the higher races there is now a tendency towards baldness of the head, and the tendency is most noticeable among individuals whose mental development is highest.

The general contrast between mental development and power of endurance is not limited to men, but is noticeable also among the lower animals. A thoroughbred horse differs from a cart-horse in much the same way that a highly cultivated man differs from an unskilled labourer. Refinement and sensitiveness are set against power of endurance. No doubt in both cases the higher mental type will often endure more than the lower, but that is merely because the higher type, driven by a higher motive, will hold out against greater suffering. It is not that the suffering is less, for it is greater. But the emotional drive is often greater in still higher proportion.

The vitality of every individual is not an unalterable quantity, but fluctuates from day to day, and even from hour to hour. After a tiring day the body is exhausted and the mind depressed. Constant mental excitement is always a physical strain, but excitement under fatigue is the greatest strain of all, for the draft on the diminished nervous energy is very apt to exceed what the body can spare. It is proverbial that early rising and early retiring are conducive to health. This, of course, is not due to any



special virtue in the hours themselves, but to the fact that early retiring implies a curtailment of evening excitements. All forms of mental excitement are best tolerated when the body is fresh. The normal flow of mental energy may then be sufficient to maintain a moderate excitement without borrowing from the body energy. But the diminished quantity of mental energy at night is inadequate for many social entertainments, and the demand is met by drafts upon the body, which before very long shows obvious signs of exhaustion. Alcohol is of great assistance in promoting mental energy at the expense of bodily energy. It alleviates the feeling of tiredness by which the mind naturally protests against further demands, but it cannot create energy ; it can only transmute it from one form to another. It nearly always reduces fineness of discrimination and delicacy of judgment. When servants, who have hitherto habitually been civil, show a tendency to incivility, the reason is nearly always to be found in alcohol, destroying for a time all the finer adjustments and perceptions.

Another fact in which the antagonism between mental and bodily energy may be noticed is that all forms of mental exhilaration predispose the individual to current infections. Common colds, for instance, are far more liable to be caught during mental excitement, especially occurring late in the day. Intense excitement in a fatigued condition renders the individual an almost certain victim of catarrhal infections which may happen to be present. During the reconstitution of the British Government in 1915, when Mr. Asquith ceased to be Prime Minister and was



succeeded by Mr. Lloyd George, both leaders (we may suppose) were under the stress of unusual excitement. The month was December when infection was ubiquitous, and both leaders contracted violent colds at the same moment. The fact is very noticeable with children, who are remarkably liable to fits of excitement. Conversely, a period of mental hebetude often accompanies physical improvement, and is apt to be a feature of holidays, both in old and young.

The same general fact may be noted in insanity, though obscured by many other factors. Acute mania soon leads to physical exhaustion, and maniacs are highly susceptible to infections. Rapid increase in body weight is always a sign of lessening excitement, though it may be either in the direction of cure, or else towards the mental obliteration called dementia. Acute delirious mania is nearly always fatal, on account of bodily exhaustion. Among normal persons some degree of mental depression often accompanies physical reconstitution, and is then a favourable sign, so long as it is not too extreme.

Excessive cultivation of the body, as already remarked tends towards mental inanition. This is true, not only when the bodily cultivation is entirely healthy, as in training for sports, but also when it is morbid. Here we have one explanation of the enervating effects of luxury.

“The mind shall banquet, though the body pine ;

Fat paunches have lean pates and dainty bits

Make rich the ribs, but bankrupt quite the wits.”

But there are doubtless several mental factors co-operating with the physical to account for the damaging effects of luxury. Luxury is usually accompanied by idleness, and it is usually an indication of



easy circumstances, free from that adversity which (as already shown) is a powerful factor towards mental development. Demand for physical comfort is not necessarily to be called a luxury. The luxurious Romans of the degenerate age were indifferent to physical comfort, and that very indifference was probably a sign of their degeneration. True luxury is always fatal except to an industrious people.

The bodily state has a marked influence on the quality of emotion. In a depressed physical condition the emotions often deteriorate. Courage and self confidence are undermined ; timidity and caution take their place. Love—in its higher manifestations—becomes debilitated. The social and moral feelings are felt less acutely. Jealousy and malice are more readily aroused. Vanity takes the place of pride. Sometimes, on the other hand, emotion or intellect may be strengthened, and assume an obsessional character.

Permanent invalids thus tend to some emotional degeneration. They have not the physical strength to support emotion, and in this way their condition resembles that of senility. These changes are noticeable also in the same individual at different times of day, according to whether he is fresh or tired. Men become more irritable at the end of a tiring day ; temporarily they undergo a deterioration of emotional tone, which, however, is soon restored, when they have been physically refreshed. A hungry man is often an angry man, and proverbs exist in various languages corresponding to the housewife's recipe :—" Feed the brute."

" *Ventre digiuno non ode nessuno.*"

Deep emotion is usually accompanied by some



conspicuous physical effect. It is often followed by increased appetite for food. This has been noticed as a result of the access of religious fervour arising among pilgrims to the waters of Lourdes. Profound mental depression often has the same effect ; persons depressed by neurasthenia are commonly large eaters. Hysterical anorexia is characterised by a need for movement and exercise, and the restlessness of certain kinds of individual is due to some ingredient of mental instability.

For the maintenance of the body in a healthy condition physical exercise is necessary. Without it the functions soon begin to languish. For maintenance of the mind in a healthy condition mental exercise is equally necessary. An intellect which is never worked soon becomes enfeebled. Emotions which are never aroused lose their strength. But body and mind are not sharply divided in this or any other respect. Mental exercise reduces the need for bodily exercise, and *vice versâ* ; but there is a limit to the capacity of energy for being transferred from one channel to the other. Some degree of physical exercise and some degree of mental exercise are always essential to health, and although, between certain limits, one may take the place of the other, those limits are easily passed. If the body remains in inactivity for a period, the mind becomes clogged and weakened. If the mind is left unexercised the body also suffers.

“ When the mind’s free the body’s delicate.”

For the preservation of health the bodily functions have to be exercised ; and mind, rightly regarded, is a bodily function—one which draws to itself a far larger proportion of the vital energy in man than it does in lower animals.



## CHAPTER XXI

### HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

THE mind, like the body, represents the resultant of two components called Heredity and Environment. These two components jointly determine the character of the man ; and they determine it so absolutely, that if we were completely informed of every factor in his heredity and environment, and if our power of physiological calculation was unlimited, we should be able to prophesy with certainty what he would do or what words he would use on any given occasion.

The question often arises as to whether heredity or environment plays the larger part in the formation of character. The answer depends on what traits of character we are considering. The deeper traits are the product of heredity, and are capable of only small alteration by environment : the shallower traits are mainly acquirements due to environmental influence. Heredity determines the substance of character, but environment is responsible for its external form. It so happens that the shallower differences are often of deep ethical importance. Heredity, for instance, may endow a man with the qualities of genius ; environment may decide whether those qualities are exercised to the lasting benefit of society, or in a career of crime. Or heredity may confer vivid and intense emotional capacity, and environment may degrade those emotions, so that—while retaining their intensity—they are of evil colour, and their very strength is their main vice. In short,



heredity furnishes the mind with its weapons, but it depends largely on environment to what use they are put.

While environment thus plays an important part in moulding character from the point of view of ethics and practical conduct, it is of very little account from the standpoint of pure psychology. A man's constitution, physical and mental, is almost entirely determined by heredity. Modifications due to environment are shallow and impermanent. They never go deep enough to be handed down by heredity; they are apt to alter even during the lifetime of the individual. Members of the same family always preserve a fundamental resemblance to one another. However different their education and mode of life has been, they are still more like each other in deep instinctive traits than they are like other people. No biologist would suggest that any modification, however great, would justify placing the individual in a new variety or a new race—still less in a new species. Virtually all the qualities of an animal are given by heredity. Modifications due to environment are infinitesimal by comparison; they can never attain a magnitude that would be anywhere near large enough to be considered, even in the most detailed biological classification.

The mind is no doubt somewhat more susceptible to environmental influence than the body. The brain of the new-born infant is still highly plastic, and there is much more room for moulding here than there is in any other organ of the body. But the limits of possible modification are still relatively narrow, and they become rapidly reduced year by year as the child



grows older. The first year of life is that in which environment is most potent. The second, third, fourth and fifth are all highly susceptible in diminishing degree. After the fifth year the child's mind has become relatively fixed. The main outlines of its character are determined for life. Of course at that age its character is very different from what it will become, just as its body is also very different. It is not so much the character that is fixed—but the lines along which character will develop with advancing years. Later influences are far less potent to alter the main track of development, which has by this time been laid down, and for the most part irrevocably.

Nevertheless heredity is the main determinant of character. All that environment can really do is to supply the conditions for development of the various qualities given at birth. Education is part of the environment ; it is the conscious setting of an environment adapted (or intended to be adapted) for developing inherent qualities. Education, as ordinarily understood, refers only to intellectual qualities. It aims at developing the intelligence—which it does by supplying the conditions under which the intellect is called into play. Education cannot create intellectual qualities, not already present. These qualities, however, would remain dormant and undeveloped in the absence of education. So also all other emotional qualities—far more important for character than intellectual qualities—would remain dormant, unless they were placed in an environment suitable for their development. Heredity gives the raw material of character, while environment (including education) weaves it into a fabric.



Education and environment naturally develop some parts of the mind more than others. At birth the potentialities are sure to depart from the average here and there ; all men are not born alike ; each has his own congenital irregularities of mind—below the average in one department, above it in another. Environment may tone down these primitive irregularities by developing the weaker sections more than the stronger ; or it may increase them by developing the stronger sections most. In the latter case great force is attained in one region of the mind, compensated, no doubt, by weakness elsewhere. But when one region of the mind, congenitally strong, has been developed by exercise, it becomes a dominating feature, comparatively free of susceptibility to further influence of environment. It wells forth energy by an irresistible impulse, and is hard to repress. This trait gives rise to certain deep differences of character between men. Some are of the instinctive type, pursuing certain lines of activity in a somewhat relentless manner, and relatively little diverted by alterations of environment. Others have no deep instinctive feelings, and their activities veer about in correspondence with every change of environmental pressure.

In short, environment works mainly by developing or repressing the traits given by heredity. Environment cannot itself create new traits. Potentialities are definitely fixed at birth ; education and environment merely decide which of them shall be brought out, and which shall remain dormant. After birth no new cells ever make their appearance in the brain or nervous system. The individual has to go through



life with the nerve-cells he derived from his ancestors. Some may be destroyed on his journey through life, but nothing new will ever appear. It lies with education, however, to bring certain sets of cells to full functional maturity, while the rest remain rudimentary from lack of exercise and nourishment.

As intellect is only a minor feature of character, so education (in the narrow sense) is only a minor feature of environment. As usual, the consciously devised and direct method of developing a mind is far less potent than the indirect methods. Character depends on emotion, but conscious training of emotion is rarely attempted, and does not form part of ordinary education. The laws which govern the development of emotion have already been indicated. The emotion must have plenty of exercise. Its path must not be too easy ; it must have work to do—something to press against, so that its strength may be developed. It must not be poured forth too easily in active expression, etc., etc. It has often been noted that the most vigorous social section of the community is the upper stratum of the lower class. They are not depressed by poverty or sunk in a low environment. On the other hand, they cannot live in ease, but have to exert themselves continuously to maintain and improve their position. They have no spare funds for purposes of dissipation, and are not able to squander their energy on amusements or irrelevant pursuits. The most successful men in life spring in large proportion from families not of high degree, where the parents have to struggle and are compelled to be efficient, and yet are above the border-line of poverty or destitution. Such conditions are often realised in the



families of country parsons, which turn out more than their average share of successful men.

The upper classes are more favourably situated as regards external opportunity, but less favourably for the development of their full natural energy. They are relieved to a great extent of the pressure of a threatening environment. They can afford a greater variety of amusements and of interests, which dissipate energy along many different channels; they have not to push against the obstacles which confront one less fortunately born, and they thus lose the benefits of hard exercise which develops mental qualities. In short, they can go through life without the qualities which would be essential under other circumstances, and we rarely acquire qualities that we can do without.

Further, it has to be noticed that the higher an individual starts in the social grade the less room is there for rising further, and the more for descending. At the very top there is nothing to hope for, and much to fear. The condition of kings is, as Gibbon remarked, "the most pregnant with fear and the least susceptible of hope." At the bottom there is everything to hope for and nothing to fear. On the average, social changes at the top of the scale must be in the downward direction; those at the bottom must be upward. Hence success and improvement of position are easier to those low down whose ambitions are correspondingly moderate. The upper classes are sometimes disappointed with life; for them it is so hard to rise, so easy to fall, and their ambitions have often been cast on a large scale, impossible of fulfilment. Hence the remark used by Goethe:—



“ Sie scheinen mir aus einem edlen Haus  
 Sie sehen stolz und unzufrieden aus.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet it must be admitted that in the present state of the civilised world, opportunity is a far more important asset to an individual than efficiency. The asset is purely a material one, for there is no obvious relation between happiness and worldly position.

Such at least was the experience of Abdalrahman, most magnificent of Oriental caliphs, possessor of all the wealth and luxury that the world could give, a despot of unlimited power: “ I have now reigned,” said he, “ above fifty years in victory or peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honours, power and pleasure, have waited on my call, nor does any earthly blessing appear to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot; they amount to FOURTEEN:—O man, place not thy confidence in this present world.”

Happiness is probably in far closer association with efficiency than it is with opportunity. “ Superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.”

It is worth observing that in certain respects the upper classes have more in common with the lower classes than either have with the middle. The features wherein they most differ from the middle classes are those that arise as a result of social

<sup>1</sup> “ They come from a noble house;  
 They look haughty and discontented.”



environment. As a rule, neither the upper nor the lower class are assertive of their social position ; the former because they have no need to assert what is generally recognised ; the latter because no amount of assertion would be effectual. The bulk of the middle classes, on the other hand, are anxious to appear in a higher social grade than that which they actually occupy. Where the social grade is a dubious one, it fills attention to a greater degree than when there is no room for doubt. Hence snobbery is far more prevalent among the middle classes than among either the upper or the lower. The middle classes, *as a whole*, push for position, both as regards rank and money ; they are more sensitive to appearances than those above and beneath them, and more prone to ostentation in exhibiting to the view of others such qualities of rank or money as they may possess—a habit of mind which not infrequently occasions the contempt of those in other grades, though duly impressing those of the same grade. Hence also less mental independence. In so far as men are bound by appearances, their freedom of action is limited. Where appearances are less important, independence of conduct is more natural.

It is only fair to observe, however, that the middle classes are a very heterogeneous body, containing elements that are widely diverse. The upper class is a close and homogeneous body, the individuals of which show far less diversity than the great masses of the middle classes. The latter contain many different extremes, and to some sections snobbery is almost unintelligible. It is far easier to lay down general propositions concerning the upper class than



concerning the middle. And from all grades men arise who virtually have *no* class ; their qualities in other ways are such that they are not thought of as belonging to this or that class, nor do they think of themselves in that manner. Such is the case with men of eminence in most spheres. The interest which they excite on account of their peculiar qualities is enough to fill the attention and to grade them—the class-sentiment being, as it were, drowned out and not strong enough to rise into consciousness.

Environment works, then, by supplying the *milieu* in which some congenital qualities develop and others slumber. Education supplies the *milieu* for the development of intellectual qualities. Emotional qualities are similarly developed by environment—especially by immersion in some particular “atmosphere,” potent to develop or repress. Contact with the world is what environment means ; those who have come in contact with the most numerous different aspects of the world usually know most.

“Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.”

Periodical change of environment is necessary for the health both of body and mind. Monotony is deadly not merely in the metaphorical but in the literal sense. An animal which is fed exclusively on one food soon dies, even though that food combines in the proper proportion all the physiological requisites for complete nutrition. Everyone is aware of the benefit resulting from a holiday, even though the change is from a comfortable home to an uncomfortable lodging. Busy men profit by a period of idleness ; idlers profit by a period of work. Uniformity of climate is not the best condition for good health.



Statistics show that the death-rate is lower in stormy months than in the corresponding months of other years when the weather has been uniform. A room kept permanently at a constant temperature is felt to be ill-ventilated, even though the air is fresh. Variety of food, climate, season, temperature, and occupation are all necessary for health. But the variation must not be within too wide limits. Older people in particular cannot tolerate too wide a variation. Persons of dull wit and feeling endure monotony more easily than more highly sensitive persons. The Arab races endure it more easily than the European, and among Europeans the working classes endure it more easily than those of higher status. But for all, variation is to some extent beneficial: variation of scenery and of occupation; variation of the impressions which affect the individual and of the activities which he adopts. The necessity for breaking routine is recognised in many of our social institutions and customs.

To sum up, heredity furnishes the substance of character; environment gives the external form. Psychologically heredity is everything, but heredity may be twisted by environment into different shapes, the distinction between which is often of profound ethical importance. The division of men into good and bad—sheep and goats—is largely based on their environmental acquirements, and such a division is but a superficial one.



## CHAPTER XXII

### SOME CONCLUSIONS

THE most obvious conclusion emerging from our study of human character is that the motives and actions of men depend on instincts or feelings rather than on reason. Men, like other animals, contain a fund of energy which pours forth in a constant stream, and which is always being renewed. Life is seen as a succession of feelings which give rise to their appropriate actions. The feelings are to a great extent determined by the constitution of the individual. The same instincts well up in everyone, with little reference to the impressions of environment. We can prophesy that a man in the course of his life will pass through a certain gamut of feelings, and will perform a continuous flow of actions. We can prophesy approximately even what kind of feelings he will experience and what kind of actions he will perform. But the precise feelings and the precise actions depend on the environment in which he happens to find himself. All that the environment does is to determine the flow of feeling and action into this or that channel.

No doubt the precise form which a man's natural activities may assume is of first-rate practical and moral importance. The error, therefore, has very naturally arisen of attributing men's actions to the external circumstances which appear to have called them forth, with the consequent assumption that men's lives are regulated mainly by reason. It is a natural fallacy, but none the less a fallacy, and so



long as it is entertained there can be no progress towards a science of character. The fact is that the bulk of human activities are blind and unreasoning—born of instinct and emotion, not of intellect.

But they are purposive nevertheless. They are purposive in the same way that our legs, our arms, our hands, and all our organs are purposive. They are adapted to the environment, not by some transcendental faculty of reason (as formerly supposed), but by the slow process of evolution under the influence of natural selection. Natural selection moulds instincts and feelings just as it does limbs and organs, and it moulds them in such a way as to be serviceable to the animal. The mere fact that a man pursues a rational mode of conduct affords no proof that it is prompted by conscious reason. However paradoxical it may sound, instinct is often far more rational than the dictates of human reason. A rich man may work hard in accumulating further wealth, of which he has no real need. He is not governed by reason, but by instinct. His feelings demand expression in some form of activity, and by long use the expression has become canalised in that particular form. Half the things we do in the world are not done for the ostensible purpose alleged. They are done because it is our nature to do that sort of thing, and if we did not do it there would be an unpleasant sense of vacancy or strain. Even when reason induces us to start a certain line of activity we tend to continue it long after the reason has passed away. Old men and old women usually carry on the same occupations as when they were young, even when there is not the least occasion for them to do so.



Why do swallows fly away in the autumn ? To get to a warmer climate, says the advocate of reason. Not so ; they fly away because there is an instinct in swallows arising in the autumn which expresses itself in a long flight. If a swallow is put in a cage it flutters wildly for several days during the migration period. The instinct expresses itself when the reason for it is removed.

Why does Lady Maria pay a ten-minute call on Lady Jane in the afternoon ? Is it for the pleasure of seeing Lady Jane ? Not at all. It is because Lady Maria is so constituted as to find relief in that particular form of activity. Why do they spend the ten minutes in talking scandal about their friends ? Not to injure their friends, but because their sentiments find natural relief in talking scandal. Why does anyone in a state of excitement find it necessary to communicate the cause of his excitement to everyone he meets ? Not to interest them, for they are often much bored by it, but because the excitement tends strongly to verbal expression.

Why did the billiard-marker spend his holiday watching billiard-matches ? Why does a murderer go back to the scene of his crime ? Why does the patient retail to his visitors full details of his complaint ? Why did Herbert Spencer write a system of philosophy ? For just the same reason that Lady Maria goes to call on Lady Jane. We must not seek for *objective* reasons : the *subjective* reason is all-sufficient.

Again it is sometimes asked, do women dress for men or for other women ? The question itself contains



the usual fallacy. They do not dress for either ; they dress to please themselves, because they would feel dowdy and uncomfortable in society if they did not, and because when they do they derive an agreeable feeling therefrom. These illustrations may be slight, but they truly indicate a very large sphere of human activities. It is feeling, not reason, that governs the lives of men. Nor could it be otherwise. Human reason, however much it may be vaunted, is very frail and erring : altogether incapable of guiding men through life. Instincts are immensely more powerful and more reliable. They were implanted in the course of evolution, and if they had been erring our species would have ceased to evolve. The perception of this truth is much hindered by the current fallacy that morality springs from reason, and is a quality to be acquired by learning. As we have seen, it is one of the deepest of human instincts. Right feeling and true charity are as prevalent among the ignorant as among the wise. If educated persons appear in the police-courts less frequently than uneducated persons, it is not because they are intrinsically better, but because they are more prudent, and because, being usually in better circumstances, they are not subject to the same incentives to break the law.

But instincts, however true they may be for the natural world in which our species was evolved, are often not true guides for the artificial world which we have created for ourselves. Men pursue honours, wealth and power under the impression that those are reasonable objects of life. In reality, however, the pursuit is a pure and blind expression of egoistic



instinct. What does worldly distinction bring to its bearer? A certain amount of flattery: expressions of respect somewhat above the ordinary. And what are these but ministrations to the sense of vanity? Ambition is mostly rooted in vanity. Why does a politician spend his life in arduous labour, endeavouring always to rise higher in public fame? The reasonable motive—the ostensible motive—is that he desires to introduce certain reforms, which he thinks are of high public importance. Sometimes this is the real motive, but more often it is personal ambition—the desire to be famous—and to receive those marks of respect from his fellows which agreeably titillate the sentiment of vanity. It is not only so in politics. It is the same in all spheres where ambition develops. Rousseau insisted on it. “Otez à nos savants le plaisir de se faire écouter, le savoir ne sera rien pour eux. Ils n’amassent dans le cabinet que pour répandre dans le public; ils ne veulent être sages qu’aux yeux d’autrui; et ils ne se soucieraient plus de l’étude s’ils n’avaient plus d’admirateurs.” The condemnation is too sweeping. There are many who lay up knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but there are more who lay it up for the sake of applause. Vanity is a more common motive than love of truth. It is the same in the profession of the soldier, the artist, the writer—in all professions where ambition leads. All these professions vie to draw to themselves the attention of the public. But if men pursued their calling for the sake of the calling alone, why should they care for the public attention? What is it to the true man of science whether the public are interested in science or not? The complaints as to lack of



interest may indeed be based on a pure philanthropic desire for the public welfare. But if we look fairly at the facts we cannot fail to appreciate that there is also a desire for public acclamation. Science, literature, art, politics, soldiering, are generally fostered by ambition, and ambition itself arises out of the egoistic instinct.

Nor is it different with those pursuits in which the accumulation of money is the object. After a certain point increase of wealth brings no corresponding return of happiness to the possessor. It is usually spent in a more expensive style of living, and this serves the purposes of ostentation, which again is built upon vanity.

These remarks are not intended to suggest any discredit on persons actuated by ambitious motives. We are merely interested to notice how the human mind works, and in particular to observe that many of the most notable of human achievements are due to the blind impulse of a familiar and primitive instinct. But the question arises as to how far this instinct is a reasonable one. Life is a continuous flow of feeling; the happiness of life depends upon the nature of the feelings which we experience as we move along. If the normal flow of feeling is seriously disturbed by our mode of life, than that mode of life is hedonistically unreasonable. It clearly is not worth while to abandon a healthy and pleasurable style of life on the chance of receiving compliments at the close of it, which are flattering to our sense of vanity. Yet that is often done. Men abandon the solid substance of life, in a wild pursuit of the empty glitter. They throw away their lives in dull sub-



servience to an *idée fixe*. For vanity is not associated with happiness. If it is not gratified, it is an occasion of pain. If it is gratified, it merely grows and expects more. It is not an emotion which justifies the abandonment of any solid form of happiness, and those whose lives are dominated by ambition are never the happy people of the world. Life is short ; it passes day by day without pause to its final extinction. No philosophy of life is worth considering if it does not include the maxim *carpe diem*.

It is true that men largely order their lives, not according to rational principles of hedonism, but as the puppets of fixed ideas. The dominion of a fixed idea is a sign of weakness ; it is the sacrifice of life to a theory.

“ Grey are all theories ; green alone Life’s golden tree.”

And yet it is the fixed ideas that accomplish the great achievements of the world. As we have seen, unusual strength is generally allied with weakness. Men want riches, power, fame ; but neither riches nor power nor fame bring happiness. Happiness does not depend on externals, but on the emotional tone and capacity of an individual. When these are degenerated, the lines of Goethe apply :—

“ Cursed be at once the high ambition  
Wherewith the mind itself deludes !  
Cursed be the glare of apparition  
That on the finer sense intrudes !  
Cursed be the lying dream’s impression  
Of name, and fame, and laurelled brow !  
Cursed all that flatters as possession,  
As wife and child, as knave and plough !



Cursed Mammon be, when he with treasures  
To restless action spurs our fate !  
Cursed when, for soft, indulgent leasures,  
He lays for us the pillows straight !  
Cursed be the vine's transcendent nectar,—  
The highest favour Love lets fall !  
Cursed, also, Hope—cursed Faith, the spectre !  
And cursed be Patience most of all ! ”

An *idée fixe* is not amenable to reason. It is easy to prove by logic the futility of certain lines of conduct. The individual may believe it, but he does not act upon it, for his actions are governed by feeling, and not by logic.

Men are so obsessed by the idea of logic that they endeavour to prove that all their actions are reasonable and logical. This often leads to an appearance of hypocrisy. People justify themselves by specious arguments for performing certain actions, which anyone can see are prompted by personal interest or some other motive of an emotional character. They try to hide their true motives, not only from others, but from themselves. But all our instincts are not rational nor consistent with one another. Complete consistency in life is not practicable, and the striving after consistency too often promotes dogmatism and hypocrisy.

Reason also is extraordinarily liable to err. People reach conclusions by a process of reasoning and impetuously proceed to apply them in the conduct of life. If the conclusions are sound the result is satisfactory. If the reasoning happens to contain a fallacy, the individual may suffer seriously. How many people find out when it is too late that they



have ordered their lives on a false basis ! The road to hell is paved with good intentions. People interfere and meddle with the course of nature. They distort their own souls in the vain endeavour to live up to some theory of life, owing its origin to reason, but which *more* reason would have shown to be fantastic. If we are determined to grind down and suppress our natural sentiments, let us first of all be sure that our reasoning is correct. If it involves much distortion of natural impulses, we may be tolerably sure that it is incorrect. It is more important to be ourselves than it is to be consistent. For those feelings which we may succeed in suppressing are not destroyed ; they are merely squeezed into dark corners of the unconscious mind, where, for lack of ventilation and free expression they begin to putrefy and poison the soul with their deadly toxins. Then perhaps, when some false simulacrum of logic has led us astray so that we have failed in the maximum of *carpe diem*, the awakening may come ; but too late, for the days are gone.

The dominion of false reasoning is nowhere more conspicuous than in social and political spheres. There is indeed no sphere where rational conclusions are so hard to reach. Individual character is sufficiently intricate ; social character rests in impenetrable obscurity. Politics in effect present a clash of warring sentiments, masquerading as reason and attempting to justify themselves by reason. Arguments are the stock-in-trade of politics, but scarcely is anyone ever converted from his political faith by an argument. He may be converted by oratory or by other emotional appeal, and he is certain to put



down his conversion to reason, but reason rarely plays any part in the matter ; nor can it ; the jungle is too dense to be penetrated by the light of reason.

In this chaos of sentiment, carrying in its front the spurious idolatry of reason, there can be but one sound principle, and that is to exercise the most profound caution in altering or trying to alter the state of society which has grown up in course of evolution. The structure of society is not a mere chance any more than the structure of an individual is a chance. They are both the product of slow growth and evolution, which has moulded them in adaptation to the prevailing conditions. In short, there is a purpose behind our existing institutions ; they continue to exist because they serve the purposes of social life. Few doubt that all or nearly all the organs of a human being serve some purpose in the struggle for existence, though there are many organs whose purpose has not yet been discovered. So, too, the organs of the body politic serve a purpose, though in many cases it is hard to see what that purpose is.

The fanatic of reason is not satisfied, however, unless he can see reasons. If he does not see a reason, he assumes that there is none. It does not occur to him that the apparent lack of reason may be due to any deficiency of his own vision. He assumes, on the contrary, that social evolution has pursued an erroneous course, and he sets forth to repair the error by the light of his own understanding. He usually believes in the existence of God, but he is of opinion that he can effect remarkable improvements in God's handiwork.

Social institutions hypostatise the human mind.



They exist as the expression of the social instincts and feelings. But social feelings change somewhat from generation to generation. From the periodical changes in the literature of a people we can infer the changes in their prevailing sentiments. These changes likewise necessitate changes in social institutions. "Reform" must always go on; but the incessant changes in social structure should conform to the changes in social feeling—that is to say, they should be gradual—almost imperceptible—rather than sudden and dramatic. If the social structure has become hardened and fixed, so that it has failed to alter in conformity with social feelings, then after a time a sudden revolution may become inevitable for the re-establishment of harmony. Such was the case with the French and the Russian Revolutions. The sentiments of the people were no longer reflected in their social institutions, and the whole structure of society was suddenly rent by the resulting explosion.

While the shallower feelings are subject to constant fluctuation, the deeper feelings are relatively permanent. And the main outlines of social structure are also relatively permanent. The visionary proposes to destroy society by a single *coup*, and to rebuild it on the model, not of human sentiments (of which he knows nothing), but of a preconceived plan which represents his notion of reason and logic. He may produce much social disorganisation, but he never can succeed in doing anything more. Institutions that do not grow out of feeling, but are supported by logic alone, collapse of their own weight, like houses built upon the sand. And the moral of these reflections is this. Let us not be too busy



inventing schemes of social reconstruction, whether great or small. Let reforms come by the slow and gradual pressure of public sentiment, or, as it is usually miscalled, "public opinion." Let our constitution be plastic, so that reforms can become established by slow degrees without internal commotions. And, on the other hand, let us beware of trying to force the social mind, of which we know nothing, into the mould of crude theories, which rest on the assumption that we know everything. The doctrine of *laissez-faire* is now unfashionable ; yet it contained a profound element of truth. As a dogma or creed, it is unworkable. As a fundamental hypothesis, it is essential. It must not present a blank wall to the steady progress of sentiment ; but, on the other hand, it must establish sufficient resistance to bar the way to passing fads and immature theories. Societies, like individuals, are often carried away by vain ambitions and *idées fixes*. But for societies, as for individuals, life is short ; those who fix their eyes on the stars cannot see the ground they are walking on ; those who are buried in schemes for the future forget the present, which is the sole reality. The schemes may be bad, or they may be good. If they are bad, so much the worse. If they are good : well, "cela est bien dit, mais il faut cultiver notre jardin."









