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ARROWS OF DESIRE

ESSAYS ON OUR NATIONAL CHARACTER AND OUTLOOK

BY

J. S. MACKENZIE,

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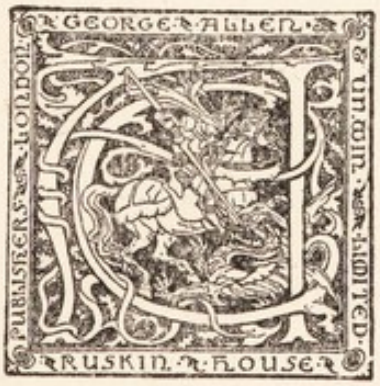

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'Bring me my bow of burning gold;
Bring me my arrows of desire;
Bring me my spear: O clouds, unfold;
Bring me my chariot of fire.
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.'

BLAKE.

PREFACE

THIS is a series of somewhat disconnected essays; and, like many other recent publications, it owes its origin to the war. It has not been easy for anyone, in these last few years, to give his mind to purely speculative inquiries. Absorbing as the problems of the cosmos must be to all who have ever felt their fascination, devotion to them presupposes some degree of stability in the affairs of the little planet that we inhabit. When the whole order of our civilization was threatened, even those who were most completely destitute of any power to set against the forces that made for dissolution were at least bound to feel a certain call to contribute something to the great work of re-establishing a better and more enduring order. Those who could do little or nothing of a directly practical kind towards the furtherance of this end were naturally led to attempt at least to help in the interpretation of the conditions in which we are placed and in the consideration of possible means for their improvement. It is out of such an endeavour that these essays have grown. They are specially concerned with our own national life and character, the subject that seemed most readily accessible, and not perhaps the least important. Some aspects of it, no doubt, are not specially within the writer's province. To treat them satisfactorily there would have been needed a more intimate knowledge of history and literature, of anthropology and social conditions, than I have found myself able to acquire. But, after all, there are few who are competent to deal thoroughly with the manifold aspects

of a nation's life; and perhaps it is not presumptuous to hope that some readers will be found to whom the materials that have here been brought together may be of use. At any rate, I may say *Liberavi animum meum*; and, having completed this expedition in what are to me somewhat uncharted seas, I may be free to return to those safer territories in which, though full of pitfalls, I happen to be more at home. It will be observed that, even in this expedition, I have not ventured very far from the shore; and that I have summoned to my aid a considerable number of capable pilots.

Some of the earlier parts of the book were originally written to serve as an address to the Past Students of University College, Cardiff.

My obligations to many other writers will be sufficiently apparent; but I wish to offer very special thanks to Mr. Harold Peake, whose suggestions on the somewhat elusive problems of race I have found very enlightening.

September, 1919.

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ARROWS OF DESIRE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Among the lessons that the Great War has taught us, the importance of a right understanding of national psychology is not the least. We live at a time of *crisis*, both in the older and in the newer sense of the term. It is a time of danger and a time of judgment—a time when we have to bestir ourselves and a time when we have to try to know ourselves. 'Know thyself' is an injunction that may be addressed to nations as well as to individuals—perhaps even with greater force. The aspiration of Burns, that some power should enable us 'to see ourselves as others see us,' is at least more easy to fulfil for a people than for a single person; since it does not depend so much on the difficult process of introspection. And it is quite as important to try to see others as they see themselves. Yet it is evident that there are considerable difficulties in the way of both attempts. The judgments that we form both on other peoples and on our own are generally based on a very imperfect survey, and nearly always somewhat distorted by prejudice. The opinions that are commonly expressed in this country about the German character at the present time are probably a good deal different from those which were entertained about the middle of last century. We were apt to think of them as dreamers, and we may have been partly right; but we did not sufficiently realize

that their dreams might become nightmares. They have given us a new version of the 'Sturm und Drang.' And most of us, I suppose, would be apt to characterize the French rather differently now from the way in which they would have been characterized by our ancestors at the time of the first Napoleon. We tended to think of them as mad revolutionists, and did not sufficiently appreciate the fine ideals by which they are often stirred. We called them frivolous, because their clarity makes them witty. We did not realize that their wit is, for the most part, a kind of forked lightning; whereas we are rather liable to produce, as Carlyle said of Sterling, nothing but 'beautiful sheet lightning,' when it is not rather like 'the crackling of thorns under the pot.' We thought ourselves relatively serious and solid when sometimes we were only slow and dull. Many are now inclined to describe the French, in contrast with ourselves, as being relatively sane, serious and logical. But our estimates of our own national character, like our estimates of others, have undergone many transformations, and may have to undergo many more. Such transformations may be due in part to the fact that the character of peoples, like that of individuals, is liable to change; but it can hardly be doubted that they are partly due also to changes in the point of view from which our estimates are formed. To correct the errors that thus arise, it is essential that we should take a wide survey of any people that we wish to study, and observe how its character has shown itself in a variety of different circumstances. History and biography are the most direct sources for such a study; but perhaps the more creative work of the great literary artists who have made it their business to 'hold the mirror up to nature' is even more enlightening. Among these there is certainly none more reliable than Shakespeare; and it is generally recognized that in the character of Henry V he has set before us the picture of a typical national hero. It is true, of course, that

the England that Shakespeare depicted was in many respects widely different from that with which we are now acquainted. It was a merrier and a poorer England, less firmly bound down by its own peculiar laws and conventions, and in general more amenable to the influences of its continental neighbours. Yet it can hardly be denied that the main features of the national character were at least already in the making; and, indeed, the fact that the guise in which they present themselves to us is not precisely that with which we are now familiar, serves on the whole to make the essential identity that underlies the differences only the more conspicuously apparent. Hence it may be worth while to attempt to understand exactly what are the chief characteristics that are revealed in the type that he has painted. With this I intend to deal shortly. But, before making this attempt, it may be well to note briefly what are the characteristics that have been more particularly ascribed to the British people by those who have made a special study of it.

There is an obvious difficulty in the way of attempting such a summary as this. Though we may speak of the British people, there is clearly nothing that can be referred to as the British race. Nearly everyone in Great Britain is of mixed race, and the mixtures are very various. The traditions also, and even the language, of different parts of the country are far from being the same. Most of us are struck by such differences as those between the English, the Scotch and the Welsh, or even between the inhabitants of the northern and southern parts of each of the three main divisions. Yet it is not always easy to decide to what part of the country a particular type of character is properly to be regarded as belonging. Henry himself, who is naturally thought of as a definitely English type, was claimed as being Welsh by birth; and Fluellen is represented as declaring, 'All the waters in Wye cannot wash your Majesty's Welsh blood out

of your body.' But perhaps this need not be taken too seriously. At any rate, foreign observers are, in general, not so much impressed by these local differences as we are apt to be. Fouillée, for instance, who made a special study of the national types in Europe, is inclined to regard the inhabitants of Great Britain as forming one of the most homogeneous peoples that are anywhere to be found.[1] At any rate, there are a good many common traditions by which we have all, more or less, been shaped. What these are it would take us too long to inquire in such a sketch as this. We can only notice what appear to be the most prominent points.

Most of those who have dealt with the characteristics of the British people have fixed upon our insularity as one of the chief determining features. Emerson, for instance, says[2]: 'Every one of these islanders is himself an island, safe, tranquil, incommunicable.' There may be something fanciful in this; but the fact that we have

[1] *Esquisse psychologique des peuples Européens*, p. 192. Even Taine takes Carlyle as a typical Englishman. Boutmy, however, fully recognizes the differences between the sister nations, and perhaps even exaggerates them. See *The English People*, especially p. 97. The purely anthropological characteristics would seem to be pretty uniform throughout the various parts of the British Isles. See on this *The Races of Europe*, by Mr. W. Z. Ripley, pp. 303–5, and Mackinder's *Britain and the British Seas*, pp. 154–5.

[2] *English Traits*. See also Fouillée's *Esquisse*, pp. 190, 194, 205, 214, etc. Henry James (in *The Middle Years*) emphasized the sense of security as being the source of most of our British characteristics. It would be very interesting to compare the Japanese, as the great island people of the East, with our own countrymen. In contrast with the Chinese (who, however, are also not altogether unlike us in some respects), they would probably be found to have some points of resemblance to us. But it is pretty obvious that there are also great differences, due apparently to race, climate, literary and religious traditions, and other historical circumstances. Individual isolation would hardly seem to be one of the points of resemblance. But this is a subject to which it is not here possible to do more than allude. Reference may be made, however, to Mr. Ripley's *Races of Europe*, p. 303, and *The Development of Japan*, by Mr. K. S. Latourette, chap. i.

shared in the common civilization of Europe, and yet have been able to maintain a certain isolation from it,[1] has undoubtedly a good deal to do with the peculiarities by which an outside observer is struck. As Wordsworth said, there are two voices, one of the sea and one of the mountains, that call people to independence. The Swiss have one; the English have the other; the Scotch, the Irish and the Welsh, like the Greeks, have both. As islanders, we are a seafaring people; and a ship may almost be regarded as an aggravated form of island. Most of our early ancestors were adventurers from the Western parts of Europe; and it is probable that, as a nation, we have inherited from them some of the detachment and love of independence by which they were characterized. The climate of our country has, no doubt, also had something to do with the determination of our national character. It is favourable to activity. 'A better climate,' as Gissing[2] says, 'does not exist for healthy people.' According to Charles II, in a saying that has often been quoted, 'it invites men abroad more days in the year and more hours in the day than any other country.' Lowell also, when acting as Ambassador, maintained that the climate of London is the best in the world. There are few times at which we cannot easily take our walks abroad—at least with a lantern and an umbrella; and

[1] It is possible, however, to exaggerate the isolation of an island. The sea has often proved more easily passable than the land. 'No one,' says Mr. A. E. Zimmern (*The Greek Commonwealth*, p. 311), 'can live in Greek lands without feeling, as the Greeks did, that it is the land that divides and the sea that unites.' See on this Mr. H. J. Fleure's *Human Geography in Western Europe*, chap. viii. In future, I suppose, the air is likely to become more easily passable than either land or sea.

[2] *Henry Ryecroft*, p. 116. With this may be contrasted, however, the very gloomy account of the English climate that is given by Taine, both in his *History of English Literature* and in his *Notes on England*. The general influence of climate in determining the English character is greatly emphasized both by Taine and by Boutmy.

at most times we are strongly impelled to active exertion. We are seldom much tempted to bask in the sun, and we feel, in general, the need of securing food and shelter more urgently than the inhabitants of most other civilized countries. Our island is not an island of the blest; nor is it a land in which it is always afternoon. It is a region that produces men of action [1] rather than men of reflection, and men, in general, who are more ready to act on their own initiative than at the command of others. Hence, with all their diversities, our people are characterized by a certain individualism, a certain self-reliance, a certain pride, a certain reserve, which appear to lie at the roots both of the good qualities and of the bad ones by which we are chiefly distinguished. We may glory in them with Goldsmith:

> 'Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
> I see the lords of humankind pass by.'

We may be pleased by the saying of Goethe, that an Englishman has always a certain completeness, even when he is only a complete fool. Or, on the other hand, we may regret to find that we are thought of as eccentric, fickle, haughty, perfidious, pharisaical or hypocritical; and that, in emergencies, we are content to 'muddle through,' instead of having carefully devised plans. For good or for ill, we are naturally self-centred rather than sociable, and more ready to act than to think.

The virtues that are, on the whole, most commonly ascribed to the English are love of freedom—at least for themselves—practical energy and dogged persistence under difficulties. The faults with which they are generally charged are pride, lack of forethought, reliance on tradition,

[1] See Fouillée's *Esquisse*, pp. 202–4, 233–6, etc.; also Boutmy, *The English People*, pp. 8, 17–20, etc., and Taine, *Notes on England*, p. 76.

and a certain form of hypocrisy or pharisaism.[1] The last-named fault, in particular, has been dwelt upon by nearly all our critics. 'Our country,' says Mr. F. H. Bradley,[2] 'the chosen land of Moral Philosophy, has the reputation abroad of being the chief home of hypocrisy and cant.' Similarly, Sir Walter Raleigh states[3] that 'outside England, not only among our enemies, but among our friends and allies, it is agreed that hypocrisy is our national vice, our ruling passion.' Sir Oliver Lodge has recently defended his countrymen against this charge. 'Hypocrisy,' he says,[4] 'is not a charge easy to controvert, but as a matter of fact it is not one of our national vices. Instinctively shrinking from it, indeed, we often fall into the other extreme and refrain from putting forward our best motive. We do not resent the charge of a little more worldly wisdom than we really possess; we rather like to be thought subtle, and resent being called simply good. Yet the latter charge is nearer to our national characteristic than the former, in spite of the fact that our conduct so often falls below our aspiration.' Emerson also supports this view[5]: 'They hide virtues under vices, or the semblance of them. . . . He is a churl with a soft place in his heart, whose speech is a brash of bitter waters, but who loves to help you at a pinch. He says no, and serves you, and your thanks disgust him.' Charlotte Brontë also constantly referred to continental hypocrisy, in contrast to English sincerity. It is certainly difficult to decide a question of this kind;

[1] It may be thought that I ought to have added drunkenness —a fault at which Shakespeare, for instance, is constantly girding. But this is a weakness that seems to vary very much in different peoples at different times, and to depend a good deal on special circumstances. Some remarks about this by W. F. Rae in the Preface to Taine's *Notes on England*, pp. lv–lvi, may be referred to. It is of course true that our climate tempts us to excess both in eating and in drinking.

[2] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 436.

[3] *England and the War*, p. 129.

[4] *The War and After*, p. 44.

[5] *English Traits*, viii.

but it may be noted that Sir Oliver's defence seems to imply a partial admission. If we *shrink* from hypocrisy, it would seem that we are partly aware of a tendency to fall into it. Moreover, in the wider sense of the term, the opposite kind of concealment would itself be a kind of hypocrisy—which means primarily posing or playing a part or wearing a mask. Some remarks by Mr. A. C. Benson may help to throw light on the difference of view. 'Nowadays,' he says,[1] 'the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is reversed. The Pharisee tells his friends that he is in reality far worse than the Publican, while the Publican thanks God he is not a Pharisee. It is only, after all, a different kind of affectation.' It is a pose in either case, and I think it is true at least that English people seldom wear their hearts upon their sleeves. They can usually 'boast two soul-sides,' and what they show to the world at large—sometimes even what they show to themselves—is apt to be a little of a pose. It seems to be true of English people, in general, that they are particularly anxious to do the 'correct thing.' If it is regarded as correct to fast twice a week, they will do it; if it is regarded as correct to eat and drink with publicans and sinners, they will do that. But, in either case, they will do it, not as what they see to be best, but rather as being what is expected of men of their class and position; and they will do it, not whole-heartedly, but with a somewhat divided mind. Deliberate self-conscious hypocrisy, such as that of Tartufe or Shakespeare's Richard III, or that which we are tempted to ascribe to some recent Germans, is probably not common in England. We are perhaps more prone to self-deception. But Carlyle has told us that 'sincere cant' is the worst form of it. Sometimes at least, as Socrates contended, it is better to do wrong consciously than unconsciously. George Gissing, who discussed this question somewhat fully in *Henry Ryecroft*, decided (p. 274) that 'our vice

[1] *Upton Letters*, p. 20

is self-righteousness,' rather than hypocrisy. This is what is commonly understood by pharisaism. 'A hypocrite in the vulgar sense,' says J. B. Mozley,[1] 'knows that he is one, because he deceives another; but the Christian hypocrite is the *deceived* too.' 'It is worth inquiring,' another writer remarks,[2] 'whether the ordinary type of hypocrite is more responsible for his two-facedness than is the sleep-walker for his sleep-walking, the stammerer for his stammering.' When our Pecksniffs deceive others by their fine phrases, I suppose they are partly intoxicated by their own verbiage. Gissing said[3] of the typical Englishman that 'his religion, strictly defined, is *an ineradicable belief in his own religiousness*.' This is perhaps the natural defect in a country that prides itself on its religious freedom, and refers everyone to his own private conscience. His conscience may be, in Ruskin's phrase, 'the conscience of an ass,' and may be more open to self-flattery than an external authority would be. The institution of the Confessional had probably some advantages that are missed in most Protestant communities. It tended, no doubt, with all its faults, to promote self-knowledge, and to check undue self-satisfaction.

With these preliminary observations, I now pass to the consideration of Shakespeare's Henry V, regarded as a typical example of the national character.

[1] *University Sermons*, II, 'The Pharisees.'

[2] *Psycho-analysis*, by M. K. Bradley, p. 74. No doubt there is some exaggeration in the suggestion that is here made.

[3] *Henry Ryecroft*, p. 275. I suppose Rupert Brooke had pretty nearly the same in mind when he mentioned (*Memoir*, p. cxxxv) 'insularity and cheerful atheism' as the chief characteristics of his countrymen. Of course the 'atheism' is, in most cases, implicit. The avowed atheist, even the avowed agnostic, is comparatively rare.

CHAPTER II

SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY V AS A NATIONAL TYPE

My reason for selecting Henry V as an illustration of our national type is my conviction that Shakespeare has exhibited in this character, along with some of the finer national traits, just the kind of pose that I have been referring to. I am well aware that this is not the view that has been commonly taken. The play of *Henry V* has sometimes been described as a glorious epic in which Shakespeare's conception of the very perfect knight is set forth. I am quite unable to regard it in this way. I would hardly go so far as Mr. B. Wendell [1] in calling it a 'dull play,' but certainly, so far from seeing in it a glorious epic, some parts of it appear to me so feeble that I have difficulty in believing that they are by the same hand as that which wrote the two parts of *Henry IV*, or even as that which wrote *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. I am pretty sure that, in the language of Dr. Johnson, 'many men, many women, and many children' might have written several of the scenes. If they were actually written by Shakespeare,[2] it is clear to me that his heart was not in the work. In the choruses, as Dr. Johnson said, 'a little may be praised, and much must be forgiven.' But, of course, such

[1] *William Shakespeare*, p. 185.

[2] Some doubts have recently been raised about this, notably by Mr. John M. Robertson (who seems, however, to be rather too ready to discover traces of other hands).

strictures do not apply to those parts in which Henry himself is on the stage; and it is only with these that we are directly concerned, together with the relevant passages in the two parts of *Henry IV*. I assume—as I think one is fully entitled to do—that, throughout these three plays, the character that is set before us is a clear and consistent one. The only question for us is, what exactly Shakespeare's conception of it was.

The view that was commonly, or at least very frequently, taken before the subject was dealt with by Mr. A. C. Bradley,[1] and some other recent writers, was that Shakespeare intended Henry to be regarded as one of his most perfect heroes, with a few wild oats indeed to answer for in his early youth, but in the end almost without a flaw. One writer[2] went so far as to say that 'he is Shakespeare's ideal prince, perhaps his ideal self, what in his better moments he would wish himself to have been.' We have reason to believe that Shakespeare was not a particularly self-satisfied person. There were moments at least when he was to be found

> 'Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
> With what he most enjoyed contented least,'

but few would now believe—especially after Mr. Bradley's masterly essay just referred to—that Prince Henry was specially the god of his idolatry. Mr. Bradley, indeed, was not the first to reject such a view. Swinburne, at a much earlier date, characterized Henry—I think, quite correctly—thus[3]: 'His typical English hero or

[1] In his *Oxford Lectures on Poetry* ('The Rejection of Falstaff').

[2] Bowden, *The Religion of Shakespeare*, p. 165. More recently it has been suggested by Mr. A. Acheson (*Mistress Davenant*, pp. 72–3) that Shakespeare depicted Henry as an ideal for the Earl of Southampton to emulate.

[3] *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 115. Swinburne's rhetorical style often tended to conceal the essential soundness of his judgments.

historic protagonist is a man of their type who founded and built up the Empire of England or India; a hero after the future pattern of Hastings or of Clive; not less daringly sagacious and not more delicately scrupulous, not less indomitable or more impeccable than they.' Hazlitt also, at a still earlier date, criticized Henry pretty severely. I think Shakespeare did put something of himself into the character of Henry, but hardly his 'ideal self.' It is my object here to set forth a view somewhat more in accordance with the evidence of the plays.

The character of Henry V presented a difficult problem to Shakespeare; and I am convinced that his primary interest in writing the three plays lay in the attempt to solve the problem. The patriotic motive, though it served to give him his opportunity, did not, I think, greatly appeal to him. No one who felt deeply about that would have violated history as Shakespeare did. 'Man, proud man, dressed in a little brief authority,' never had much fascination for him. It was not the victorious King that he cared for, but only the somewhat perplexing man. Mr. Yeats says[1]: 'Shakespeare watched Henry V, not indeed as he watched the greater souls in his visionary procession, but cheerfully, as one watches some handsome, spirited horse, and he spoke his tale as he spoke all tales, with tragic irony.' I think, however, that Mr. Yeats's characterization of Henry is, on the whole, rather too depreciatory. Also, I think, Shakespeare's attitude is always too sympathetic to be properly described as 'irony.' It is pretty clear that Shakespeare had but little knowledge of the actual history of Henry's life, and it is certain at least that he made no serious attempt to preserve historical accuracy. He was content to follow the popular traditions, which had already been crudely expressed in the old play *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, and to create some fresh traditions. He can

[1] *Studies of Good and Evil*, p. 164. The whole passage is worth referring to.

hardly have been ignorant, for instance, that the relations that he established between Harry Monmouth and Harry Percy were a pure invention. Now, the difficulty in the character of Henry, as represented in these popular traditions, lies of course in reconciling the stories of the wildness of his youth with the reputed piety and wisdom of his maturity. Perhaps a more intimate knowledge of the facts would have tended to remove the problem, and with it the dramatic interest of the character.[1] But imaginative writers—such as Meredith in *Diana of the Crossways*—are often glad to take somewhat doubtful reports of historical occurrences as a foundation for studies of character. For Shakespeare at least it is evident that there was a very real problem in the reputed character of Henry. He could not accept the theory of a sudden conversion; for, in fact, even the popular traditions showed that it was not altogether sudden. Even in his early youth Henry had sometimes, according to the stories, shown a notable self-restraint. At any rate, Shakespeare no doubt agreed with the view that he puts into the mouth of the Archbishop of Canterbury, that

> 'miracles are ceased,
> And therefore we must needs admit the means
> How things are perfected';

and with the theory of the Bishop of Ely, that

> 'the prince obscured his contemplation
> Under the veil of wildness; which, no doubt,
> Grew like the summer grass, fastest by night,
> Unseen, yet crescive in his faculty.'

[1] It is not easy to get at the exact truth about the historical Henry. Most historians are inclined to reject many of the tales about his youth rather summarily; but it would seem that recent research is tending to allow the probability of a considerable measure of truth in them. Reference may be made, on this subject, to *The Reign of Henry the Fifth*, by J. H. Wylie, vol. i., especially chap. xiv.

But this does not carry us very far. We have still to ask, What kind of character was it that had to develop itself in this particular way?

Shakespeare's answer to this question seems to have been, that we must assume a character of many conflicting 'humours,' leading to a succession of more or less conscious poses. If we may call such a character a 'universe,' it may almost be described as 'a pluralist universe.' His father, who may be supposed to have had some knowledge of his disposition, says of him:

> 'he is gracious, if he be observed;
> He hath a tear for pity, and a hand
> Open as day for melting charity;
> Yet notwithstanding, being incensed, he's flint;
> As humorous as winter, and as sudden
> As flaws congealèd in the spring of day;
> His temper, therefore, must be well observed.'

Almost at his first appearance, we find the Prince himself exclaiming: 'I am now of all humours that have shown themselves humours since the old days of goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o'clock at midnight.' And, just a little earlier, we find him giving this explanation of his attitude:

> 'I know you all, and will a while uphold
> The unyoked humour of your idleness:
> Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
> Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
> To smother up his beauty from the world,
> That, when he please again to be himself,
> Being wanted, he may be more wondered at,
> By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
> Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
> If all the year were playing holidays,
> To sport would be as tedious as to work:
> But when they seldom come, they wished-for come,
> And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents. . . .
> So, when this loose behaviour I throw off
> And pay the debt I never promisèd,
> By how much better than my word I am,
> By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;

And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
Redeeming time when men think least I will.'

Even Mr. Marriott, who adheres on the whole to the older conception of Henry's character, is somewhat scandalized by this utterance, which he designates as priggish. That is a hard term, though it has been applied also by Mr. F. Harris [1] and Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch.[2] Let us call it rather a more or less self-conscious pose. Shakespeare's soliloquies are probably to be taken, in general, as revelations of a partly subconscious working. They are not to be regarded as what a man actually says, even to himself. Henry, we are to understand, yields to a transient humour, but is dimly aware that there is something deeper down within him by which that humour is opposed, and by which it will in the end be overcome. These two levels of consciousness appear throughout all the earlier scenes, the one in the Prince's play with Poins and Falstaff, the other in the frequent outbursts of sarcasm and sometimes violent invective. He is alternately attracted and repelled by his associates. He is entertained by them, and yet (as Falstaff at least is sometimes painfully aware) he does not really appreciate what is attractive in them. He regards them as his playthings, and intends, even from the first, to throw them away when they have served his turn. It is here that we discover the unamiable side of his character. He may be 'sworn brother to a leash of drawers,' but his feeling towards them is far enough from being brotherly. He only realizes that he has 'sounded the very base-string of humility.' On the whole, he is a pleasant and

[1] *The Man Shakespeare*, pp. 95 and 102. Mr. Harris refers to Henry as 'the prince of prigs.'

[2] *Shakespeare's Workmanship*, pp. 141–3.

playful egoist, as his brother John is a somewhat sour and unpleasant one; but the one is almost as hard as the other. This hardness is seen very conspicuously in his vainglorious attitude towards Percy:

> 'All the budding honours on thy crest
> I'll crop, to make a garland for my head,'

and in the curt dismissal of Falstaff, when he was supposed to be dead:

> 'Death hath not struck so fat a deer to-day,
> Though many dearer, in this bloody fray.'

Family affection, as Mr. Bradley notes, is almost the only kind of affection of which he appears to be capable in any deep sense of the word. That kind of affection at least seems to be shown distinctly in his attitude towards his brothers and in his grief at the death of his father. That this grief is genuine cannot be doubted; though I think the display of it contains a considerable element of more or less conscious pose. Before he pays his last visit to his father, we find him exercising his mind a good deal about the attitude that he is to assume. He says to Poins: 'It is not meet that I should be sad, now my father is sick; albeit I could tell to thee—as to one it pleases me, for fault of a better, to call my friend—I could be sad, and sad indeed too.' 'Very hardly,' says Poins, 'upon such a subject.' 'By this hand,' the Prince rejoins, 'thou thinkest me as far in the devil's book as thou and Falstaff for obduracy and persistency: let the end try the man. But I tell thee, my heart bleeds inwardly that my father is so sick: and keeping such vile company as thou art hath in reason taken from me all ostentation of sorrow.' 'The reason?' 'What wouldst thou think of me, if I should weep?' 'I would think thee a most princely hypocrite.' 'It would be every man's thought; and thou art a blessed

fellow to think as every man thinks: never a man's thought in the world keeps the road-way better than thine: every man would think me a hypocrite indeed.' Now it is quite clear, I think, that Shakespeare does not mean us to think him a hypocrite. But it is not so clear that he does not intend us to think him something of a poseur. In the final scene at his father's deathbed we seem to perceive three partly conflicting emotional attitudes. First, we find unquestionable grief for his father's fatal illness:

> 'God witness with me, when I here came in,
> And found no course of breath within your Majesty,
> How cold it struck my heart! If I do feign,
> Oh, let me in my present wildness die,
> And never live to show the incredulous world
> The noble change that I have purposed.'

He does not feign. We find in him also, however, a general sense of the burden that comes with a crown:

> 'O polished perturbation! Golden care!
> That keep'st the ports of slumber open wide
> To many a watchful night!—sleep with it now!
> Yet not so sound and half so deeply sweet
> As he whose brow with homely biggin bound
> Snores out the watch of night!'

This also is a genuine feeling. He repeats the expression of it afterwards to his father; and it is an anticipation of what he says to himself later, just before the battle of Agincourt, with a still deeper realization of its truth:

> 'Tis not the balm, the sceptre, and the ball,
> The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
> The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
> The farced title running 'fore the king,
> The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
> That beats upon the high-shore of this world,—
> No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,
> Not all these, laid in bed majestical,

Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave,
Who, with a body filled and vacant mind,
Gets him to rest, crammed with distressful bread;
Never sees horrid night, the child of hell;
But, like a lackey, from the rise to set,
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night
Sleeps in Elysium; next day after dawn,
Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,
And follows so the ever-running year,
With profitable labour, to his grave:
And, but for ceremony, such a wretch,
Winding up days with toil and night with sleep,
Had the fore-hand and vantage of a king.[2]

Such reflections as these must be supposed to have come quite naturally to Henry. But, when he puts on the crown at his father's bedside, he is not entirely filled with such melancholy reflections. He is not without the proud consciousness of the great inheritance that is coming to him:

'My due from thee is this imperial crown,
Which, as immediate from thy place and blood,
Derives itself to me. So, here it sits,
Which God shall guard: and put the world's whole strength
Into one giant arm, it shall not force
This lineal honour from me: this from thee
Will I to mine leave, as 'tis left to me.[3]

On this point Henry does not appear to be quite candid in the report that he makes to his father, or perhaps rather not fully conscious of what had passed in his own mind. After referring to his chiding of the crown, he goes on to say:

'But if it did infect my blood with joy,
Or swell my thoughts to any strain of pride;
If any rebel or vain spirit of mine
Did with the least affection of a welcome
Give entertainment to the might of it,
Let God for ever keep it from my head,
And make me as the poorest vassal is
That doth with awe and terror kneel to it![3]

But almost immediately afterwards, when his father has discoursed about the questionable methods by which he had gained the throne, the Prince exclaims :

> 'You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me ;
> Then plain and right must my possession be :
> Which I with more than with a common pain
> 'Gainst all the world will rightfully maintain.'

The spirit that was perhaps before somewhat in the background of his consciousness has now burst into the front ; and we realize that the previous air of humility, though not altogether hypocritical, was a more or less unconscious pose.

What immediately follows need not specially concern us. The next important scene is that in which Falstaff and his companions are dismissed. The bearings of this have been so thoroughly discussed by Mr. Bradley that we need not dwell upon them at much length. The action itself may have been justified by the circumstances. It might have been impossible for Henry to maintain his new dignity, and the changed attitude of mind that is to go with it, in the immediate neighbourhood of his old companions. But most people feel that the manner of the dismissal cannot be defended. Even the older commentators, such as Dr. Johnson, recognized this. Parts of Henry's speech can hardly be called other than atrocious.

> 'I know thee not, old man ; fall to thy prayers ;
> How ill white hairs become a fool and jester !
> I have long dreamed of such a kind of man,
> So surfeit-swelled, so old, and so profane ;
> But, being awaked, I do despise my dream.
> Make less thy body hence and more thy grace ;
> Leave gormandizing ; know the grave doth gape
> For thee thrice wider than for other men.
> Reply not to me with a fool-born jest ;
> Presume not that I am the thing I was ;
> For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
> That I have turned away my former self ;
> So will I those that kept me company.'

Here certainly is a fine pose. The force of self-righteousness could no further go. Even the Pharisee in the parable could hardly have surpassed this. He proceeds to refer to his former companions as his 'misleaders,' as if he had not himself been an instigator of their riotings; and as if he had not previously boasted that he knew them all, and that he associated with them only for his own purposes. Here, where on the surface he seems most virtuous, I think it must be allowed that he reaches the lowest point of moral degradation in the whole of his career. That Shakespeare meant us to feel this—about which even Mr. Bradley seems to be a little uncertain—I cannot for a moment doubt. He does not allow us to forget Henry's treatment of his old companion, to whom, as Falstaff said, he 'owed his love.' The hostess tells us that 'The King has killed his heart.' Nym says, 'The King has run bad humours on the knight; that's the even of it,' to which Pistol answers:

> 'Nym, thou hast spoke the right;
> His heart is fracted and corroborate.'

'The King is a good king,' says Nym; 'but it must be as it may; he passes some humours and careers.' Fluellen, a little later, remarks that 'as Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, being in his ales and his cups, so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and good judgment, turned away the fat knight, with the great belly-doublet.' This, no doubt, is a mild hint; but it serves as a reminder.

The speech to Falstaff is naturally associated with the somewhat similar one that is made later to Lord Scroop. It would appear that Henry had been on terms of intimate friendship with Lord Scroop—not, as in the case of Poins, 'for fault of a better,' but in a more genuine way; and Scroop's treachery seems to have been of a very flagrant kind. Hence, in this case, Henry's rebuke was probably quite deserved. Yet the tone of lofty

indignation, coming so soon after the similar one to Falstaff, jars a little on one's mind; and one can hardly help wondering whether Henry does not somewhat exaggerate the intimacy of the previous friendship. If Scroop had really been as deep in Henry's counsels as the King suggests—

> 'Thou that didst bear the key of all my counsels,
> That knew'st the very bottom of my soul'—

he may have been only too well aware of the flimsiness of the pretexts on which the war was started; and this might have to some extent justified him in turning, as we should say, pro-French; but he could hardly have urged this excuse without seeming to aggravate his crime. However, this may be an unjust suspicion against Henry, and it need not be pressed.

The great rejoicings that take place over the 'conversion' of the King at the time of his accession are very natural. We know that Shakespeare does not mean it to be regarded as, in any deep sense, a conversion, but only a somewhat deliberate change in public attitude, premeditated for a long time, partly as a matter of policy.[1] Hence we are not to take too seriously such declarations as that of the Archbishop of Canterbury:

> 'Never was such a sudden scholar made;
> Never came reformation in a flood,
> With such a heady currance, scouring faults;
> Nor never Hydra-headed wilfulness
> So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,
> As in this king.'

This view, indeed, is somewhat modified, as we have previously noted, by what immediately follows; but it would seem that Henry himself was quite willing to

[1] The conversion of the historical Henry would seem to have meant primarily that he came definitely under priestly influences, and set himself in opposition to the Lollards. See Wylie's *Reign of Henry V*, chap. xvi.

have the change represented in this way. I suppose the Archbishop's flattering sentences about Henry's eloquence and penetration should also be taken with some reserve:

> 'Hear him but reason in divinity,
> And, all admiring, with an inward wish
> You would desire the King were made a prelate:
> Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
> You would say it had been all-in-all his study:
> List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
> A fearful battle rendered you in music;
> Turn him to any cause of policy,
> The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
> Familiar as his garter:—that, when he speaks,
> The air, a chartered libertine, is still,
> And the mute wonder lurketh in men's ears,
> To steel his sweet and honeyed sentences.'

It is certainly quite true that he has always been represented as quick in perception and very ready and fluent in discourse, though perhaps hardly 'sweet and honeyed.' It is noteworthy, however, that, when the subject of the war with France is under discussion, he accepts the decision of the Archbishop without any question. Such an attitude may have seemed to the Archbishop eloquent enough. It is right to remember also that he had made a very strong appeal to the Archbishop that he should 'justly and religiously unfold' the whole bearings of the questions. But the arguments brought forward were evidently open to some doubt, and we might have expected a more searching scrutiny of them. Instead of this, Henry proceeds to consider practical difficulties, in a way that seems to imply that he had pretty well made up his mind beforehand, and that he was quite content to let the Archbishop serve as his conscience. We have to remember also that the King's father had on his deathbed urged him

> 'to busy giddy minds
> With foreign quarrels; that action, hence borne out,
> May waste the memory of the former days,'

and that his brother John had shortly afterwards stated:

> 'I will lay odds that, ere this year expire,
> We bear our civil swords and native fire
> As far as France: I heard a bird so sing,
> Whose music, to my thinking, pleased the King.'

It would seem that Shakespeare means us to understand that other considerations, besides the justice of his claim, had considerable influence on Henry's mind. We are not, of course, concerned with the historical question,[1] but only with Shakespeare's treatment, as throwing light upon his conception of Henry's character. It would be going too far to say that Henry is represented as hypocritical;[2] but I think it is the case that his conscientious scruples are made to appear not very deep. Here, as at an earlier stage, he is eager to do what is in accordance with his humour and advantage, but is anxious, at the same time, to preserve his self-respect by giving to his policy the sanction of religion.

At a later stage, on the eve of the final battle, we find him a good deal troubled by conscientious scruples. He had hoped that he might salve his conscience by putting it into the keeping of the Archbishop, and is not at all pleased to learn, on talking with some of the soldiers, that they are inclined to throw all the responsibility upon himself. He reasons with them, and tries to reduce his responsibilities as far as possible, almost betraying his identity in his vehemence; but his own mind is not altogether relieved, and he falls into the melancholy

[1] The historical Henry seems to have been a good deal more passionate and less reasonable in his attitude than Shakespeare represents him as being. See Wylie's *Henry V*, p. 491.

[2] French writers have generally represented the historical Henry as a hypocrite; and even English historians, though naturally inclined to take a more favourable view of him, have to admit that he sometimes displayed a good deal of duplicity. See the instances given by Wylie, pp. 410–11 and 444–5.

musing, to which reference has already been made, on the hard lot of the King:

> 'Upon the King!—let us our lives, our souls,
> Our debts, our careful wives,
> Our children, and our sins, lay on the King!
> We must bear all. O hard condition,
> Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
> Of every fool, whose sense no more can feel
> But his own wringing! What infinite heart's-ease
> Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!'

He takes refuge at last in prayer:

> 'Not to-day, O Lord,
> Oh, not to-day, think not upon the fault
> My father made in compassing the crown!
> I Richard's body have interred new;
> And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
> Than from it issued forced drops of blood:
> Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
> Who twice a day their withered hands hold up
> Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built
> Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
> Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do;
> Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
> Since that my penitence comes after all,
> Imploring pardon.'

If there is some touch of the Pharisee in parts of this, it must surely be allowed that there is something of the Publican as well. On the whole, it is at this time of stress that his character appears at its best; and in this, I think, he is typical of his people. We admire, and we are intended to admire, his sober and dignified courage. Throughout the whole of this anxious time, however, we seem to discern a conflict between his worldly ambition and his conscience. Here, as everywhere, we see distinct evidence of the divided mind.

This conflict shows itself even more explicitly, though somewhat more superficially, in what follows. On the one hand, he maintains, though in a more subdued form, the rather vainglorious spirit that appeared at the time

of his fight with Percy and in some of the earlier scenes in France [1]—the old devotion to 'honour' at which Falstaff scoffed :

> 'By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
> Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost ;
> It yearns me not if men my garments wear ;
> Such outward things dwell not in my desires ;
> But if it be a sin to covet honour,
> I am the most offending soul alive.'

But, in the end, he renounces personal honour, and seeks to ascribe all the glory to God :

> 'Take it, God,
> For it is none but Thine ! . . .
> Come, go we in procession to the village,
> And be it death proclaimed through our host
> To boast of this, or take that praise from God
> Which is His only.'

I think this somewhat extreme self-denying ordinance is meant to suggest some degree of insincerity. We have seen too much of Henry to credit him with quite so much humility and renunciation. It is to some extent a pose ; and Shakespeare allows Fluellen to give a little prick to the bubble :

> 'Is it not lawful, an please your majesty,'

he innocently asks,

> 'to tell how many is killed ?'
> 'Yes, captain,'

says Henry,

> 'but with this acknowledgment,
> That God fought for us.'
> 'Yes, my conscience,' answers Fluellen, 'he did us great good.'

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[1] At one point he apologizes for his boastful spirit :—

> 'Forgive me, God,
> That I do brag thus ! This your air of France
> Hath blown that vice in me ; I must repent.'

But it is pretty clear that he did not need the air of France, when the humour was on him.

We may suppose that Henry accepts this reduction of his heroics with a slightly embarrassed smile; and he proceeds in a somewhat minor key:

> 'Do we all holy rites;
> Let there be sung *Non Nobis* and *Te Deum*;
> The dead with charity enclosed in clay;
> We'll then to Calais; and to England then;
> Where ne'er from France arrived more happy men.'

Shakespeare does not allow us to forget, however, that, with all his desire for personal honour, and with all his religious (some might say, his superstitious) devotion, Henry did not hesitate to carry out in the sternest fashion what seemed to be necessary for the successful prosecution of the war. In this respect at least the historical records seem to support the Shakespearean portraiture. He threatens the people of Harfleur with the extremest form of frightfulness:

> 'The gates of mercy shall be all shut up,
> And the fleshed soldier, rough and hard of heart,
> In liberty of bloody hand shall range
> With conscience wide as Hell, mowing like grass
> Your flesh-fair virgins and your flowering infants.'

He is careful to explain, however, that they will have themselves to blame for these outrages; but it seems clear that he took pretty seriously the words of his previous exhortation:

> 'In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness and humility;
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
> Then imitate the action of the tiger.'

A little later we find him sanctioning the killing of prisoners—partly, no doubt, by way of reprisal. Gower says: 'There's not a boy left alive; and the cowardly rascals that ran from the battle ha' done this slaughter:

besides, they have burned and carried away all that was in the King's tent; wherefore the King, most worthily, hath caused every soldier to cut his prisoner's throat.' And immediately afterwards, we have this declaration from the King himself:

> 'I was not angry since I came to France
> Until this instant. Take a trumpet, herald;
> Ride thou unto the horsemen on yon hill;
> If they will fight with us, bid them come down,
> Or void the field; they do offend our sight;
> If they'll do neither, we will come to them,
> And make them skirr away, as swift as stones
> Enforced from the old Assyrian slings;
> Besides, we'll cut the throats of those we have,
> And not a man of them that we shall take
> Shall taste our mercy.'

Gradually we see that Henry comes more and more to pose as the simple soldier, satisfied to be nothing else. Already, in his address to the people of Harfleur, we find him saying:

> 'as I am a soldier—
> A name that in my thoughts becomes me best.'

He had never, indeed, been averse to sounding the 'base-string of humility,' and always liked to be thought able to 'drink with any tinker in his own language'; though sometimes he felt that such familiarity was a little derogatory to his princely dignity. He tells Poins, 'Belike, my appetite was not princely got; for, by my troth, I do not remember the poor creature, small beer. But, indeed, these humble considerations make me out of love with my greatness. What a disgrace is it to me to remember thy name! or to know thy face to-morrow! or to take note how many pair of silk stockings thou hast, viz. these, and those that were thy peach-coloured ones! or to bear the inventory of thy shirts, as one for superfluity, and another for use!' But at the end he has wrought himself thoroughly into the attitude of

a rough soldier. In the wooing scene with which the record of his life closes, he tells Katharine:

'If you would put me to verses or to dance for your sake, Kate, why you undid me: for the one, I have neither words nor measure, and for the other, I have no strength in measure, yet a reasonable measure in strength. If I could win a lady at leap-frog, or by vaulting into my saddle with my armour on my back, under the correction of bragging be it spoken, I should quickly leap into a wife. Or if I might buffet for my love, or bound my horse for her favours, I could lay on like a butcher and sit like a jack-an-apes, never off. But, before God, Kate, I cannot look greenly nor gasp out my eloquence, nor I have no cunning in protestation; only downright oaths, which I never use till urged, nor never break for urging. If thou canst love a fellow of this temper, Kate, whose face is not worth sun-burning, that never looks in his glass for love of anything he sees there, let thine eye be thy cook. I speak to thee plain soldier: if thou canst love me for this, take me; if not, to say to thee that I shall die, is true; but for thy love—by the Lord, no; yet I love thee too. And while thou livest, dear Kate, take a fellow of uncoined constancy; for he perforce must do thee right, because he hath not the gift to woo in other places; for these fellows of infinite tongue, that can rhyme themselves into ladies' favours, they do always reason themselves out again. What! a speaker is but a prater; a rhyme is but a ballad. A good leg will fall; a straight back will stoop; a black beard will turn white; a curled pate will grow bald; a fair face will wither; a full eye will wax hollow: but a good heart, Kate, is the sun and the moon; or rather the sun and not the moon; for it shines bright and never changes, but keeps his course truly. If thou would have such a one, take me; and take me, take a soldier; take a soldier, take a king.'

It has sometimes been thought that, in representing Henry in this way in the final scene, Shakespeare has not been consistent with the character that was previously ascribed to him. It seems probable that the first sketch of *Henry V* was written before the two parts of *Henry IV*, and it is possible that the earlier conception of his character is not quite consistent with the later. But anyone who has studied such an analysis of Shakespeare's characters as that which is given by Mr. A. C. Bradley in his book on *Shakespearian Tragedy* will not readily believe that

Shakespeare was ever careless in the delineation of important characters, however careless he may sometimes have been in smaller matters that did not directly concern his art. Certainly, many good critics have been perturbed by this closing scene. Swinburne complains [1] that 'the hero's addresses savour rather of a ploughman than a prince.' Dr. Johnson says: 'I know not why Shakespeare now gives the King such a character as he made him formerly ridicule in Percy.[2] This military grossness and unskilfulness in all the softer arts does not suit very well with the gaieties of his youth, with the general knowledge ascribed to him at his accession, or with the contemptuous message sent him by the Dauphin, who represents him as fitter for the ball-room than the field, and tells him that he is not to *revel into duchies*, or win provinces with a *nimble galliard*.' The Dauphin, of course, was badly out in his estimate, and the Archbishop overdid his flatteries about the 'sweet and honeyed sentences.' Henry was right enough in thinking that his style was not very well adapted for a sonnet. But he has certainly lost nothing of his fluency, or of his somewhat superficial wit; and we see that he continues, even when he is in love, to be much more interested in himself than in anybody else. It would surely be a mistake, however, to suppose that the character that he here

[1] *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 105.

[2] Mr. F. Harris (*The Man Shakespeare*, p. 93) maintains that the characters of the two Harries are not really differentiated throughout. But surely this is quite false. It seems to me that there is hardly a sentence spoken by the one that could with any propriety be ascribed to the other. Mr. Harris complains also that Percy is sometimes made to talk poetry (p. 81). But surely it is very Percyesque poetry. Perhaps the historical Percy would not have spoken in that way; but he was a different person. In spite of the Duke of Marlborough, I think one has always to remember that Shakespeare was not a historian. One has to remember also that these plays were written before he had finally cast off the sonneteering manner, as distinguished from the more purely dramatic style.

ascribes to himself is to be taken as a true description of his nature. It is only the last of his poses. He loves himself, and has the utmost confidence in his own excellence, whether he sports with Poins and Falstaff, drinks with tinkers in their own language, weeps over the woes of greatness, wages war, or woos a wife. He can be of all humours that ever called themselves humours; but he never ceases to be himself, and to a considerable extent the god of his own idolatry. When the scene is regarded in this way, it does not seem necessary to suppose that there is any real inconsistency in the characterization.

It might, no doubt, be urged that we hardly need a theory of this kind to account for the change that takes place in Henry's apparent character after he enters upon his career as a warrior. In the recent Great War, more than one man engaged in it has testified that he felt himself to be quite a different being on the field of battle from what he was in his peaceful employment at home. But it seems clear at least that such a transformation would more readily take place in a man of many humours like Henry than in one more purely cool and calculating like Prince John or more purely impulsive like Hotspur.

In describing Henry's attitudes as poses, I have no intention of implying that Shakespeare does not mean us to regard him with sympathy and some admiration. He may even have put something of himself into the character. Some of the stories of Shakespeare's own youth are not so very different from those that are told about Henry's; and I should think he also must have been a man of many humours, and not without a proud confidence in himself. The Sonnets contain many evidences of this,[1] notably the fifty-fifth, in which he writes:

[1] I assume, in spite of Browning's protest, that Wordsworth was substantially right in thinking that Shakespeare unlocked his heart in the Sonnets. The difficulty about their interpretation seems to be largely due to the confused way in which they have been arranged. The new arrangements given by A. Acheson,

'Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.'

He seems even to have been conscious of a certain pride in himself as of the nature of a besetting sin:

'Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
And all my soul and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my heart.
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
No shape so true, no truth of such account;
And for myself my own worth do define,
As I all other in all worths surmount.'

At the same time, like Henry, he never looked in the glass for love of anything he saw there:

'But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
Beated and chopp'd with tann'd antiquity,
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;
Self so self-loving were iniquity.'

But Shakespeare had a remedy, which would seem to have been denied to Henry, both for his self-love and for his self-abasement. He found it by losing himself in the enjoyment of the lives of others and in identifying himself with them:

''Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days.'

Samuel Butler, the Countess of Chambrun and others enable one to view them as giving expression to experiences and moods throughout a succession of years in the early or middle part of Shakespeare's life. Without committing myself to either of these arrangements, and allowing for some of the conventional attitudes of a sonneteer, I see no reason to doubt that they express genuine feelings and record actual experiences.

This is brought out most explicitly in the twenty-ninth Sonnet :

> 'When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
> I all alone beweep my outcast state,
> And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries
> And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
> Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
> Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
> Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
> With what I most enjoy contented least ;
> Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
> Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
> Like to the lark at break of day arising
> From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate ;
> For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
> That then I scorn to change my state with kings.'

It was this unique gift, of course, this power of identifying himself with others, that made Shakespeare the greatest of the world's dramatists.

Now, it would seem that this gift was definitely denied to Henry. If I am right in regarding him as a man of many humours, and as one who tended to conceal his own nature under a succession of poses, it may be thought that this implies the possession of a considerable dramatic faculty. But this is not the case. If he had been a hypocrite, like Tartufe, he would necessarily have been an actor. Probably most successful diplomatists, and even many leading politicians, have to practise the dramatic art. Even Gladstone, who was hardly, in the ordinary sense of the word, a hypocrite, was described as a consummate actor ; and I suppose this could have been said even more truly of Chatham. On the present stage of history, it would certainly be easy to point to other theatrical characters—perhaps even more easy out of England than in it. But Henry at least, as I understand him, was very far from being a hypocrite in the baser sense, or even in the sense of one who consciously wore a mask. He did, indeed, take a certain amount of pleasure

in mystification, and was not averse to dramatic performances. He readily falls in with the suggestion of 'a play extempore' after the horseplay with Falstaff; just as he afterwards associates himself with Poins in the little game of 'old Outis.'[1] It is noteworthy that in none of these cases is the dramatization undertaken on his own initiative. At a later stage, however, we find him passing himself off as a common soldier, and seeking to mystify Fluellen by pretending to have taken a glove from Alençon. There is a somewhat similar element of mystification in his exposure of Scroop and the other conspirators. But he is obviously not a good actor. In the play with Falstaff, he has but little to say for himself in his own part, and makes not the slightest attempt to put himself in the place of his father. In this he contrasts very markedly with Falstaff, who throws himself into both the rôles with all the readiness and gusto of one of the 'harlotry players.' In the character of a common soldier also, Henry almost 'gives himself away' and brings himself into ridicule, by speaking obviously from his own point of view as King. The other impersonations do not amount to much. He was not an actor, but an unconscious poseur. He could not play a part deliberately, but only as the humour took him. He does not really understand himself, and still less is he capable of appreciating others. Though he is entertained by Falstaff, it does not appear that he has any genuine appreciation of his subtle humour. He tends to regard Falstaff simply as 'a fool and jester,' a pure sensualist, a coward, or even as a 'damned brawn.' It is chiefly this limitation that forces us to recognize, with Mr. Bradley,[2] that his mind had not received from Shakespeare's own

[1] I am assuming here that the elder Samuel Butler was right in his interpretation of this phrase as referring to the disguise of Odysseus. See the *Life* by his son, vol. i, p. 182. But this suggestion does not appear to have been favourably received.

[2] *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, p. 273.

'the inexplicable touch of infinity which he bestowed on Hamlet and Macbeth and Cleopatra, but denied to Henry the Fifth.' Still, it is probable that he did give him some of his own characteristics, and perhaps some of those of that other self whom he celebrates in the Sonnets—the Earl of Southampton or another. Indeed, as we have seen, there is some ground for thinking that he put more of himself into the character than the historical Henry quite deserved. It is probable that the emphasis I have laid on his defects has led to a somewhat exaggerated impression; but I think the faults to which I have referred are real spots, even if it is to be admitted that they are the spots on the sun. Certainly Shakespeare does not intend us to despise or dislike Henry. He would at least have us agree with Nym that 'the King is a good king; but it must be as it may; he passes some humours and careers.' And, as Mr. Chesterton says,[1] the plays are 'problem plays,' in the sense that 'the reader or spectator is really doubtful whether the high but harsh efficiency, valour and ambition of Henry V are an improvement on his old blackguard camaraderie; and whether he was not a better man when he was a thief.' In general, Walter Pater was no doubt right in affirming[2] that 'Shakespeare's kings are not, nor are meant to be, great men.' But certainly Henry is the most heroic and the most attractive of them, and also the most characteristically British. Henry VIII might have afforded material for an equally interesting study; but it is pretty certain that Shakespeare had not much hand in the composition of the play in which that monarch is depicted.

[1] *George Bernard Shaw*, p. 175. [2] *Appreciations*, p. 207.

CHAPTER III

HENRY'S PLACE IN THE TRILOGY

So far I have supported my view of Henry's character by reference to his own sayings and doings. I now proceed to consider it with reference to the place he occupies in the three plays in which he is the central figure. By looking at him in this way, we may see more definitely what the poet's main conception was.

It is a striking characteristic of Shakespeare's dramatic art in general that almost every one of his plays has some peculiar odour of its own. This is well brought out in the account that was given by Francis Thompson of his earliest reading of them. 'I had,' he says,[1] 'a certain sublatent, subconscious, elementary sense of poetry as I read. But this was, for the more part, scarce explicit; and was largely confined to the atmosphere, the exhalation of the work. To give some concrete instance of what I mean. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream* I experienced profoundly that sense of trance, of dreamlike dimness, the moonlight glimmer of sleep-walking enchantment, embodied in that wonderful fairy epilogue "Now the cat," etc., and suggested by Shakespeare in the lines, "These things seem small and undistinguishable, like far-off mountains turned into clouds." I did indeed, as

[1] *The Life of Francis Thompson*, by Everard Meynell, pp. 10–11. 'Now the cat' should, I suppose, read 'Now the hungry lion.' It is perhaps right to acknowledge that Francis Thompson would not have accepted the interpretation of Henry's character that is being here set forth. See his essay on 'Shakespeare's Prose' (Works, vol. iii.).

I read the last words of Puck, feel as if I were waking from a dream and rub my mental eyes. . . . So, again, I profoundly experienced the atmospheric effect of *Macbeth*, *Lear*, *The Tempest*, *Coriolanus*, of all the plays in various degrees. Never again have I sensed so exquisitely, so virginally, the *aura* of the plays as I sensed it then.' This atmosphere is not due simply to the characters of the leading persons, but much more to the way in which Shakespeare contrives to surround them with an appropriate environment—sometimes natural, sometimes supernatural. Often the main theme is accompanied by a somewhat similar one in the background. In other cases the effect is heightened by contrast. Now, if we ask what is the special atmosphere of the three plays with which we are here concerned, and specially the two parts of *Henry IV* (and perhaps we might add *The Merry Wives of Windsor*), the answer would seem to be that it is an atmosphere of poses. Shakespeare did not, like Ben Jonson, write a play called *Every Man in his Humour*; but these plays might very well have been so characterized. It is true, of course, that in most of Shakespeare's plays there are characters who show peculiar humours; but there are surely none in which the whole atmosphere is pervaded by them, as it is in these—none in which we might exclaim at almost every turn, with Sir Hugh Evans, 'Why, it is affectations.'

In Henry himself we see a man of many humours: in most of the other characters we see a man in some particular humour. And, in order to give this atmosphere its full effect, Shakespeare has—as he seldom hesitated to do—deliberately falsified history. This is seen most conspicuously in the case of Percy and in the quite unhistorical creation of Falstaff.

With regard to Percy, it can hardly be doubted that Shakespeare violated history quite deliberately in representing him as being nearly of the same age as the Prince.

His object may have been partly that of securing a dramatic effect by giving Henry a personal triumph at the end of the first play. He conquers his rival at the end of the first, his tempters at the end of the second, and his foreign enemies at the end of the third. But I believe the more important object in the violation of history was that of bringing out the contrast between the attitudes of the two rivals. That of Percy is the single-minded, but blind and hot-headed, pursuit of honour. Some may be inclined to say that his honour was rooted in dishonour ; but he would seem to have had fully as much right on his side as the King had on his ; and his pursuit of his aim shows at least the rough chivalry of one bred in the border —the sort of chivalry of the free lance that seems, in some degree, to have found its literary expression in recent times in the person of Swinburne. This is to some extent a pose, but it is a pose that is consistently sustained ; and it is contrasted with the less impulsive, the cooler and more correct, but perhaps less generous and single-minded conception of honour by which the Prince is animated. But, as we have seen, the contrast between the two characters is partly obliterated in Henry's final pose. He assumes the bluntness of Percy, though he still retains the cooler calculation and larger outlook.

The character of the Prince is also set in contrast to that of his brother John, whose cold duplicity, especially in his dealings with the Archbishop of York, is opposed to the more generous and chivalrous qualities by which Henry is characterized. It is noteworthy, however, that, on the occasion of his trick, he anticipates the pious attitude of Henry—' God, and not we, hath safely fought to-day.' Like Percy, he is more single-minded than his brother ; and both Percy and he gain more honour at the outset, though in the end they are surpassed by the more versatile Henry. The difference between the two princes is humorously ascribed by Falstaff to their different potations. ' This same sober-blooded boy doth

not love me; nor can a man make him laugh; but that's no marvel, he drinks no wine. . . . Hereof comes it that Prince Henry is valiant; for the cold blood he did naturally inherit of his father, he hath, like lean, sterile and bare land, manured, husbanded and tilled with excellent endeavour of drinking good and good store of fertile sherris, that he has become very hot and valiant.'

This reference of Falstaff serves to remind us that Henry's father also is placed in contrast with him. His calculating State-craft (which, from a historical point of view, is probably somewhat exaggerated) is set in opposition to what was at least the earlier attitude of his son, the more liberal and open nature which he never lost:

'Let me wonder, Harry,
At thy affections, which do hold a wing
Quite from the flight of all thy ancestors.
. . . . .
Had I so lavish of my presence been,
So common-hackneyed in the eyes of men,
So stale and cheap to vulgar company,
Opinion, that did help me to the crown,
Had still kept loyal to possession.
. . . . .
The skipping King, he ambled up and down
With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits.
. . . . .
As thou art to this hour, was Richard then
When I from France set foot at Ravenspurg;
And even as I was then is Percy now.
Now, by my sceptre and my soul to boot,
He hath more worthy interest to the State
Than thou the shadow of succession;
For of no right, nor colour like to right,
He doth fill fields with harness in the realm;
Turns head against the lion's armed jaws;
And, being no more in debt to years than thou,
Leads ancient lords and reverent bishops on
To bloody battles and to bruising arms.'

This passage not only emphasizes the difference between father and son, but also incidentally gives the ground for Shakespeare's falsification of the age of Percy.

The romantic superstitions of Owen Glendower are also brought out in contrast with the somewhat earthy common sense of the more purely English types. Perhaps his attitude is hardly to be called a pose; but it may at least be described as a somewhat peculiar humour.

Many of the minor characters are marked by special affectations. In Justice Shallow we see the posing of one who was proud to bear arms, but certainly could not be said, in the phrase of Robert Burns, to have fetched his patent of nobility direct from Almighty God. Perhaps we may regard him as exhibiting the beginnings of that rather typically British attitude which in later times has been described as snobbery. His companion Silence is represented as showing an affectation of jollity which is not really in keeping with the general feebleness of his character. Pistol, in like manner, exhibits the pose of poltroonery affecting the airs of a swashbuckler; and in Nym we see a shallow nature affecting a deep reserve. The peculiar humours of Bardolf, Mrs. Quickly and others need not be specially characterized; nor need we dwell upon the slight sketch of the modes of speech of the Scotchman and the Irishman introduced, obviously for this special purpose, in *Henry V*; nor upon the way in which the French characters in that play are contrasted (with a roughness that seems to border on caricature) with those of the British. But the characters of Falstaff and Fluellen call for rather more special attention. To some extent they may be taken as representing peculiar poses of their own; but on the whole it seems better to regard them as being used to expose the affectations of others.

On Fluellen, indeed, there is not very much to be said. In his case, as in some others, we see evidence of Shakespeare's knowledge and appreciation of the Welsh character. Fluellen is a hero-worshipper, prepared to follow Henry through thick and thin and to regard him as a second Alexander. His personal loyalty is strengthened by the

fact that he is able to recognize Henry as a fellow-countryman; and it is accompanied by a good deal of scorn for those who do not earn his devotion. He is somewhat apt to be imposed upon by fine words; yet he is capable of thinking for himself. He is a great stickler for order and discipline; and his critical comments call attention to weaknesses in the organization of the army and sometimes even suggest doubts with reference to Henry himself. He is evidently not altogether satisfied with the King's affected renunciation of all credit for the victory, though, out of deference, he suppresses his objections.

The place of Falstaff calls for somewhat fuller consideration. The understanding of this has been very greatly facilitated by Mr. A. C. Bradley's penetrating study. Prior to the appearance of his brilliant essay, the general tendency had been to regard Falstaff in the light in which Henry himself had taken him, as witty and entertaining, but at bottom a sensualist, a liar, a coward and a buffoon. There have, indeed, seldom been wanting some suspicions that Henry's view of him was not wholly just. Even Rowe is evidently conscious of something not altogether satisfactory. He says of Shakespeare's treatment of Falstaff: 'If there be any fault in the draught he has made of this lewd old fellow, it is that tho' he has made him a Thief, Lying, Cowardly, Vainglorious and in short everything vicious, yet he has given him so much wit as to make it almost too agreeable, and I don't know whether some people have not in remembrance of the Diversion he had formerly afforded 'em, been sorry to see his friend Hal use him so scurvily when he comes to the Crown in the end of the Second Part of *Henry the Fourth*.' And though that stern moralist, Dr. Johnson, repudiated Rowe's suggestion, it is evident that he also was conscious of some regret. But it was Maurice Morgann who first made a valiant attempt to defend Falstaff against at least one of the main charges that are usually brought against him. This is very judiciously dealt with by

Mr. Bradley. Hazlitt's general characterization of Falstaff is worth remembering: 'He is a dissipated man of rank, with a thousand times more wit than ever fell to the lot of all the men of rank in the world. But he has ill played his cards in life. He grumbles not at the advancement of men of his own order; but the bitter drop of his soul overflows when he remembers how he and the cheese-paring Shallow began the world, and reflects that the starveling Justice has lands and beeves, while he, the wit and the gentleman, is penniless, and living from hand to mouth by the casual shifts of the day. He looks at the goodly dwelling and the riches of him whom he had once so thoroughly contemned with an inward pang that he has scarcely a roof under which he can lay his head. The tragic Macbeth, in the agony of his last struggle, acknowledges with a deep despair that the things which should accompany old age—as honour, love, obedience, troops of friends—he must not look to have. The comic Falstaff says nothing on the subject; but by the choice of such associates as Bardolf, Pistol, and the rest of that following, he tacitly acknowledges that he too has lost the advantages which should be attendant on years. No curses loud or deep have accompanied his festive career—its conclusion is not the less sad on that account; neglect, forgotten friendship, services overlooked, shared pleasures unremembered, and fair occasions gone for ever by, haunt him, as sharply as the consciousness of deserving universal hatred galls the soul of Macbeth.' The tone of this is perhaps a trifle too solemn for 'funny, queer Sir John'; but I think, on the whole, it strikes the right note. The humour of the character, like most humour that has any depth in it, is not far removed from pathos. It was not sighing and grief that blew him up like a bladder, but neither was it light-hearted merriment; and, though he scoffed at honour, it was by the loss of honour—in a different sense—that he died. Swinburne says that 'in point of

feeling, and therefore of possible moral elevation, Falstaff is as undeniably the superior of Sancho as Sancho is unquestionably the superior of Panurge' (*A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 108). The implied comparison of the relation between Henry and Falstaff to that between Don Quixote and Sancho is worth bearing in mind. There is something quixotic in Henry's pursuit of honour. But what chiefly concerns us here is the place that is occupied by such a character in the development of the plays.

Now, the view that I seek to maintain is that his place in the play is in the main that of a foil to the various poses of the other characters. His own attitude may, indeed, be itself regarded as a pose; but it is a conscious pose, taken up with the express purpose of throwing ridicule on the more unconscious poses of others. To some extent at least he justifies the saying of Socrates that it is better to do wrong consciously than unconsciously. His vices are largely assumed; and, being consciously assumed, do not degrade him as hopelessly as more unconscious vices would. He is essentially a Rabelaisian character—a type that is perhaps more French than English [1]—combining moral laxity with intellectual penetration and suggestiveness. His cowardice, as Morgann [2] and Mr. Bradley have urged, is not very deeply seated. He can be brave enough when he feels that the occasion demands it. Nor is he even, in any extreme sense, intemperate. Like Socrates himself, he can stand

[1] If the character of Falstaff was drawn from a living model —Florio, as some have supposed—this might account for the presence in it of some elements that are not typically English. Mr. Acheson's book on *Mistress Davenant* may be referred to in this connection (especially pp. 71–3), though the views contained in it hardly seem to be supported by sufficient evidence.

[2] Dr. Johnson's gibe against Morgann is well known. But Morgann was one of the very few men who compelled Johnson to confess error on another matter; and perhaps, if he had had an opportunity, he might have carried conviction on this subject as well.

a good deal. We can hardly imagine him associating with Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek, unless indeed he ever really sank into the kind of degradation that is represented in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. His eating of beef and his drinking of sack did not interfere with his wit. Even at the worst he had a good deal more of that than 'a Christian or an ordinary man.' His lies, again, are certainly too gross and palpable to deceive anyone. His thieving is, no doubt, reprehensible; but he was living among people who, to a considerable extent, followed 'the good old plan' that Wordsworth ascribed to Rob Roy—

> 'That they should take who have the power,
> And they should keep who can.'

As Mr. B. Wendell says,[1] 'whoever was not regular in life had to be hand and glove with thieves and cut-throats.'

He probably thought, like the Spartans, that the disgrace did not lie in stealing but in being caught. The only stealing in which we actually find him engaged is undertaken at the instigation of the Prince and Poins. There may be a little more truth than appears in his declaration, 'Before I knew thee I knew nothing; but now am I become little better than one of the wicked.' At any rate, the encouragement that he got from his young associates, coupled with his desire to forget his own age, may have led him into greater excesses than he would otherwise have run into. As Hazlitt suggests, he was a sort of fallen angel (at least, if to be a 'gentleman' is to be an angel). He is certainly not a Superman, but he is in a sense 'beyond Good and Evil.' His philosophy of life may be compared with that of Burns's Jolly Beggars:

> 'Life is all a variorum;
> We regard not how it goes;
> Let them cant about decorum
> Who have characters to lose.'

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[1] *William Shakespeare*, p. 172.

He is above all that, not indeed with 'the glorious liberty of the children of God,' but with the more inglorious one of those who have ceased to care whose children they are. It is, as Mr. Bradley contends, a spurious freedom, but it serves as a foil to those who are under the bondage of thoughtless conventions.

If we consider his character carefully, we shall be more fully convinced that though it may be doubted whether, even under the best of conditions, he could ever have been expected to 'purge, and leave sack, and live cleanly as a nobleman should do,' yet, in comparison with many who pass for respectable, he is not so vile as to make us ashamed of a weakness in his favour. Though, as Dr. Johnson says, he 'never gives utterance to a generous sentiment' (how intolerable a generous sentiment would be in such a mouth!), yet the tribute of his poor followers to his memory is surely not felt to be ridiculous. He is, of course, an extreme egoist; but that is too common a failing of human nature to be very severely censured; and one likes to see it naked, rather than veiled. But he is not without interest in others, and the craving for affection which implies some degree of reciprocity. His comments on various people, though humorously critical, show a degree of understanding that does not come without interest. In playing the character of Henry IV, he preaches a better morality than was ever shown by that astute monarch himself. He regrets that he cannot win the love of Prince John; and, as it gradually dawns upon him that he is hardly more successful with Henry, his feeling is a good deal deeper than regret. He is convinced that Henry 'owes him his love,' and he makes many attempts to win it. He is not altogether joking when, in the character of the Prince, he seeks to show that 'there is virtue in that Falstaff.' He is anxious to 'play out the play,' in order that he may convince him of the unfairness of his judgment. 'Dost thou hear, Hal? never call a true piece of gold a counterfeit:

thou art essentially mad without seeming so.' Not mad, but somewhat lacking in perception. Am I claiming too much for Falstaff? Is he only a clever rogue? I think his penetrating humour is incompatible with that. It is the perception of latent qualities that redeem his knaveries that leads Mr. Bradley to join in the wish of Bardolf, 'Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in hell!' If he were found to be in hell, there are a good many who would want to know the reason why. At any rate, it seems clear that it would be as great a mistake to think of Falstaff as all black as it would be to think of Henry as all white, or even to suppose that the one who never was 'converted' is in all respects to be treated as less worthy of esteem than the one who was. Hazlitt said that Falstaff was 'the better man of the two'—a view that has been emphatically endorsed by Quiller-Couch.

All this, however, is not wholly satisfactory. I think we have always to remember that the conditions of the stage are not the conditions of ordinary existence. People do not talk in blank verse in ordinary life; neither do they speak and act quite as they do on the stage; nor do we judge them by quite the same standards. Charles Lamb brought this out, with only a slight exaggeration, in his account of the comedians of the Restoration period. 'Men's speech in great drama,' it has been said,[1] 'is as much higher than the words they would use in real life as their thoughts are higher than those words. It says the unuttered part of our speech.' We must look for a similar heightening on the more comic side. The drama throws light on the significance of life, but it does so partly by relieving us from some of its perplexing and hampering conditions. We look at things, if not 'through a kind of glory,' at least through a medium which is not quite that of ordinary sunlight. The drama is a form of art,

[1] Arthur Symons, *Figures of Several Centuries*, p. 266.

not a form of photography.[1] In the novel, of course, the conditions of ordinary life have to be rather more strictly observed. Is this one of the circumstances that prevent the novel from being quite as fine a form of art as the drama? But even the novel is not necessarily quite realistic. Even Balzac could hardly be called a realist; and even Zola is not purely so. Certainly *Wilhelm Meister* is far removed from realism; and so are most of the tales of Victor Hugo. But to pursue this subject would carry us deeper into the consideration of the nature and functions of art than it is possible for us here to go. It is enough to remember that Falstaff, though not a very airy spirit, must not be pictured or judged exactly as if he were a mere mortal. With all his solidity, he remains, after all,

> 'A spirit still, and bright
> With something of celestial light.'

There is one thing at least that may be safely said about Falstaff. In the delineation of this character Shakespeare has certainly succeeded in bringing us into what is commonly said to be the right attitude for a Christian, that of loving the sinner but hating his sin. There are few who do not feel a certain liking for Falstaff; but there is probably no one who is even in the slightest degree tempted to imitate him.

I have followed Mr. Bradley so much in this account that it may be well to note some points in which the view he takes seems to me to be open to doubt. I cannot feel sure that he is right in thinking that Shakespeare was run away with by the character of Falstaff, that he intended him to be more contemptible than he succeeded in making him. My impression is that Shakespeare intended us

[1] The special form of art has also to be considered. Mr. B. Wendell has emphasized the connection of the Shakespeare drama with the old 'Moralities,' and Quiller-Couch has supported him in this. I am not able to judge of the importance of this particular consideration, but probably it calls for some attention

to feel about him and about Henry in the way in which most unprejudiced people do feel. Mr. Bradley's chief reason for thinking otherwise seems to be based on the doctrine that the plays must be supposed to 'end happily'; and that the Second Part of *Henry IV* would not end happily unless the rejection of Falstaff were taken as deserved. I suppose it is true that the plays were intended to have a happy ending; but I think Shakespeare was content, in all the three plays, to make the ending happy only in appearance. The First Part ends happily with Henry's triumph over Percy and the collapse of the internal troubles. But the happiness of it is a good deal marred by the death of Percy. In the comparison between the two young Harries, Hazlitt remarks that 'we like Hotspur the best upon the whole, perhaps because he was unfortunate.' His fate is not much dwelt upon in the First Part, and thus that part may be said to end happily. But the unhappy side of it is brought into prominence at the beginning of the Second Part. The play of *Henry V* may also be said to end happily with the victories in France, the successful marriage and the bright outlook. But, for an audience that had the plays of *Henry VI* in mind, there must surely have been a sad irony in the King's prognostications: 'Shall not thou and I, between Saint Denis and Saint George, compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard?' Even to a more modern audience the prospect is not an encouraging one. It seems to me that the ending of the Second Part of *Henry IV* is very similar. It is happy on the surface; and the irony of it is only driven home in the succeeding play. In all this I believe that Shakespeare had his eyes open. Perhaps his craft in throwing some dust in the eyes of his audience may not be altogether to be commended. Did Shakespeare sacrifice too much to popular effect? At any rate, that is another story. But I should be

disposed to maintain that Shakespeare was in the main right. A play is a play ; it has its superficial aspect which satisfies 'the groundlings,' as well as the deeper one which comes out on subsequent reflection ; and Shakespeare understood thoroughly how, within the limits of his art, to provide both. It may be true, as some have recently contended,[1] that, both as man and as artist, he was a little deficient in the more heroic virtues. At least, he was eminently social and very sensitive to his surroundings. It is a little difficult to imagine him standing aloof and 'uttering odious truth.' But his concessions to popular demands did not lead him to falsify his art in any of its great essentials. Like many of his countrymen, he was often careless on the surface, but vigilant enough in matters that he thought important.

[1] Especially Mr. F. Harris in *The Man Shakespeare.* Some of Mr. Shaw's criticisms are perhaps essentially similar. See also below, pp. 128–9.

CHAPTER IV

THE ENGLISH CHARACTER

NATIONAL character, as we have already noted, is a subject on which it is very difficult to form a definite judgment, though pronouncements on the subject are often made with great readiness. 'What people, for example,' asks Finot,[1] 'has been more studied than the ancient Greeks? . . . Yet in spite of all the sides of its life thus opened to our gaze, we are unable to furnish an exact definition of its soul. According to Renan, the Greeks were the least religious people in the world. According to Fustel de Coulanges, the Greek life incarnates the religious life *par excellence*.' Most nations contain characters of more than one type—often of types that are in pretty marked contrast with one another; and sometimes one type and sometimes another tends to become predominant in the national life. This is perhaps specially true in democratic countries, though Plato no doubt exaggerated this feature. But in all countries we seem to find a good many differences in type. To take an instance that is specially prominent at the present time, it is pretty generally recognized that there is a considerable difference between the normal character of the North Germans (especially the Prussians) and the South Germans (especially perhaps the Swabians); while that which is found in Middle Germany is readily distinguishable from them both. It would be difficult to find much in common between the type represented

[1] *Race Prejudice*, p. 181.

by Bismarck and that represented by Schiller; and there are many intermediate types. Besides this, we have to take account of the Polish, the Jewish, and other elements in the population, by which the national life is often strongly affected.[1] In France also it seems to be the case that there is a pretty sharp contrast between the somewhat emotional type, supposed to be of Celtic extraction, and the rather cold and logical type that is sometimes described as Latin.[2] In America the man who belongs to Boston or Concord is generally a good deal different from the one who hails from Chicago or New York. In England it would be difficult to trace much community of spirit between Hobbes and Shelley or between Huxley and William Blake, or between Swinburne and Henry Sidgwick. In Scotland there is a sharp distinction between the Highlander and the Lowlander, though most Scotsmen are somewhat mixed; and even in Wales there is some difference between the North and the South. The more marked division in Ireland is no doubt somewhat exceptional. It is true that, even where there are obvious differences of this kind within a country, there is usually a common atmosphere, common methods of education, common customs and traditions, and some degree of community of speech, by which the distinctions are softened or annulled.

Most people who have lived for a considerable time in a foreign country must have noticed how easy it is to

[1] According to Nietzsche, 'all true Teutons went abroad.' Quoted by Finot, *loc. cit.*, p. 272.

[2] It is undoubtedly wrong to speak of a Latin *race*, as is sometimes done; but it seems to be true that some parts of the population of France are largely 'Alpine' in race and Celtic in tradition, while others are more mixed in race and more strongly influenced by the Latin civilization. Some useful remarks on this and other similar points will be found in an article by Mr. H. J. Johnson on 'Race, Language and Nationality in Europe' in *The Sociological Review*, vol. xi. No. 1. See also *The World's Peoples*, by A. H. Keane, pp. 350–4.

fall into the habits and ways of thinking and feeling of those with whom one is constantly associated. Immigrants into the United States, for instance, though diverse in race, nationality, language and traditions, seem in time (except when they make a special effort to maintain their national customs) to become hardly distinguishable from the older inhabitants. This is partly an effect of climate and of the general conditions of life, but partly also of the social environment. One who has lived a good deal in different countries has observed 'how impossible it is to live in a place and not breathe its atmosphere. You may not like what you breathe, but you are influenced.' [1] I suppose this is the explanation of Mr. Houston Chamberlain's enthusiasm for all things German. Some Americans also, whose final judgment is adverse to Germany, have noted how difficult it was, while living in Germany, to avoid adopting the German point of view. Often, indeed, those who go to a new country adopt its characteristics in a somewhat intensified form. It has been noted [2] that the Irish, who are regarded as inclining to indolence at home, become exceptionally energetic when they are associated with hardworkers. Again, Treitschke was said to have become 'more Prussian than the Prussians,' and other instances of a similar kind could easily be multiplied.[3] Being free from the conflicting influences of the national spirit, and conscious mainly of certain dominant tendencies with

[1] Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick, *Karen*, chap. xxi.

[2] See *My Irish Year*, by Mr. Padraic Colum, p. 20. Mr. Colum attributes the changes to difference in diet; but it may be doubted whether this is the only circumstance that has to be considered. It would seem, indeed, that the Irish, in general, are by no means inclined to be indolent in their own country, when they have a security of tenure.

[3] With reference to Ireland, for instance, the following statement is interesting: 'Those Protestants who had identified themselves with the agitation for Irish rights were, for the most part, extremists, who became more Nationalist than the Nationalists themselves' (*Chief and Tribune*, by M. M. O'Hara, p. 14).

which they can readily sympathize, such immigrants are often able to voice the soul of their adopted country with less reserve, and to attach themselves more heartily to its institutions, than those who by a longer experience have been made to feel its weakness and imperfections as well as its more attractive characteristics. Yet such new settlers in a country are seldom quite indistinguishable from the older residents. Kant and Nietzsche, for instance, even though actually born in Germany, could hardly be taken as quite typically German ; the former retaining some characteristics that are pretty obviously Scottish, and the latter having probably a distinct tang from his Polish strain. Similarly, J. S. Mill, Ruskin, and even Gladstone, though born and nurtured in England, retained certain traces of their Scottish extraction. Hence, while it would be wrong to attach overmuch importance to racial differences within a country,[1] they do to a certain extent continue to be a source of some perplexity to anyone who tries to make general statements about the character of a people. Besides this difficulty, it is sometimes necessary to take account of what Mr. Yeats has referred to [2] as the 'antithetical self.' A man or a nation sometimes sets up an ideal of self which is different from, sometimes even sharply opposed to, the normal character ; and this ideal tends gradually to modify the type. Carlyle's ideal of 'silence' can hardly be said to have been his own characteristic. The Jews are famed for their prophets of righteousness ; but they are also noted for the fact that they tended to stone them ; and it would probably be wrong to form a judgment on the national character either from the prophets or from

[1] It is probably true that racial characteristics, even when largely obliterated by cultural influences, are apt to show themselves at critical periods or in special emergencies. Mr. Harold Peake tells me that there have been some remarkable instances of this in the course of the recent war.

[2] *Per amica silentia lunæ.*

the stoners of them. It could only be properly made by taking some account of both. The ancient Greeks are commonly thought of as characterized by moderation, love of beauty, and wisdom. They had these ideals—at least the Athenians had them—but it is not easy to determine how far the general life of the people was permeated by them. They were set up in opposition to a life of violent passions, superstition, fickleness and superficiality. The Greeks treated their philosophers, on the whole, in the same way in which the Jews treated their prophets. One cannot always assume that peoples form their gods in their own images. They may rather form them in the image of what they feel to be lacking in themselves.

Heine thought it surprising, or affected to regard it as surprising, that Christ should have been a Jew and Shakespeare an Englishman.[1] Perhaps it is not less remarkable that Socrates should have been born among the fickle Greeks. Or perhaps there is no occasion for surprise in any of these instances. They are probably all typical, though they are typical of what is best in the life of their peoples, rather than its ordinary level. But when a nation tries to give an account of its own character, it may be apt to describe ideals, especially when it is looking back at the past or forward to the future, rather than at what it sees around it. Sometimes we are even more apt to idealize foreign peoples, especially ancient peoples; but sometimes, in judging another people, we are apt simply to go by what we see—occasionally by what we see in their emigrants—and such judgments are often extremely superficial. Thus, apart from the inherent difficulties of the problem, we are in constant danger of surrounding ourselves with illusions and prejudices in attempting to deal with it.

In general, we may say that the whole attempt to describe national characteristics is vitiated by the two

[1] *Shakespeare's Mädchen und Frauen*, at the beginning

circumstances that all human beings are essentially alike and that all human beings are, in some respects, distinct. The homogeneity of type within any country has to be accepted with many qualifications. 'There is a wider gap,' as it has been said,[1] 'between men of different temperaments than there is between men of different nationalities.'

Now, the character of the English is probably one of the most difficult of all to determine. Emerson, who made one of the most elaborate attempts, seems to fall into frequent self-contradiction, and has to confess,[2] 'The truth is, they have great range and variety of character.' In race they are very mixed, having been formed by successive waves of immigration from the continent of Europe. Perhaps there may even be a larger Roman infusion than is commonly supposed. In general, it seems true to say that the earliest immigrants were mainly of the Mediterranean race, that these were followed by Alpines, and that most of the later ones were Nordic. Each new set tended to gain a certain predominance over the previous one; but gradually they became very largely intermixed. Class distinctions, partly based upon race, have also been pretty strongly marked; and the traditions of one class have often been widely different from those of another. Also, if there is any truth in the view that a certain kind of hypocrisy or posing is one of their leading characteristics, this fact must of itself make it peculiarly difficult to discover their true nature. With these cautions, however, we may proceed to notice some of the qualities that have been commonly ascribed to the English, either by native or by foreign observers; and I will endeavour to arrange them in such an order as may serve to bring out their connections with one another. What has been already stated in the introductory chapter and in the analysis of Henry's character should be of considerable assistance in this attempt. It may

[1] Patrick MacGill, *Glenmornan*. [2] *English Traits*, viii.

be well to note that I am confining my attention for the present to the characteristics that are ascribed to the English. On the characteristics of the Scotch, Irish and Welsh I may have something to say later.

1. INDIVIDUALISM.—As we have already noted, the individualism or insularity of the English has been generally recognized as one of their most fundamental characteristics. How far this is connected with geographical and climatic conditions it would be difficult to determine. The climate is obviously not well adapted to the *al fresco* sociability of the continental café or Biergarten; and this may to some extent account for the Englishman's love of home—a word that has for him a quite peculiar connotation. His house is his castle. He seeks to be independent within his own four walls, and regards any autocratic control, whether in Church or State, with a very genuine, though perhaps not usually a very passionate, abhorrence. He can stand a good deal of constraint; but there are limits that he does not readily allow to be passed. This attitude appears to have been in some degree characteristic of the English throughout their history; but its practical development may have been due to special circumstances, such as comparative remoteness from the dominating influence of Rome, the absence for considerable periods of a stable and genuinely national monarchy, the absence of a *noblesse* like that of France,[1]

[1] On this point it may be well to quote the statement of Macaulay (*History of England*, chap. i.): 'There was a strong hereditary aristocracy: but it was of all hereditary aristocracies the least insolent and exclusive. It had none of the invidious character of a caste. It was constantly receiving members from the people, and constantly sending down members to mingle with the people.' Similarly, M. Cestre has recently (*France, England and European Democracy*, p. 24) emphasized the fact that there was 'no Feudalism in England.' English lords are *land*-lords, not feudal chiefs. 'In England,' says Mr. E. Jenks (*The State and the Nation*, p. 226), 'where feudalism as a military and political system was feeble, its influence as a scheme of landownership was greatest.' See also *William Pitt and National Revival*, by Mr. Holland Rose, pp. 13–16.

the resistance to the alien dominion of the Normans, etc. Whatever the explanations of it may be, it appears to have become deeply rooted in the national character and to be the basis of many of its other features. It is well to note, however, at the outset, that the type of individualism that is characteristically English does not necessarily imply either egoism or self-interest. It is not incompatible with voluntary co-operation, loyalty to persons and institutions, and the general spirit of community. It shows itself primarily in the desire to live and let live, and in antagonism to any purely external constraint. Dr. Johnson might be referred to as a typical example of a man of marked individuality who was far from being egoistic or unsocial.

2. Liberty.—The most obvious form that is taken by this individualism is found in the insistence on political liberty. 'Britons never shall be slaves' may almost be said to be the truest expression of the national religion. That it is somewhat connected with the insularity of the country is perhaps evidenced by the readiness with which this conception of liberty is associated with that of 'ruling the waves.' But it is easy to pass from the thought of our bulwarks against alien aggression to that of our *Magna Charta* and other defences against domination at home. Hence it has often been noted that while, in the use of the great Revolutionary formula, the French are at least as much devoted to equality and fraternity as they are to liberty, this is by no means the case with the English. It is nearly always for liberty that they are prepared to sacrifice their lives; and when we have found what men are ready to give their lives for, we have probably discovered what is most central in their natures. 'Liberty in England,' it has been said,[1] 'is the prime national instinct, the instinct that governs life.'

In its extreme form, this love of liberty shows itself

[1] L. March Phillips, *Europe Unbound*, p. 212

in what Matthew Arnold described [1] as 'the Englishman's right to do what he likes, to march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes,' But this extreme Anarchism can hardly be taken as characteristic of the English attitude in general, which, though it objects to external constraint, is generally bound by traditions and conventions and by some degree of good-humour.

3. PRIDE.—'Proud Albion' is a common phrase on the Continent; and Goldsmith placed this quality first in his characterization of the English. Mr. Price Collier says [2] that they have 'a haughty egotism that would make Alexander, Cæsar or Napoleon turn pale.' Another recent writer [3] refers to pride as 'the deadly sin of England.' It connects itself naturally with the sense of independence, and hence Goldsmith associates it with defiance. It seems necessary to connect it specially with the sense of independence; for it does not appear that the typical Englishman is generally proud of anything in particular—not of his talents and only to a limited extent of his possessions or race, or of the Constitution of his country. There is, however, as George Gissing noted, a touch of national consciousness in his attitude, which may be to some extent compared with that with which a Roman would declare *Civis Romanus sum*, or that he was 'a citizen of no mean city.' According to Tolstoy,[4] 'the Englishman is self-confident because he is well aware that he is a member of the best-ordered State in the world, and that whatever he does as an Englishman will be well done.' This attitude is connected with Goethe's saying that, however foolish and limited an Englishman may be, he has a certain completeness. Like the Miller of the Dee, he envies nobody. Sir Willoughby Patterne was 'quaintly incap-

[1] *Culture and Anarchy.*
[2] *England and the English*, p. 63.
[3] Benchara Branford, *Janus and Vesta*, p. 199.
[4] Quoted by Mr. B. Pares in *Russia and Reform*, p. 257.

able of a jealousy of individuals.' He feels that, imperfect as he may be, he is on the whole the pick of creation, and has enough resources in himself to face the world. His mind to him a kingdom is. He is in *seipso totus* —hardly, however, *teres atque rotundus*; for he is usually somewhat angular. His pride is seldom of the nature of conceit or vanity. Not being dependent on anything external to himself, it is not easily wounded. As Meredith said, he takes 'thwackings,' both physical and spiritual, somewhat lightly. Hence duelling has been more readily suppressed in this country than in most others. Ruskin wrote[1] 'It is extremely interesting to me to contrast the Englishman's silently conscious pride in what he *is*, with the vexed restlessness and wretchedness of the Frenchman, in his thirst for "*gloire*," to be gained by agonized effort to become something he is *not*.' Emerson gives similar testimony,[2] though perhaps with a touch of exaggeration: 'In all companies, each of them has too good an opinion of himself to imitate anybody. He hides no defect of his form, features, dress, connection, or birthplace, for he thinks every circumstance belonging to him comes recommended to you. If one of them have a bald, or a red, or a green head, or bow legs, or a scar, or mark, or a paunch, or a squeaking or a raven voice, he has persuaded himself that there is something modish and becoming in it, and that it sits well on him.' Mr. B. De Selincourt notes[3] of Blake that 'having a snub nose, he believed it an essential part of Christianity to

[1] *Præterita*, vol. i. chap. xi

[2] *English Traits*, ix. Hawthorne (*The House of Seven Gables*) was inclined to regard this as a general human characteristic. 'It is very queer,' he says, 'but none the less true, that people are generally quite as vain, or even more so, of their deficiencies, than of their available gifts.' But this is perhaps truer of a somewhat thick-skinned and self-satisfied people like the English than it is of those who are more thin-skinned and sensitive. Also, I doubt whether this form of self-satisfaction is rightly described as vanity.

[3] *William Blake*, p. 9.

have one.' Certainly, the Englishman in general tends to be very well satisfied both with himself and with his country. Madame Novikov notes[1] that 'there is one very curious trait about Englishmen. Whenever they wish to exhaust the language of compliment and outdo all the superlatives of praise which they have bestowed upon a foreigner, they say, "He might be taken for an Englishman."' Similarly, it has been said[2]: 'Our Pharisees have but to say a thing is English, and it is accepted by them as being synonymous with being the right thing.' In this respect, as in several others, the English seem to bear a considerable resemblance to the ancient Romans. Aristotle's description of the high-minded man applies, in several particulars, both to the Roman and to the English character; though the Englishman is less self-conscious than Aristotle's type, and less inclined to stand upon his dignity—except perhaps in the case of some College dons. He is generally saved from too much arrogance by a sense of humour. The character, however, is seen in its fullest blossom, and without the saving salt, in Meredith's subtle sketch in *The Egoist*. It is right to add, however, that—as perhaps in the case of the younger Pitt—shyness is often mistaken for pride.

4. MAGNANIMITY.—The pride of an Englishman is generally associated with some degree of chivalry, with a certain attitude of *noblesse oblige*. He is inclined to take the side of the under-dog. He likes to think of himself as the protector of oppressed peoples and small nationalities. Partly for this reason, he likes to have ample resources. Though there is much poverty in England—the slums are perhaps without a parallel—yet those who chiefly set the tone to English life have generally abundance of goods; and they are not often miserly. What was said of Cardinal Wolsey might apply to many: 'though he was not satisfied in getting,

[1] *Skobeleff and the Slavonic Cause*, p. 112.

[2] *Conventional Cant*, by Mr. Sidney Whitman, p. 3.

which was a sin, yet in bestowing, madam, he was most princely.'

The English, as Matthew Arnold urged, fear and despise poverty, next to slavery. Gissing also remarks[1] that 'at the root of our being is a hatred of parsimony. . . . An Englishman desires, above all, to live largely; on that account he not only dreads, but hates and despises, poverty. His virtues are those of the free-handed and warm-hearted opulent man. . . . His vices, for the most part, originate in loss of self-respect due to loss of secure position.' Mr. Padraic Colum quotes[2] an Irish saying, that 'among all nations on the face of the earth, the English are the easiest to deal with in the matter of horses.' A certain largeness of mind is seen in many of their works, and a certain carelessness about petty details. Mr. Shaw[3] says that 'the intellectual laziness and slovenliness of the English is almost beyond belief.' There may be some exaggeration in this; but many recent disclosures have tended to confirm its substantial truth. This lordliness is very conspicuously seen in the works of Shakespeare himself. His carelessness has often been exaggerated; but I think it is true enough to say that he often spoils a fine passage by some small fault. In different ways we may see traces of a similar magnanimity in Milton, Chatham, Newton and Darwin. There is certainly an absence of everything that is mean and petty in these representative men; and, in a less degree, it is somewhat typical of most Englishmen. This also is a point that was emphasized by Gissing. It is closely connected with the peculiar type of pride that is ascribed to the English.

[1] *Henry Ryecroft*, pp. 134–5. On this see also Escott's *England*, especially p. 246.

[2] *My Irish Year*, p. 170. Doubt has been thrown by S. L. Hughes (*The English Character*, p. 292) on this particular aspect of English magnanimity. He suggests that there is apt to be a certain element of guile in the English attitude with regard to horses.

[3] Preface to *John Bull's Other Island*.

It makes them less prone to nourish resentment or to seek revenge for injuries than many other peoples are. Even Pistol, when he swears that he takes the groat in earnest of revenge, does not mean it. The Englishman is seldom 'too proud to fight,' but he is generally too proud to bear malice. 'Whether or no the British warrior's good nature has much range of fancy,' said Henry James in almost the last thing he wrote,[1] 'his imagination, whatever there may be of it, is at least so good-natured as to show absolutely everything it touches, everything without exception, even the worst machinations of the enemy, in that colour.' Sidney Whitman also—a severe critic of his country—testifies[2] that 'there is more innate good-nature in the unspoilt Anglo-Saxon than in almost any race.' Taine also testifies[3] that 'they are decidedly good-natured folks.'

5. PUGNACITY.—At the same time, the independence, angularity, and frequent eccentricity of the English leads them into frequent quarrels. Their pride makes it difficult for them to stand opposition. 'I am afraid,' Emerson says,[4] 'that English nature is so rank and aggressive as to be a little incompatible with every other. The world is not wide enough for two.' In their public life, they tend on the whole to act on the Virgilian principle 'regere imperio populos, pacisque imponere morem, parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.'

If in recent times this spirit has not been as conspicuously seen as in former generations, it is to be feared that the change is due mainly to the circumstance that we now possess more of the world's territory than we are able to manage.

This spirit shows itself even in private life. An Englishman is often a bundle of prejudices, which he flaunts in people's faces; and many, besides Dr. Johnson, are inclined to talk for victory—a practice, I believe, which

[1] *Within the Rim*, p. 108.
[2] *Conventional Cant*, p. 64.
[3] *Notes on England*, p. 44.
[4] *English Traits*, ix.

is much more rarely to be found among the French and other peoples. 'Go about in England as a stranger,' says Gissing,[1] 'travel by rail, live at hotels, see nothing but the broadly public aspect of things, and the impression left upon you will be one of hard egoism, of gruffness and sullenness. . . . And yet, as a matter of fact, no nation possesses in so high a degree the social and civic virtues.' The contentiousness that thus characterizes the English people does not necessarily conflict with what has been already stated with regard to their fundamental good-nature. In fighting vigorously for the side with which they have identified themselves, they do not necessarily lose their kindliness. These two aspects of the English are readily seen in a quite natural combination in such a case as that of Dr. Johnson. It must be confessed, however, that pugnacity is rather apt to degenerate into cruelty. To this I will refer more definitely at a later point.

6. Practicality.—The independence of the British character shows itself also in the form of self-reliance in action. The 'self-made man,' so much admired by Smiles, is on the whole a characteristic product of the country. The pride of the Englishman is somewhat hurt by the idea that he has been directly helped by anyone else. The kind of education that is provided, though in other respects faulty, has some tendency (though Monsieur Demolins has probably exaggerated this) to encourage this attitude. The system of primogeniture has also made it necessary for the younger sons of wealthy people to do something to earn their own livelihood. Thus there is a general feeling that on the whole everyone has to make his own way. This fact helps, with other things, to make the Englishman naturally active, even when there is no special call for exertion. His play is almost as strenuous as his work. He has not much inclination for *dolce far niente*. No doubt the

[1] *Henry Ryecroft*, pp. 124–5.

climate, as already noted, has something to do with this. It has the result also, on the more negative side, that there is not much tendency to meditation. The Englishman is not as strong in continuous and systematic thought as he is in bodily action. 'Most Englishmen,' according to Mr. H. G. Wells,[1] 'even those who belong to what we call the educated classes, still do not think systematically at all; you cannot understand England until you master that fact; their ideas are in slovenly detached little heaps, they think in ready-made phrases, they are honestly capable therefore of the most grotesque inconsistencies.' Mr. Price Collier, in like manner, states[2] that 'they have drilled themselves through centuries till this mental haziness, which permits them to hold two contradictory propositions at one and the same time, has become a part of their being.' In particular, they are usually somewhat deficient in forethought. With this also the climate may have some connection. It has been noted[3] that an Englishman is liable to be caught in the rain without an umbrella, owing to the difficulty in foreseeing the weather. Hence he trusts rather to his power of dealing with a situation as it arises, and has confidence in his ability, according to the common phrase, to 'muddle through.' I do not know whether the confused system of spelling in the English language is to be regarded as a cause or a consequence of the general 'muddle.'

7. Doggedness.—In consequence of the characteristics that have just been noted, the best qualities of the English are seen in times of stress and difficulty. In their hours of idleness they are apt to seem careless and futile, lacking in ideas, eccentric, awkward and

[1] *Joan and Peter*, chap. xii.

[2] *England and the English*, pp. 70–1. Reference may also be made to Boutmy's book on *The English People*, especially pp. 17–20 and 46–7.

[3] James Ward, *Psychological Principles*, p. 209.

unreliable; but they can generally be trusted to rise to an emergency. When they realize that something must be done, they set themselves, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, 'doggedly to it.' The description in Tennyson's *Ulysses* is probably much more applicable to the English character than to the Greek:

> 'My mariners,
> Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me,
> That ever with a frolic welcome took
> The thunder and the sunshine,'

and again—

> 'strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.'

Similarly, we have Browning's

> 'welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go';

and his final aspiration to 'fight on, fare ever there as here.' I fancy most Englishmen feel a certain sympathy also with Milton's Satan, when he speaks of 'the courage never to submit or yield.' The phrase from *Tom Brown's Schooldays* is also worth bearing in mind—'the consciousness of silent endurance, so dear to every Englishman—of standing out against something, and not giving in.' I wonder whether Scott's characterization of women as 'in our hours of ease, uncertain, coy, and hard to please,' and as becoming 'ministering angels' 'when pain or anguish wring the brow,' is more particularly applicable to the women of Britain. At any rate, with some variation in the phrasing, something of the same sort might often be applied to Englishmen—weathercocks in a breeze, hearts of oak in a storm. Henry James, referring more particularly to their conduct in the European War, speaks [1]

[1] *Within the Rim*, p. 110.

of their 'jolly fatalism . . . a state of moral hospitality to the practices of fortune, however outrageous.'

8. Empiricism.—The independence of the Englishman leads him to be suspicious of dogma and system and disregardful of authority. Some of the leading English thinkers, such as Hobbes and Spencer, hardly deigned to read what was written by other people; and, though these are somewhat exceptional, an Englishman in general is not *addictus jurare in verba magistri*. He prefers to trust to his own observations and experience. Hence a sort of radical empiricism has been characteristic of almost all English thought, from the two Bacons, through Hobbes, Locke, Butler, Bentham, to Spencer and Sidgwick. English writers are generally stronger in criticism than in construction. Even Green and Mr. Bradley are hardly exceptions to this. Nor, indeed, is Darwin. I am inclined to regard Locke and Darwin [1] as the most characteristically English among our scientific and philosophical writers; but there is hardly anyone who does not more or less resemble them. They are nearly all as hesitating in thought as they are resolute in action. They walk by sight and not by faith, still less in general by systematic

[1] It may be worth noting here that, according to recent anthropologists, Darwin belonged racially to that special type that is now known as that of the 'Beaker Makers.' Although this is a comparatively rare variety, it would seem to have had a considerable influence in the determination of the English type. It is said that the common representations of John Bull bear distinct traces of it. It is said also that many Quaker families approximate to it. The qualities that commonly go with this type would seem to be certain powers of accurate observation, some constructive skill, and a distinctly unaggressive and rather benevolent form of independence. See the articles in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* by Mr. Keith (1915, p. 16) and by Messrs. Fleure and James (1916, pp. 86–8, etc.). Curiously enough, Goldsmith and King Robert Bruce are said to be other instances of this type; so that it can hardly be regarded as a negligible element in our national life. It may even be the element that has given it its most distinctive racial character. I am indebted to Mr. Peake for calling my attention to it.

reasoning. They leave lucidity to the French and systematic construction to the Germans. Of course, there are many exceptions to this, as to all such general statements.

9. AMATEURISHNESS.—Lord Rosebery said that the British are a nation of amateurs; and this connects at once with what has just been stated. The authority, the expert, is distrusted.[1] 'Most Englishmen,' it has been said,[2] 'prefer the worst of amateurs to the best of experts, and would rather be wrong with the one than right with the other.' There is some exaggeration in this; but at least it is, on the whole, truer of this country than of most others that the greater part of our scientific and philosophic thinkers have drifted into their studies without much definite training. Comparatively few have had official positions as teachers of their subjects. They have not been, in the language of Lord Palmerston, 'damned Professors.' And in English life in general people do not readily think of themselves as having definite vocations in life. They speak characteristically rather of their 'avocations'—as if their work was something that called them away from their true life. Gladstone once remarked[3] of Archbishop Tait, 'I doubt, if he ever

[1] It is well to remember that this seems to have been characteristic of a great people in the ancient world. 'Athens,' says Mr. A. E. Zimmern (*The Greek Commonwealth*, pp. 158–9), 'had no permanent civil service, at least in the higher branches, and, except for military officers and for the council, no man might hold the same position twice. She had professional policemen and clerks and town-criers; but all her important public work was done by a rapid succession of amateurs.' 'It was not,' he says again, 'that they objected to working in a State system: it was that they objected to working in any system whatsoever. It was their settled inclination and one of their proudest boasts to remain amateurs, to be supreme, as they said of perhaps their greatest statesman, in "improvising right remedies for sudden emergencies."' It seems to have been partly the same feeling that made them suspicious of the professional teaching of the Sophists.

[2] *Municipal Life and Government in Germany*, by W. H. Dawson, Preface, p. ix.

[3] G. W E. Russell's *Portraits of the Seventies*, p. 347

read a theological work in his life.' Gladstone himself read most things, but probably the theory of the State was not the subject in which he chiefly specialized. Probably most Englishmen work hard; but, as Meredith indicated in *Harry Richmond*, they seldom are willing to regard their special work as the main interest in life. They hope to be able to retire, or at least to have leisure for something else than their particular business. Many—here again we may refer to Meredith's *Evan Harrington*—are anxious to be regarded as 'gentlemen'; and, though this term may be used in a sense that does not exclude hard work, it is generally taken to exclude a good many kinds of work, and even to imply that one is not too exclusively absorbed in any kind. Henry James, a somewhat detached observer, may be quoted on this.[1] 'Overt, who had spent a considerable part of his life in foreign lands, made now, but not for the first time, the reflection that whereas in these countries he had always recognized the artist and the man of letters for his personal "type," the mould of his face, the character of his head, the expression of his figure, and even the indications of his dress, so in England their identification was as little as possible a matter of course, thanks to the greater conformity, the habit of sinking the profession instead of advertising it, the general diffusion of the air of the gentleman—the gentleman committed to no particular set of ideas.' It is, perhaps, partly for this reason that the art of poetry, which does not require any professional training, is the only one in which the English have shown any continuous excellence. There are grounds for believing that Shakespeare was not free from the kind of ambition that is so common among his countrymen. He expresses keen regret that his nature tends to be 'subdued to what it works in, like the dyer's hand'; and he evidently retired at a comparatively early age from his dramatic

[1] *The Lesson of the Master.* See also *The Decline of Aristocracy*, by Mr. A. Ponsonby, pp. 300–1.

occupation. But this may have been due to failing health. Certainly, he must have worked very steadily, while he remained in London. Even Dr. Johnson, who could work very strenuously when it was necessary, seems to have thought it foolish—or affected to do so—to undertake literary work except for the purpose of earning money. Perhaps this was a pose, but I think it is a somewhat characteristically English one. 'No one understands the English,' says Dr. Figgis,[1] 'who has no sympathy with the strange εἰρωνεία which takes the pose of carelessness just when we are most deeply concerned.' This is connected with the general attitude of reserve, which will be noticed later.

10. Realism.—It follows from what precedes that the Englishman, as Emerson says,[2] stands very firmly upon the earth. He acts in the living present, and does not much care to look before and after, except in so far as such looking may help to guide him in the practical activity that lies nearest him. He loves facts, rather than theories. He believes, with Butler, that 'things are what they are,' and that it is vain to attempt to explain them away. Though Meredith was not a typical Englishman, his love of 'earth' may be taken as representative; and we may compare it with Browning's description of his attitude—

> 'heaven above, sea under,
> Yet always earth in sight.'

English people are generally anxious that even their fiction should be 'founded on facts.' It was probably for this reason that Shakespeare did not invent entirely fresh plots, though he felt himself at liberty to treat old ones with the greatest freedom. 'I do not know what "poetical" is,' says Audrey. 'Is it honest in deed

[1] *Some Defects in English Religion*, pp. 29–30.

[2] *English Traits*, vi. 'I find the Englishman to be him of all men who stands firmest in his shoes.'

and word? Is it a true thing?' 'Why should I carry lies abroad?' says Autolycus. And Hamlet, in presenting his play, assures his audience that 'the story is extant, and writ in choice Italian.' I suppose Shakespeare was familiar with the demand for such assurances.

Yet English realism is very different from that which is characteristic of the French; and this is apt to make us think sometimes that realism is not natural to the English at all. On this I may quote a passage from a writer to whom French life and thought are very familiar.[1] 'The French are essentially of a logical temperament, and it is this quality that makes them face the worst of everything. In personal matters they may be tempted to veil truth for the sake of politeness, but in questions of principle their intellectual sincerity is uncompromising. They are fearlessly honest thinkers, and so averse to comfortable self-delusion that they take a sort of bitter pleasure in believing the worst. We English—a sentimental, poetical race—are content to dwell in a more or less cloudy intellectual sphere. And when we depreciate ourselves, it is not because of our fondness for reality, nor because of our logical temperament, but through inverted pride. We are always inclined to run away from facts. In our literature we like things to be represented not as they are, but as they should be. We have our realists, but even they are not as frankly and vividly realistic as their literary brethren across the Channel. We have never had a Zola. That master of realism of set purpose constituted himself the man with the muckrake. And by riveting his readers' attention on the foul spots, which defile not only French, but every form of our so-called "modern civilization," he created an impression that his country was rotten to the core.'

I suppose our somewhat murky climate is rather inimical to a lucid outlook. But is it more logical to concentrate attention on the foul spots than on the bright

[1] Miss Winifred Stephen in *The France I Know*, chap. i.

ones? Certainly realism, of the type represented by Zola, or perhaps even by Balzac, does not come naturally to the Englishman. His realism is decidedly optimistic, and this no doubt often leads him into serious illusions. He tends to believe that the ills of life can easily be put right. He thinks, according to the epigram of Lord Beaconsfield, of 'Peace and Plenty, amid a starving people, and with the world in arms.' He has a great respect for 'facts,' and likes to be well informed about them; but he is apt to look at them through rose-coloured spectacles. He 'makes believe a good deal,' like Dickens's 'Marchioness'; but he is generally inclined, like the same writer's Mark Tapley, to accept the worst that comes and call it 'jolly.' It is true that he is also rather prone to grumble (especially when things are going well); but his grumbling is based on the general conviction that the world is normally 'all right,' or could easily be made so. His attitude to the world is that of Tennyson's Will Waterproof:

> 'I look at all things as they are,
> But through a kind of glory.'

Browning has also well expressed it, though perhaps in a way that is less characteristically English:

> 'I find earth not grey but rosy,
> Heaven not grim but fair of hue;
> Do I stoop? I pluck a posy;
> Do I stand and stare? All's blue.'

Similarly, Wordsworth's outlook, though patiently realistic and sober-tinted, is certainly not that of the man with the muckrake. Yet the darker side is seldom ignored by our most characteristic writers—such as Chaucer, Pope, Johnson, Fielding, Thackeray and Hardy. Even Shelley learned in suffering what he taught in song. Even Shakespeare's aerial spirits have always a tang

of earthiness in their composition. And our more scientific writers are surely not much addicted to idealizing, though they generally regard their facts with some complacency. It is complacency, I believe, that is in the minds of a good many of our critics when they speak of British hypocrisy. They think that we always tend to represent things as being better than they are, and as we know that they are.

John Bull is commonly represented as a rather bewildered person, waking up at intervals to find things in confusion, and bestirring himself hastily to set them straight. His general attitude is somewhat like that of Hamlet:

> 'The time is out of joint:—O cursed spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right!'

But, on the whole, he never doubts that it can be set right, if only he will exert himself sufficiently. On the other hand, it seldom occurs to him that, if he had thought things out more carefully beforehand, they would not have been so badly out of joint.

11. Comfort.—This type of optimistic realism may be connected with the love of comfort, for the explanation of which the climate might also be once more appealed to. The Englishman makes himself at home in the world, and seeks to find his happiness in it. Even his conception of moral duty tends to be based upon the pursuit of happiness and its general diffusion. Nietzsche wickedly compared this attitude to the complacency of a cow. Even those who are somewhat inclined to asceticism do not wear hair shirts. The types described by R. H. Benson are exceptional. The climate creates an urgent need for food and shelter; and the activity of the people has provided large resources. Quakers, who renounce most of the gaieties of life, are rather noted for their solid comforts. This characteristic of English character is perhaps too obvious to need special emphasis. Gissing's comments, however, are perhaps worth quoting. 'The

Englishman's need of "comfort,"' he says,[1] 'is one of his best characteristics; the possibility that he may change in this respect, and become indifferent to his old ideal of physical and mental ease, is the gravest danger manifest in our day. For "comfort," mind you, does not concern the body alone; the beauty and orderliness of an Englishman's home derive their value, nay, their very existence, from the spirit which directs his whole life.' I think this may be taken as the good side of what is probably, on the whole, a source of weakness. 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests'; and the son of the Englishman also—at least of the moderately prosperous Englishman [2]—has usually a place where he can possess his soul in peace. 'They are contented, confident,' says Mr. Price Collier.[3] 'Their disregard of philosophy proves their happiness. What they are, and what they have, satisfies them. It is the unhappy man, who indulges in thought, and dreams himself and others into non-existent situations, who comes back to be disappointed by the real world.'

12. Agnosticism.—Even the religion of the English is apt to be somewhat dominated by the idea of comfort. An Englishman's religion tends to become a part of his domestic system. According to Mr. Collier,[4] 'it is an affair of the State. One is loyal to it, as one is loyal to the King.' 'The religion of England,' Emerson says,[5] 'is part of good breeding. When you see on the Continent the well-dressed Englishman come into his Ambassador's

[1] *Henry Ryecroft*, p. 255. It is well, however, to remember the great contrast that modern English life presents in this respect to that of the Greeks in their best days. The contrast is well brought out by Mr. Zimmern in *The Greek Commonwealth*, p. 209. What is important, I should suppose, is to bear in mind the distinction, emphasized by Mr. Bosanquet, between luxury and refinement.

[2] Not of all. See, for the other side, Charles Lamb's short essay on the fallacy of the saying 'Home is Home, though it is never so homely.'

[3] *England and the English*, p. 176.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 262.

[5] *English Traits*, xiii.

chapel, and put his face for silent prayer into his smooth-brushed hat, one cannot help feeling how much national pride prays with him, and the religion of a gentleman. So far is he from attaching any meaning to the words, that he believes himself to have done almost the generous thing, and that it is very condescending in him to pray to God.' This has been well brought out by Mr. Lowes Dickinson. He describes [1] a scene in which some young Englishmen on their way out to India sing a hymn. A Frenchman asks, 'Why do you do it?' and Mr. Dickinson proceeds:—'I began to explain. "For the same reason that we play deck-quoits and shuffle-board; for the same reason that we dress for dinner. It's the system." "The system?" "Yes. What I call Anglicanism. It's a form of idealism. It consists in doing the proper thing." "But why should the proper thing be done?" "That question ought not to be asked. Anglicanism is an idealistic creed. It is anti-utilitarian and anti-rational. It does not ask questions; it has faith. The proper thing is the proper thing, and because it is the proper thing it is done." "At least," he said, "you do not pretend that this is religion?" "No. It has nothing to do with religion. But neither is it, as you too simply suppose, hypocrisy. Hypocrisy implies that you know what religion is, and counterfeit it. But these people do not know, and they are not counterfeiting. When they go to church they are not thinking of religion. They are thinking of the social system.". . . "It is the virtue of the Englishman that he never doubts. That is what the system does for him."'

It would no doubt be somewhat cynical to suggest, as one is sometimes tempted to do, that the religion of most Englishmen is based largely on the desire that they and their friends should be at least as well provided for in the next world as they have been in this. But it is hardly too much to say that, at its best, a large element

[1] *Appearances*, pp. 3–5.

in that religion consists in a love of freedom and devotion to practical beneficence, rather than in any more metaphysical beliefs. Englishmen are pretty ready to accept the view that Work is Worship. From this point of view, most of the dogmas of religion are comparatively unmeaning; and the profession of them tends to become a matter of rote. It would probably be found that most Englishmen are essentially agnostics, if not in the sense of denying the possibility of gaining any definite knowledge of the nature and source of ultimate reality, at least in that of doubting the validity and value of any particular theories on the subject. Many of them are beginning to rely on psychical research, rather than on traditional doctrines. Sidgwick was probably right in thinking that this kind of empirical evidence is calculated to make a special appeal to the English mind. Of course, there are not many Englishmen who care to describe themselves as agnostics, just as there are not many who like to be called rationalists or free-thinkers. They prefer, in general, not to be required to think at all. Their attitude is apt to conform somewhat to the advice of Mrs. Quickly to Falstaff: 'I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with any such thoughts yet.' Matthew Arnold, in characterizing the influence of Wordsworth, sums it up in the lines—

> 'The cloud of mortal destiny,
> Others will front it fearlessly—
> But who, like him, will put it by?'

It may be doubted whether this expresses very well the actual influence of Wordsworth; but at least it does express a characteristically English attitude. Taine remarks[1] that 'intellectual poltroonery is the only species of cowardice which is common in this country, but it prevails to a lamentable extent.' Morley has noted of

[1] *Notes on England*, p. 238. See also p. 349.

Gladstone (*Life*, I, pp. 201–2 and 209) that, with all his mental activity, he had a distinct lack of 'intellectual curiosity' and a tendency to defer to authority. It is true that there has been a good deal of religious strife in England; and that the English, like the other branch of the Anglo-Saxon family across the Atlantic, are, in a sense, characterized by a strong vein of piety. Bryce reports that American women were described by a German as 'furchtbar frei und furchtbar fromm' (terribly free and terribly pious); and perhaps both terms might have been applied, with only a little less force, to some circles in England. The Puritan tradition, in particular, has kept both these elements alive; but, though there have been mystics among the Puritans, I suppose it is true to say that the struggle for political liberty has been a more dominant influence even with them than the attempt to understand theological dogmas. It is the practical side of religion, rather than the theoretical that appeals to most Englishmen. This is at least very much more true of them than it would be of the Scotch or Germans.

13. Imagination.—An Englishman is generally more ready to take his religious ideas, and even his views of life as a whole, from poetry than from more systematic forms of thought. He relies on logic to criticise and to destroy; but for construction prefers to trust imagination. It is commonly said that in imagination the English are weak; but I believe it is only in a certain sense of the word that it is true. It is undoubtedly the case that many Englishmen impress one as being singularly matter-of-fact and prosaic. It may be that this is generally true of those that are most purely Saxon or Nordic; and that those who are differently constituted have some admixture of the Alpine or Mediterranean strain. Perhaps Caliban and Ariel live side by side in the same island. But it would not be easy to prove that there is any such sharp distinction of types. However that may be, it

seems clear at least that there *is* another type in England than that which is characterized by lack of imagination. The chief glory of England lies in its imaginative literature. Shakespeare, as Carlyle urged, is a greater possession than Indian Empire; and Shakespeare is by no means as unique in the national literature as Carlyle maintained. Except Greece, I should doubt whether any country is richer in poetry. In the interpretative and constructive imagination, I am disposed to think that the English in general are singularly strong; perhaps not in the reproductive faculty; and they are probably weak in the power of forecasting events.[1] But for the latter at least what is needed is careful thinking rather than strength of imagination—so far, at any rate, as these two things can really be separated. All the higher forms of imagination need the guidance of thought. Blake (who, no doubt, was not quite typically English) had a wonderful—though rather undisciplined—imagination; but it would probably not have helped him much in any practical affairs that called for careful planning. Even Shakespeare did not take the trouble to think out the exact conditions under which his characters were living; but it can hardly be supposed that this was due to weakness in imagination. It is the Englishman's imagination that puts a halo over the facts that appear in their squalid nakedness to the more purely logical mind of the Frenchman. But it does not follow, as I have already urged, that the French view is the more realistic. Sometimes at least the halo may be an essential part of the truth. 'The light that never was on sea or land' may only be waiting for hours

[1] This subject is instructively dealt with by Boutmy, *The English People*, especially pp. 13–16. His general view is that the defect of the English, in this particular respect, is due primarily to a certain bluntness of sensibility. This again he ascribes mainly to climatic conditions. Mr. W. Trotter (*Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*) refers to 'our want of interest in knowledge and foresight, our willingness to take any risk rather than endure the horrid pains of thought.'

of insight to discover it. *Dichtung* is not necessarily opposed to *Wahrheit*.

14. Reserve.—The individuality of the Englishman, both in his practical life and in the imaginative colouring that he gives to his environment, tends to make him somewhat reserved in his intercourse with others. Boutmy [1] speaks of 'the solitary being, which every Englishman is in his heart.' He adds that 'the English unite for action, and keep company with one another the better to combine their forces and the more easily to attain a certain end; they do not assemble for the purpose of talking or to pass the time agreeably in conversation.' Certainly the Englishman, as a rule, does not wear his heart on his sleeve. He hardly reveals himself except to his most intimate friends, or at least to those who belong to his own special group. To others he is apt to wear a mask or to affect a pose. General Gordon has been quoted [2] as declaring that 'we are all in masks, saying what we do not believe, eating and drinking what we do not want.' This is probably one of the sources of Euphuism and other affectations. The following passages from T. H. Escott's *England* [3] may serve to illustrate what is meant. 'Hotel life is not yet fully naturalized among us. . . . Most of us feel that opening up conversational acquaintance with strangers is a terrible risk. . . . The stranger may be diametrically our opposite: Conservative, while we are Liberal; garrulous, while we hate to listen; above all, he may be indiscreet, and may tempt us into the expression of opinions which we do not care to wear upon our sleeves. Our privacy is thus intruded upon. . . . Anything like a flow of mutual confidence is exceptional, and the prevailing attitude is one of unsociability, intensified by profound disgust.' A. J. Butler, again, said that [4] 'We are in danger of letting

[1] *The English People*, pp. 111 and 115.
[2] *Conventional Cant*, by S. Whitman, p. 57.
[3] Pp. 269–270. [4] *Memoir* by Sir A. J. Quiller-Couch, p. 53.

British reserve and dread of ridicule overpower the right claimed by every Briton, as well as American, of saying what he darn pleases, and the results may be more serious than at first seems possible.' This kind of reserve may be also seen in English songs, as Mr. Chesterton has noted.[1] 'The Germans, like the Welsh, can sing perfectly serious songs perfectly seriously in chorus; can with clear eyes and clear voices join together in words of innocent and beautiful personal passion, for a false maiden or a dead child. The nearest one can get to defining the poetic temper of Englishmen is to say that they couldn't do this even for beer. They can sing in chorus, and louder than other Christians: but they must have in their songs something, I know not what, at once shamefaced and rowdy.' Taine notes[2] that 'the English speak exceedingly low, and many others have been struck by the same characteristic. They are proud, but not vain.' The modest Allen who 'did good by stealth and blushed to find it fame,' is not untypical, though of course instances of a contrary kind might easily be produced. Carlyle strongly emphasized the inarticulateness of the English; and the essential nature of this quality has recently been explained and illustrated in a very charming manner by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch.[3] A recent remark about Kitchener by Sir Henry Rawlinson is characteristic: 'The public knew Kitchener as a hard, stern, iron man, but he was not. His acts of sympathy were proverbial, but he was always reluctant to allow them to be known.' It was probably something

[1] *The Victorian Age in Literature*, p. 14. It may seem strange that the Germans should be associated with the Welsh, as they are in this passage. But it would hardly surprise the modern anthropologist. The South Germans, to whom the statement in the text is probably most applicable, are believed to be mainly of the Alpine race, and are consequently very closely related to the majority of the people in Wales, or at least to those who have given the tone to Welsh singing.

[2] *Notes on England*, p. 61.

[3] In the concluding Essays on Patriotism in his *Studies in Literature*.

of this sort that was in Addison's mind when he stated [1] that 'modesty is our distinguishing character.' It is this characteristic, more than any other, that makes Englishmen so difficult to understand. How little, for instance, do we really know (apart from their actual work) about Shakespeare or Chatham!—in comparison, for instance, with Goethe and Bismarck.

15. Unreliability.—What has now been stated may help us to understand why it is that the English are said to be unreliable and perfidious. 'It seems,' says Mr. George Peel,[2] 'that we have been generally adjudged unreliable, proud, selfish, and quarrelsome. As far back as the seventeenth century the first of these characteristics was constantly charged against us. Thus Bossuet, in his sermon on Henrietta Maria, declared us to be more unstable than the sea which encircles us. . . . There was the same complaint in the nineteenth century. Bismarck held that it was impossible to make an alliance of assured permanence with us; and, on the other side of the Rhine, Ollivier, the minister of Napoleon III, has echoed the accusation.' It is difficult to get at the real self of an Englishman. One has first to penetrate his disguises and discount his humours and affectations. Shakespeare was well aware of this. He makes it appear not only in the character that we have sought to analyze, but in several other connections. Take, for instance, Portia's description of the Englishman in *The Merchant of Venice:* 'He is a proper man's picture, but, alas! who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere.' He evidently recognized that the English are whimsical—

> 'One foot on sea and one on shore,
> To one thing constant never.'

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[1] *Spectator*, No. 435. [2] *The Future of England*, pp. 15–16.

This characteristic renders them peculiarly incalculable and unintelligible to foreigners, and perhaps sometimes even to themselves. Sir Andrew Aguecheek (who is obviously English, though he lives in Italy) confesses that he is 'a fellow of the strangest mind i' the world.' 'Their strength, politically speaking,' says Gissing,[1] 'lies in a recognition of expediency, complemented by respect for the established fact.'

The charge of 'perfidy,' however, cannot be sustained. M. Cestre, writing from the point of view of France,[2] has recently withdrawn it, and has rightly explained [3] that the apparent instability of the English attitude is due, in general, to 'those oscillations which operate in free countries.' It is only in matters of small importance that Englishmen are apt to be somewhat whimsical and uncertain. In times of real difficulty they are generally reliable. M. Cestre even affirms,[4] indeed, that the English 'are the least variable and adaptable of all peoples.' Our seamen, such as Nelson, furnish perhaps the best illustrations of these opposite aspects of the national character. The following remarks by Mr. H. W. Steed [5] may help to throw further light on the subject. 'Englishmen,' he says, 'are guided above all by instinct. They distrust ideas; logic is repugnant to them. . . . Close observation of England shows that there is often a flagrant contradition between ideas and the conduct of the people who express them. . . . *What an Englishman may say when in a state of normal calm gives no clue to what he will do at a moment of personal or national crisis.*' Taine refers to the phrase 'when his blood is up' as expressing the condition under which the difference becomes specially prominent.

[1] *Henry Ryecroft*, p. 131.
[2] *France, England, and European Democracy*, p. 253.
[3] P. 76. [4] P. 340.
[5] Quoted by M. Le Bon, *The Psychology of the Great War*, pp. 45–6.

16. Compromise.—Not being much wedded to definite logical principles, they are apt to arrive at practical decisions by the method of compromise. Emerson says of the English: 'They have great range of scale, from ferocity to exquisite refinement. With larger scale, they have great retrieving power. After running each tendency to an extreme, they try another tack with equal heat.' This seems to amount to saying that they lack definitely-thought-out principles or purposes, and prefer to trust to what they can learn by experience. A certain lack of definite purpose may be regarded either as cause or consequence of defective methods of education. Mr. Wells says of Joan and Peter, 'Their education had done many good things for them, but it had left their wills as spontaneous, indefinite and unsocial as the will of a criminal.' The weaknesses of the method of compromise have been well exposed by Morley. It leads to strange incongruities and apparent absurdities; but in practice it yields a kind of moderation which sometimes proves better in the working than anything that could have been devised by logic and forethought. The political sagacity of the English depends largely on the skill that they have acquired in the use of this method of turning the edge of opposing forces. They can seldom be induced to sacrifice the whole of what they aim at; but, under pressure of circumstances, they can generally be got to content themselves with half, and do not much mind the incongruous other half, which to a more logical race might seem intolerable. It is probable that the tendency to compromise has a good deal to do with the common charge of hypocrisy. Mr. Price Collier says[1] 'They are not Pharisees, they are compromisers'; and again,[2] 'There are people, both English and foreign, who instead of compromise, write Hypocrisy; others still who write Conciliation; while the more vehement write Pharisaism.'

17. Tolerance.—The toleration of opposing views

[1] *England and the English*, pp. 70–1. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

is closely connected with compromise. When a middle course cannot be found, both the extremes may be allowed to subsist together. Without this, it would of course be impossible to carry out the fundamental conception of liberty. 'There is in truth,' says Mr. W. F. Monypenny,[1] 'with many faults, a certain μεσότης about the English character—in spite of their insularity a certain Shakespearean breadth about the English people which has peculiarly fitted them for the part that they have had to play in Europe in the past, and peculiarly fits them for its continuance under the different conditions of the future. The very things that, up to a certain point, contributed to their insularity, the comparatively isolated course of English history, the national love of the *via media* in politics and religion, the recoil from either of the rival fanaticisms into which our continental neighbours have so often fallen—all these things, corrected by the cosmopolitanism which the growth of a vast Empire has brought with it, has helped to make the English people what they are, in a sense, to-day—the central people of the world. Whether it is owing to the composite character of the English stock itself, or to the political circumstances that have combined English, Irish, Scotch, and Welsh in one national State without entirely fusing them, we seem to have escaped a certain rigidity of political temper and a certain liability to excesses of Chauvinism, by which more sharply defined nationalities are sometimes afflicted.' It must be allowed, however, that English toleration is often confined within somewhat narrow bounds. It has been said[2] of Dr. Arnold, for instance, that he 'believed in toleration within limits; that is to say, in the toleration of those with whom he agreed.'

18. Fairness.—It would probably be too much to claim that justice is in any special way characteristic

[1] *The Empire and the Century*, p. 26.

[2] By Mr. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, p. 184

of the English. To apply the conception of justice in any strict sense would require more careful thought than can readily be given by the English mind. But I think it is not untrue to say that Englishmen try to deal fairly. It seems to be generally agreed that actual dishonesty is comparatively rare in England. At least it is generally concealed under some recognized convention. Besides this, there is the characteristic form of honour that is commonly referred to as 'playing the game.' This does not necessarily mean being strictly just. The game may itself be a somewhat dubious one. But it means at least that there are some recognized limits beyond which unfairness does not readily pass; and often the English sense of justice shows itself in more conspicuous forms. The 'judicious Hooker' was characteristically English; and it would be easy to mention others to whom a similar epithet might very well have been applied. Henry Sidgwick might be named as a recent example. Nor can it be regarded as wholly accidental that the most impartial of dramatists was an Englishman. Sir Rabindranath Tagore notes [1] that he was never cheated in England; and M. Cestre states emphatically [2] that 'the word of an Englishman in business has the value of an oath.' Emerson also emphasized very strongly the fundamental honesty and justice of the English character.[3] Even Mr. Sidney Whitman admits this good quality as a set-off against his general indictment,[4] and states that 'the word "fair-play" even has no synonym in any other language.' No less striking is the testimony of H. H. the Aga Khan [5]: 'Long before the military strength, the material improvements or the other tangible activities of British rule are referred to by the average Indian,

[1] *My Reminiscences*, p. 168.

[2] *France, England, and European Democracy*, p. 252.

[3] *English Traits*, vii.

[4] *Conventional Cant*, p. 222.

[5] *India in Transition*, p. 34. See also *Indian Problems*, by Mr. S. M. Mitra.

you may be quite sure that he will speak of its justice.' Against this, however, it is right to notice the very different declaration of Lajpat Rai[1]: 'She has taught us the blessings of the wealth she has deprived us of; she has awakened the need for the education she has not given; she has proven the value of the power she dares not bestow.' The saying of Parnell may also be worth quoting[2]: 'Englishmen themselves are in many respects fair-minded and reasonable, but it is almost impossible to get at them—it requires intelligence almost superhuman to remove the clouds of prejudice under which they have lived.' I believe this statement calls attention to the chief qualification that has to be made in the recognition of English justice. A recent writer[3] refers to 'that English form of right which has no subtlety or qualifications.' The effort after fairness is limited by the force of tradition, the 'splendid isolation,' the lack of sympathetic insight, and the general attitude of self-satisfaction that is so deeply rooted in the national character. Hence Wordsworth, whose patriotic feeling is not open to doubt, was forced to recognize that his country often stood harshly in the way of the development of others. As the sonnet in which he states this most definitely appears to be not very well known, and as it has a special appropriateness at the present time, it may be worth while to quote it at this point.

'At this day,
If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,
Aught good were destined, thou would'st step between.
England! all nations in this charge agree:
But worse, more ignorant in love and hate,
Far—far more abject, is thine enemy:
Therefore the wise pray for thee, though the freight
Of thy offences be a heavy weight:
Oh grief that Earth's best hopes rest all with Thee!'

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[1] *England's Debt to India*, p. 338.
[2] Quoted in *Chief and Tribune*, by M. M. O'Hara, p. 14
[3] W. L. George, *The Making of an Englishman*, p. 267.

19. Humour.—Where there is a good deal of toleration for individual differences, we may expect to find many 'humours,' in the older sense of the word; and the English were undoubtedly at one time humourists in this sense. Perhaps this is less true of them now. Humours in the older sense are somewhat liable to be extinguished by humour in the newer sense, i.e. by the operation of the 'comic spirit.' It seems true to say that in England this generally takes the form of good humour, tolerant laughter at human peculiarities and weaknesses. This is eminently true of Shakespeare; and it is also to be seen in Chaucer, Addison, Sterne, Lamb, and others. The more sardonic form that we find in Swift is not so characteristically English; but keen satirists, such as Pope, Thackeray, and others are not uncommon. Like other qualities, it has some tendency to destroy its own object. 'Pity,' as Blake said, 'would be no more, if you did not make somebody poor.' So humour would be no more, if you did not make somebody ridiculous. But pity tends to remove poverty, and ridicule to destroy peculiarities. This is especially true of satire. Pope boasted

> 'Yes, I am proud, I must be proud to see
> Men not afraid of God afraid of me,
> Safe from the bar, the pulpit and the throne,
> And touched and shamed by ridicule alone.'

But few people like to be laughed at, even in the more genial way. Unfortunately, ridicule is not always a test of truth, or of any other excellence. It is to be feared the English sense of humour has some tendency to counteract the spirit of tolerance, and to give rise to some degree of undesirable conventionality.

20. Conventionality.—Conventionality is pretty generally recognized as one of the weaknesses of the English at the present time. It has been affirmed[1] that 'there

[1] S. L. Hughes, *The English Character*, p. 300.

are more Englishmen who shrink from that which is new, who suspect novelty in any form, and who hold firmly that all those who differ from them in any respect are scoundrels than there are of any other one type.' 'A sea-shell,' Emerson says,[1] 'should be the crest of England, not only because it represents a power built on the waves, but also the hard finish of the men. The Englishman is finished like a cowry or a murex. After the spire and the spines are formed, a juice exudes, and a hard enamel varnishes every part. The keeping of the proprieties is as indispensable as clean linen. No merit quite countervails the want of this, whilst this sometimes stands in lieu of all.' This was probably not so in Shakespeare's time, and Mr. Shaw is pretty certainly mistaken in representing it [2] as characteristic of an Englishman at the time of Julius Cæsar. When, however, individual liberty is pretty fully secured, and men are not much restrained either by dogmas or by autocratic government or by logical reflection, they tend to become sensitive to the opinions of their neighbours, especially if their neighbours have some sense of humour. And, if there happen to be rather well-marked class distinctions in such a society, the opinions and modes of life of the higher classes tend to be taken as the models for the lower. This feature is clearly seen in England, though of course it is not altogether peculiar to it. Henry James speaks [3] of 'the subtle resignation of old races who have known a long historical discipline and have conventional forms and tortuous channels and grimacing masks for their impulses—forms resembling singularly little the feelings themselves.' This characteristic does not sit very gracefully, however, on the English, being strongly opposed to their natural love of independence. 'We could not

[1] *English Traits*, vi.

[2] In the character of Britannus in *Cæsar and Cleopatra*. See on this Mr. Chesterton's *George Bernard Shaw*, pp. 164–5.

[3] *The Reverberator*.

cast off the coarseness of our grandfathers,' says Mr. S. Whitman,[1] 'without drifting to the other extreme.' French conventionality seems more spontaneous; while that of the English looks like a pose or affectation.

21. SNOBBISHNESS.—This leads to the consideration of what are called 'snobs'—a term that is perhaps not capable of very accurate definition. It seems to have been used primarily in the sense of a social pretender, one who tries to pass himself off as belonging to a higher class than he does. The 'Great Mel' is referred to as a snob in *Evan Harrington*. But it seems to be more commonly applied to one who affects the manners of and curries favour with those in a higher station than his own. Thackeray defines it rather vaguely as meaning one who has a mean admiration for mean things. Ruskin urged[2] that it does not properly mean one who admires, but rather one who plumes *himself* on his superior connections. Mr. Sidney Whitman described it[3] as 'that toadying debasement before rank and social power which has ever remained one of the greatest blemishes of the English race. It has been fostered at our public schools, where to be a gentleman first and to learn something afterwards has been the watchword for generations.' The prevalence of such an attitude in England seems to be due to the fact that the sense of class distinctions is rather keen, and yet that such distinctions are not very clearly marked. They depend more on certain manners and habits of life than on a rigorous system of caste. 'Loyalty,' according to Emerson,[4] 'is to the English a sub-religion. They wear the laws as ornaments, and walk by their faith in their painted May-Fair, as if among the forms of gods.' The emphasis that is laid on social distinctions is probably traceable to the subordina-

[1] *Conventional Cant*, p. 63.
[2] *Fors Clavigera*, Letter LXIII.
[3] *Conventional Cant*, p. 32.
[4] *English Traits*, xi.

tion of the Saxons to the Normans [1]; but it tends now to turn more on wealth and social position than on race. Nordau says about this [2] 'The Church and the Aristocracy of rank and wealth are well organized and firmly allied to uphold each other, with a true appreciation of the identity of their interests. The middle classes bow submissively to the written and unwritten laws of the dominant caste, are outwardly eminently respectful, show reverence to titles, and swear that those things only are seemly which the upper ten thousand approve, everything else being low and vulgar.' 'The pleasure of saying "M'Lord,"' says Mr. Ponsonby,[3] 'is almost as great as the pleasure of being addressed as "M'Lord."' Gladstone noted [4] the 'distinct undeniable popular preference, whenever other things are substantially equal, for a man who is a Lord over one who is not.' According to Mr. F. Harris [5] this kind of snobbishness is 'characteristic of all the Germanic races' and in Shakespeare's time 'was stronger than it is to-day.' Monsieur Demolins maintains that it is as strong in France as in England [6]; but my impression is that the special type that Thackeray and others have in mind is characteristically English. It depends on the existence of social inequalities without any very definite basis. In France, I believe, the ideal of equality is more fully recognized; and such inequalities as remain rest upon more definite grounds. But about this I cannot speak with much confidence. Gissing says [7] that 'no European country can show such a gap

[1] See Demolins, *Anglo-Saxon Superiority*, p. xi.

[2] *Conventional Lies of our Civilization*, p. 4.

[3] *The Decline of Aristocracy*, p. 127.

[4] Quoted in Russell's *Portraits of the Seventies*, p. 197.

[5] *The Man Shakespeare*, pp. 227 and 234. Boutmy also (pp. 62–3) ascribes it to the Germanic races in general. But what are the 'Germanic races'? I suppose it is the Aryans or 'Nordics' who specially like to think themselves superior.

[6] *Anglo-Saxon Superiority*, pp. 166–7. *Snobisme* has a different meaning.

[7] *Henry Ryecroft*, p. 127.

as yawns to the eye between the English gentleman and the English boor.' Demolins himself says[1] that 'the Gentleman is the Saxon form of a superior class, as the noble is the Norman form.'

22. MORALISM.—I have already referred to the passage in which Mr. F. H. Bradley connects the charge of cant and hypocrisy that is directed against England with the fact that it is the home of Moral Philosophy. With this I may deal more fully at a later stage. In the meantime it is enough to note that Mr. Bradley is not alone in thinking that the kind of hypocrisy that is ascribed to the English is connected with their emphasis on moral principles. The explanation of this emphasis is probably to be found in the special type of Protestantism that has prevailed in England. In Catholic countries the recognized authority is not that of moral principles as such, but rather of the interpretation that is put upon them by the Church. The individual conscience is largely subordinated to that authority. Now, the English type of Protestantism does not recognize any such authority; and the individual tends to be guided partly by the laws of the State, partly by social customs and conventions, partly by reflective principles, and partly by his own conscience. Where the Reformation has been more thoroughly carried out, the case is somewhat different. In Scotland the comparative weakness of the State enabled the Church to gain the ascendancy. In Germany, on the other hand, the strength of the State and the somewhat negative character of the Reformation have conspired to place everything under the authority of the secular government. The recent Emperor could venture, apparently without giving any shock to popular sentiment, to claim God as his 'old ally.' In America this would hardly be tolerated. When Lincoln was asked whether he thought that God was on his side, he answered that he was more anxious

[1] P. 168. On pp. 193–4 he emphasizes the fact that there is no *hereditary* lower class in England.

to be sure that he was on the side of God. In England it is perhaps true to say that the general spirit of compromise gives rise to some confusion. The trumpet gives an uncertain sound. But on the whole it is generally recognized that moral principles (if only we could be clear as to what they are) have a paramount claim upon our allegiance. M. Cestre has noted[1] that 'more than any other, the English have always been interested in questions of conduct,' and that 'English literature, in all phases of its development, has been dominated by the ethical point of view'; and 'George A. Birmingham' refers[2] to 'the instinct for duty which has made the best Englishmen the great men they are.' But duty is apt to be somewhat narrowly conceived. Moral principles have some tendency to mean those somewhat conventional and often rather confused ideas to which the State has given its sanction. Mr. Price Collier refers[3] to 'that characteristic of the English of bovinely seeing duty where their interest calls them.' Here we reach a very important aspect of the national life, to which we shall have to return later.

23. Melancholy.—A certain kind of melancholy is characteristic of English thought. It used to be referred to as 'spleen.' Goethe was much struck by the prevalence of this attitude in our literature. Gray's *Elegy* is one of the most typical English poems, and *Hamlet* is our most typical drama.[4] This melancholy may be partly due to our somewhat depressing climate. 'The rain it raineth every day.' But there can be little doubt that it is largely connected with the sense of individual responsibility. 'Conscience doth make cowards of us

[1] *France, England, and European Democracy*, p. 267. See also Taine's *Notes on England*, pp. 79 and 347.

[2] *The Bad Times*, chap. xxii.

[3] *England and the English*, p. 239.

[4] *The Shropshire Lad* might also be referred to as a characteristic example.

all.' The reflections of Henry V on the responsibilities of the king before the battle of Agincourt illustrate this attitude; and they are reflections that appeal, more or less, to all thoughtful Englishmen. Every reflective Englishman feels that he is responsible for the conduct of his own life, and even to a large extent to the conduct of his country. Also, his moral conceptions tend to be associated with the pursuit of individual happiness, which is apt to be a rather disappointing quest. Hence philosophical reflection is apt to become somewhat gloomy. An amusing illustration of this is supplied by the remark of Edwards to Dr. Johnson, that he sometimes tried to be philosophical, but somehow cheerfulness was always breaking through. This was a natural enough remark to make to one who wrote mainly about the vanity of human wishes. Complete pessimism is an attitude that is seldom taken up by Englishmen; but they rather like to feel that life is somewhat difficult and disappointing, and calls for constant effort. They are more in sympathy than they would at present care to own with Nietzsche's injunctions to be hard and live dangerously, and with his conviction that any cause can only be sanctified by a struggle. It is a sad view, but it is also a bracing one. After all, Nietzsche was an optimist; and so is the Englishman. But he is a melancholy optimist. He believes that the situation will be saved, but as if by fire. One sometimes wonders whether the gaiety of the French does not sometimes cover an attitude that is essentially sadder.

24. Sentimentality.—The Englishman is often said to be very matter of fact and guided by common sense. This, is already noted, may be true of some and not of others; but it appears at least to be true generally in the sense that he prefers facts to theories, and that in action he tends to adapt himself to the situation before him, without being much disturbed by preconceived dogmas. But he is often disturbed by conventional

prejudices, and by sentiments connected with them; and, as we have already noted, though he is fond of facts, he likes to look at them through rose-coloured spectacles. The facts he observes may be hard and trivial, but his feeling with regard to them is often tender or awe-struck; or at least he likes to affect a sort of sentiment with regard to them. He has a special affection for what is old [1]—old houses, old friends, old customs, old institutions. But sometimes his sentiments appear to have a more possessive basis. He can wax pathetic in the consideration of his possessions—his horses, his wine, his ancestral domains, sometimes his school or college. If he has few possessions, he may still take a tender interest in 'a poor thing, but mine own'; or may even, like Dogberry, rejoice in his losses. The feeling is essentially a part of his personal pride. Justice Shallow may be taken as a good illustration of this kind of sentimentality:

'Jesu, Jesu, the mad days that I have seen! You shall see my orchard, where, in an arbour, we will eat a last year's pippin of my own grafting, with a dish of carraways, and so forth; By the Mass, you'll crack a quart together, ha!—will you not, master Bardolf?'

Illustrations of a somewhat similar kind, but on a higher level, might be culled from the 'flutings' of Meredith's Egoist.

On the whole, I believe Mr. Shaw is not far wrong in the emphasis that he lays on the sentimentality of the English. It leads them often to falsify art. They demand pleasant endings for their stories. They will take their pills readily enough, but they want to have them well gilded. Meredith noted [2] that 'sentimentalists are a

[1] Mr. W. L. George (*France in the Twentieth Century*, p. 58) emphasizes this characteristic, and contrasts with the French love of change and attraction to what is new.

[2] *Sandra Belloni*, chap. i.

perfectly natural growth of a fat soil. Wealthy communities must engender them. If with attentive minds we mark the origin of classes, we shall discover that the Nice Feelings and the Fine Shades play a principal part in our human development and social history. . . . Our sentimentalists are a variety owing their existence to a certain prolonged term of comfortable feeding.'

25. Cruelty.—It may seem strange to pass from this kind of sentimentality to cruelty. But it has to be remembered that sentimentality is not the same thing as benevolence. It means a certain superficial appearance of sensibility, without the reality. It is a pose or affectation. And it has certainly sometimes been contended that the English are essentially cruel.[1] I doubt whether it can quite be made out; it is at least difficult to reconcile with what has been affirmed about their fundamental fairness and good-nature; but there are some facts that may be alleged in support of it. It must be remembered that an Englishman's fairness is partly connected with a somewhat cold indifference. Even his generosity is apt to have a touch of scorn. Also, as has been already noted, the good qualities of an Englishman are, in general, more apparent when he is in difficulties than when he is prosperous and powerful; and perhaps good-nature may be more characteristic of those classes that are liable to suffer under the laws than of those by whom they are framed and administered. It seems to be true that humanitarianism has a larger following in England than in most other countries; but it may be contended that it is greatly needed as a reaction against cruel practices. It may be argued that corporal punishment has persisted long in our public schools, and that the treatment of boys by one another is not of the gentlest kind; and it may be contended that the natural temperament is revealed by such behaviour. Some cruel sports

[1] Boutmy is one of the most emphatic on this subject. See *The English People*, especially pp. 107–9 and 131.

may also be referred to, and a good deal of horse-play, which, however, is often not ill-natured. Emerson says [1] that the nation has a tough, acrid, animal nature, which centuries of churching and civilization have not been able to sweeten.' I am not altogether convinced, however, by such references. At least, I think the reference to punishment may supply us with a clue. Dr. Johnson, who certainly overflowed with kindness, was always eager to defend almost any form of punishment, and to hallow almost any kind of rod; and we are told [2] that even one so kindly disposed as Ruskin 'did not think prisons ought to be made humane.' In general, when the English are cruel, they try to connect their cruelty with some form of moral sentiment—especially with the sentiment of moral indignation. We have seen a good deal of this directed lately against the Germans. I do not say that it has not been called for; but I believe it is true that an Englishman abandons himself to such a feeling with a quite unusual gusto. Mr. S. Whitman states [3]—possibly with some exaggeration—that 'no nation has ever gone so far in hatred and vilification of its enemies as our own, except, perhaps, the Romans.' It is true at least that we cannot easily hate without vilifying. We feel the necessity of moralizing our hatred and our cruelty. When an Englishman punishes a child, he likes to be able to affirm that the punishment is felt as keenly by the one who inflicts as by the one who suffers. It is required for a great moral end. A striking illustration may be taken from the cruel treatment of Oscar Wilde. In connection with this Mr. R. H. Sherrard

[1] *English Traits*, IV.

[2] See Morley's *Recollections*, Vol. I., p. 292. Ruskin, however, was not typically English, and the views of Carlyle and him on this subject did not receive much support. Still, it can hardly be contended that the British treatment of prisoners *is* humane See, for instance, on this *An Irish Gentleman*, by M. G. Moore, pp. 335-7.

[3] *Conventional Cant*, p. 130.

writes [1]: 'In England, if a man fall, he falls never to rise again. There are in the British a certain bloodthirstiness and a certain instinctive cruelty, which not centuries of Protestant practice have been able to moderate. These qualities of the nation account for the facts that not only is our penal legislation the severest in the world, but that a conviction entails immediate and irreparable social death on the offender.' I can hardly suppose that any dispassionate observer would maintain that the English are, in general, capable of deliberate cruelty in the way or in the degree in which some other peoples are; but I am afraid it must be allowed that there is a latent cruelty in the disposition of the British, as in that of many others; and that it lends itself with peculiar readiness to the service of a somewhat intense moral indignation, which is not always either wise or just. I believe, indeed, that the word 'justice' suggests to the English mind the idea of inflicting a punishment much more often than that of conferring a benefit. 'Use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?' is not an altogether un-English sentiment. 'We are slow in getting started,' according to a saying that is quoted by M. Cestre,[2] 'but when our indignation has been aroused, nothing can arrest or temper the inevitableness of our prosecution of the criminal.' We have noticed this attitude in the case of Henry V. Such references help to bring out the connection between British cruelty and British sentimentality. In a recent book [3] there is a reference to 'that British quality of ruthless condemnation for the sinner whom he did not know and sentimental weakness for the sinner whom he did.' Perhaps both attitudes may fairly be described as sentimental. But I am inclined to believe also that British cruelty is partly to be ascribed to the doggedness of the national tempera-

[1] *Oscar Wilde: the Story of an Unhappy Friendship*, pp. 228–9.
[2] *France, England, and European Democracy*, p. 252.
[3] *The Duchess of Wrexe*, by Hugh Walpole.

ment. An Englishman is not readily deterred from any course upon which he has entered. Hence, in the attempt to devise deterrent punishments, those who use them are driven on from one severity to another. There may be some truth also in the suggestion that the English are less sensitive to pain than most other peoples. It has been said[1] that the sufferings of others are to an Englishman 'a mere spectacle'; 'his nerves receive no thrill.' Certainly, the English are a thick-skinned people, and, as Mr. Ponsonby notes,[2] 'have a certain intolerance of physical weakness.' Perhaps we may venture to believe that English cruelty is seldom deliberate; but, if so, it may be urged that it is all the more apparent that it must be congenital.[3]

26. Hypocrisy.—After the observations that have now been made, we should be in a better position to understand the true nature of the special kind of hypocrisy or self-righteousness or pharisaism or posing that is so commonly ascribed to the English. It would seem to be the natural accompaniment of a kind of conventional morality, based rather on sentiment than on reason: To some a morality of this kind is an object of genuine devotion. To others it is more or less unconscious pose. Probably it is only to a small number that it is purely hypocritical. Hypocrisy of the kind that is represented by Tartufe is perhaps less common in England than in many other countries. Even so severe a critic as Boutmy admits[4]

[1] Boutmy, *The English People*, p. 107. See also Price Collier's *England and the English*, pp. 86 and 260–1.

[2] *The Decline of Aristocracy*, p. 91.

[3] On the other hand, I should be disposed to ascribe a large part of the atrocities of the Germans to the fact that the majority of them are by nature too dreamy and sentimental to practise cruelty except under the spur of a deliberate policy of frightfulness. From the point of view of anthropology, what appears to be true is that the purely Nordic disposition is harsh and overbearing, while that of the Alpines is apt to be unduly servile.

[4] Pp. 111–13.

that the English are, in general, characterized by candour and sincerity. The English Pharisee thinks that he is a genuine follower of the good, and really is so to a certain extent; but the object of his devotion is ill-defined, and is not entirely worthy of complete devotion. He is like one walking in the dark along a road that is not very familiar, and constantly in danger of being led astray by will o' the wisps. The contrast between the English and the continental type of posing is, I think, very well brought out in an incident that is reported in the life of Archbishop Benson. 'I shall never forget,' says Mr. A. C. Benson,[1] 'a conversation between the Ambassador of a foreign Power and my father. The former was dining at Lambeth, a genial, intelligent man, very solicitous to be thoroughly in touch with the social life of the country to which he had been accredited. After dinner, the Ambassador, in full diplomatic uniform, with a ribbon and stars, sitting next to my father, said politely, "Does your Grace reside much in the country?" My father said that as Archbishop he was provided with a country-house, and that he was there as much as possible, as he preferred the country to the town. "Now, does your Grace go to *church* in the country?" with an air of genial inquiry, turning round in his chair. "Yes, indeed!" said my father, "we have a beautiful church almost in the park, which the village people all go to." "Yes," said the Ambassador, meditatively. "Yes, I always go to church myself in the country;—it is a good thing to show sympathy with religious feeling—it is the one thing which combats socialistic ideas.[2] . . . I think

[1] *Life of Archbishop Benson*, Vol. I., pp. 611–12.

[2] This kind of hypocrisy is, however, not unknown in England. Mr. Edward Carpenter gives a good illustration. When he had conscientious scruples about Orders, the Dean of his College observed: 'It is all such tomfoolery that it doesn't matter whether you say you believe in it, or whether you say you don't. Look at my sermons in Chapel, now—are they not models of unaffected piety!' (*My Days and Dreams*, p. 74). Gissing's discussion of

you are very wise, your Grace, to go." ' Of course, as a good Englishman, the Archbishop repudiated any such grounds, and he was probably quite sincere ; but it may be open to a critic to suggest that the good Archbishop may hardly have sufficiently realized to what extent he was really a pillar of society. Even the love of liberty would seem sometimes to be a little of a pose. At least people on the Continent are apt to be a little surprised that the English sympathy with small nations is not more effectively brought into play with reference to the Irish.[1] Lowell, in the *Biglow Papers*, satirized a similar limitation on the part of some Americans :

'I du believe in Freedom's cause,
Ez fur away ez Paris is.
. . . . .
But libbaty's a kind o' thing
Thet don't agree with niggers.'[2]

Of course there are difficulties about Ireland, as there were also about the niggers. But are we as conscious of the difficulties, when they only relate to the Poles or Serbs or Armenians ? A similar inconsistency has been noted[2] in the case of Wilberforce. 'He was working at one and the same time to free the negro slave and to enslave the dispossessed English labourer.'

27. CANT.—Cant is closely connected with hypocrisy ;

British hyprocrisy (*Henry Ryecroft*, pp. 272–282) should be referred to. It is probable that the general charge of hypocrisy is to a considerable extent due to a misunderstanding of the Puritans. Since Carlyle's sympathetic interpretation of Oliver Cromwell, it has been generally recognized that the Puritans were not, properly speaking, hypocritical, though they may often have been fanatical and Pharisaical. The worst thing that can be brought up against Cromwell is, I suppose, his treatment of Ireland ; and that seems clearly to have been due to fanaticism—mainly perhaps the fanaticism of others. Cromwell appears on the whole to have acted as a restraining influence. But this is a controversial subject.

[1] See, on this, Boutmy, pp. 295–310.

[2] *Psycho-analysis*, by M. K. Bradby, p. 75.

and, as we have already seen, it is apt to be associated with hypocrisy in the charge that is brought against the English. Boutmy says[1] that it is 'that sort of hypocrisy peculiar to the English.' It is the more purely linguistic aspect of conventionality. It consists generally in the use of phrases that are the shibboleth of some party or the favourite expression of some class or set. It is a sort of dead language, and people are specially liable to fall into it when they use words the full meaning of which is not clear to them. There was probably never anyone who hated cant and hypocrisy more thoroughly than the poet Burns ; and he is entirely free from anything of the kind when he writes in Scotch ; but, when he tries to express himself in English, he tends to use expressions that are much less sincere. Anyone to whom English is the native language would not err in this way. But I believe it is true to say that the English language lends itself somewhat readily to a danger of this kind. It is a very rich and composite language, full of expressions from Latin and Greek ; and the extensive use of the Bible has given it a number of Hebrew modes of expression. Hence it has in common use a good many examples of what Ruskin called 'masked words' ; words that do not fully reveal their meaning to the majority of those who employ them or listen to them. Mrs. Quickly and Mrs. Malaprop supply extreme instances of the kind of muddle to which, in a less obvious way, many are subject. The Germans have probably on the whole been wise in attempting to keep their language more pure, so that the meaning of the words they employ may always be apparent. But this does not prevent cant : it only closes one of the avenues to it. It is well to remember also that, though cant is in itself verbal, it is evidence of a certain mental confusion. Hence Dr. Johnson rightly emphasized the importance of clearing one's *mind* of cant.

[1] P. 121.

CHAPTER V

THE CHARACTER OF SHAKESPEARE

As so many of our illustrations have been drawn from the works of Shakespeare, it seems not inappropriate to inquire how far he may himself be taken as representative of the national character. There is some difficulty in such an attempt, owing to our comparative ignorance of his origin and of the circumstances of his life. 'Others abide our question,' said Matthew Arnold, 'thou art free.' But this was never wholly true, and happily is becoming less and less true. 'Every man's work,' it has been well urged,[1] 'whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else, is always a portrait of himself, and the more he tries to conceal himself, the more clearly will his character appear in spite of him.' In this sense at least it might very well be maintained that we can know Shakespeare better than we can know anyone else who ever lived. If he were suddenly to come to life again and appear among us, there is surely no one —hardly even our most intimate friends—about whom we should feel so sure that we should understand him and that he would understand us. He reveals himself clearly in almost every line that he wrote. It is true, however, that there is some doubt as to what he did write, and as to the order in which it was written; and our ignorance on these points does interfere to some extent with our comprehension of the way in which his mind worked and grew. But recent research has thrown

[1] S. Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, chap. xiv.

a good deal of light on this subject. Most of us, I suppose, feel that we owe a great debt to Edward Dowden for his clear exposition of the stages in Shakespeare's development that are shown by the characteristics of his work at different periods of his life; and many other writers have helped to give us at least a probable view of the extent to which the works that have at various times been ascribed to him are to be accepted as genuinely his. But there is still considerable difference of opinion on this subject; and the view that we take about it does to some extent affect our view of his character. If, for instance, we were to agree with Mr. F. Harris in thinking that practically everything that has ever been ascribed to Shakespeare was actually written by him, we should have to admit that he was sometimes capable of writing very poor stuff—stuff that is not merely weak, but that gives evidence of a morbid strain. On the other hand, if we were to agree with Mr. John M. Robertson, we might have the satisfaction of believing that the great poet never really fell below his best. It is probable that neither of these views is quite correct; but it would certainly be presumptuous in one who is not much of a literary critic to determine to what extent either view approximates to the truth. All that I can venture to say is that the great bulk of the work that is ascribed to Shakespeare shows such a combination of strength and sweetness as is hardly to be found in any other writings; and that, when both these qualities appear to be conspicuously absent, I cannot easily believe that the work is his. And it seems pretty certain that he did sometimes collaborate with others. It has to be admitted also that our understanding of Shakespeare would be materially helped by a fuller knowledge of his life, apart from his writings. What we know of this is certainly rather slight, and is based on unreliable traditions. Some recent writers, with the help of these traditions, eked out by conjectural interpretations of the Sonnets and

occasional references in the Plays, together with some possible references in other contemporary writings, have attempted rather elaborate reconstructions of his life. But these are highly speculative; and the results arrived at by different writers diverge very widely from one another. Some of them seem to me almost as wild as the speculations of those who seek to ascribe the Plays to Bacon or Lord Derby or some other equally unlikely person. The fact, however, that we cannot arrive at any very definite knowledge about Shakespeare, in this somewhat external sense, may itself be taken as something of a revelation. It at least suggests that he had one of the common characteristics of the English, a certain reserve. I think most people would agree that he had a good many more; but it is not a matter that can be very easily established.

Mr. F. Harris, in his bold and suggestive but rather disconcerting books on Shakespeare, denies[1] on the whole that his characteristics were specially English. He reproduces, in a somewhat different form, the comment of Heine, to which reference has already been made. 'By a curious irony of fate,' he says, 'Jesus was sent to the Jews, the most unworldly of souls to the most material of peoples, and Shakespeare to Englishmen, the most gentle sensuous charmer to a masculine, rude race.' Perhaps we must take some account of the 'antithetical self' in such cases; but surely these rare spirits would have been starry strangers in any land. At any rate, I think Mr. Harris exaggerates both the sensuousness of Shakespeare and the rudeness of the English. After all, he was an elder brother of Shelley[2] and Keats; and

[1] Most definitely perhaps in *The Women of Shakespeare*, pp. 271–280. His general view of Shakespeare's character is given more fully in his other book—*The Man Shakespeare*.

[2] I am not so sure as Mr. A. C. Bradley is that Shakespeare was more like Fielding than Shelley. His resemblance to either could only be taken with great qualifications. Nor, indeed, am I so sure that he disliked the Puritans. The gibes against them are put into the mouths of such characters as Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

surely Sir Philip Sidney or Edmund Spenser could hardly be called rude. As for the Jews, not to mention any other instances, they produced Spinoza also—one, I suppose, sufficiently unworldly. The Jews and the Anglo-Saxons appear to be two of the strongest races that are to be found in modern Europe. At their worst, they have both a certain hardness and worldliness; but, at their best, they appear to be capable of being very finely mellowed. The various nations have different ways of blossoming—the Jews in prophets, the Germans in musicians and philosophers, the English in poets.

Foreign writers, in general, do not fail to recognize the national characteristics of Shakespeare. Possibly Taine exaggerates them a little when he refers [1] to 'the principal traits of the English character, the need of independence, the power of initiating, the energy and obstinacy of the will, the strength and ruggedness of the concentrated and controlled passions, the rough but unheard working of the interior machinery, the vast and tragic spectacle which a compact soul furnishes to itself, the habit of introspection, the seriousness with which they have always regarded human destiny, their moral and religions preoccupations, all the remains of faculties and instincts which were formerly displayed by the hand of Shakespeare and in the hearts of the Puritans.' Most English writers also recognize readily enough that Shakespeare was essentially one of themselves. Sir Stanley Leathes, for instance, remarks [2] that 'Shakespeare himself is English, through and through.'

I suppose, however, the truth lies somewhere between the views that are indicated by Taine and Mr. Harris

[1] *Notes on England*, p. 343. Reference should be made also to his account of Shakespeare in the *History of English Literature*.

[2] *The People of England*, II., p. 94. Sir Walter Raleigh (*England and the War*, p. 121) is still more emphatic—'I think there is no national poet, of any great nation whatsoever, who is so completely representative of his own people as Shakespeare is representative of the English.'

respectively. It has to be allowed, I think, that Shakespeare is not quite so typically English as Chaucer, Johnson, Tennyson, and Dickens. At least, if we could roll these four into one, we should probably have a truer impression of what Englishmen are like at their level best, and of their chief besetting sins, than we can get from Shakespeare alone. But this means, in the main, only that he is not so definitely bound as most others are by national limitations. Perhaps Mr. Harris, in the phrase that has been quoted, has rightly hit on one characteristic that prevents him from being quite typical of his country. Others, as well as he, have emphasized the view that England is essentially a masculine country. Mr. Price Collier, for instance, is even more decided about this. There are obvious qualifications that have to be made on such a view. Some of the most famous periods in English history have been times when the country was under the rule of a Queen.[1] On the other hand, it seems to be true that women have not on the whole played as prominent a part in its general life as they have done in France.[2] This may be partly due to the relative prominence of large properties in England, which do not offer much scope for the activities of women. In any case, it is probable that this feature in our national life will be less noticeable in the future than it has been in the past. In

[1] It is well to bear in mind, however, that under the rule of a queen the chief work of government is generally under the control of her ministers. A king, on the other hand, is often a good deal under the influence of women. Hence it is not always the case that the influence of women is greatest when a woman is on the throne.

[2] *France in the Twentieth Century*, by Mr. W. L. George, may be referred to on this subject, especially pp. 323–5. Mr. George has given a good deal of attention to the differences between France and England, which he has had specially favourable opportunities for observing. His story, *The Making of an Englishman*, though perhaps not otherwise very notable, is interesting in this connection, especially with reference to matters relating to the life of the family. See also *The France I Know*, by Miss Winifred Stephens, especially chap. xx., and *The Glory that is France*, by Mr. S. Dark, pp. 40–2.

the meantime, however, the contention appears to be on the whole borne out by a large part of English literature. Chaucer's patient Griselda seems to have supplied the model for a considerable number of the prominent female characters that have been represented in it. Many of the writers would seem to accept the dictum of Pope, that 'most women have no characters at all.' Now, in the works of Shakespeare also there are some women of the type that is here referred to; but, in general, it is true that with him 'A lady's Verily's as potent as a lord's.' Mr. Harris seems to me to be quite right in pointing out that, in the conduct of his plots, the women are often more decisive, whether for good or for ill—but most often for good—than the men. Meredith is the only other English writer who occurs to me as being quite comparable to Shakespeare in the place that he assigns to his female characters, unless one ought to add Browning; and these are the sort of exceptions that prove the rule; for neither of these writers could well be taken as typically English—especially Meredith.[1] One is tempted to infer, from this and other circumstances, that Shakespeare, like these two, was probably of mixed race. His strong sense of humour gives some support to this, for I believe that men of pure race seldom show much sign of it. Only those who 'boast two soul-sides,' who are conscious of a divided nature within themselves, are apt to appreciate the incongruities in the life around them. But all this is mere conjecture.

This much at least is clear, that Shakespeare had a certain universality that raises him above many of the little distinctions of time and place. It would seem that one 'so perfect and so peerless' must have been created, like Miranda, 'of every creature's best.' Other countries —but perhaps especially those that are most nearly

[1] Meredith himself considered that his skill in the portraiture of women was due to his Celtic ancestry. See Mr. Edward Clodd's *Memories*, p. 141.

akin to us—can readily assimilate him. The Germans, in particular, have been somewhat inclined to lay claim to him as one of themselves; and certainly they have some right to such a claim, in view of their admirable translations and frequent representations of his plays. It may even be true that the average German is more familiar with the Shakespearean drama than the average Englishman; and I suppose most people would recognize that of all modern poets Goethe [1] is the one who is most nearly akin to him—more reflective, less humorous, much less capable of creating living characters, but with something of the same large outlook upon life. Among the ancients some are inclined to regard Plato, in spite of the very different sphere in which he worked, as having a certain family likeness (surely much more than Bacon could be supposed to have)—being similar in his comprehensive humanity, his serene wisdom, his imaginative insight, his tendency to combine jest with earnest, his ability to make words dance at his bidding, and to give to immortal thoughts an immortal setting, and even in the power of making other personalities seem vividly present. Though Shakespeare had little Greek, he had enough to realize its imaginative significance and the love of beauty that is expressed in it; but it is pretty certain that those who have sought [2] to find definite

[1] Readers will remember the lines in which Goethe described what he inherited from his father and mother—from the former his stature and serious conduct of life; from the latter his happy disposition and delight in story-telling. Recent anthropologists, I suppose, would say that the former traits were Nordic and the latter perhaps Alpine. One is tempted to suspect a similar mixture in Shakespeare; but the subject does not appear to have been considered by our anthropologists.

[2] Like Mr. Parke Godwin, in his interpretation of the Sonnets. I think the most that can be conceded on this point is that the love of beauty and desire for its immortality that is expressed in Shakespeare's early poems is best interpreted in the light of the *Symposium*. The phrase 'holding the mirror up to nature' in Hamlet's address to the players looks, it must be allowed, very like a reminiscence of one of Plato's images in the Tenth Book of the *Republic*; but the resemblance may very well be accidental.

Platonic interpretations in his poems have gone off upon a false scent. But with all these cosmopolitan affinities, most of us cannot but feel that in very many characteristics Shakespeare is indisputably English. The special sympathy that he appears to have had for the Welsh has suggested to some that he had some relations with that nationality ;[1] but it would be difficult to point to any Welsh feature in his own character. On the other hand, most of the characteristics referred to in the preceding chapter—especially those that are marks of strength, rather than of weakness—could be pretty easily shown to belong to him.

Reference has just been made to his reserve. It is, indeed, doubtful, as we have noted, whether Browning was quite right in denying that he 'unlocked his heart' in the Sonnets. There have been a great number of theories about the Sonnets—most of them rather wild speculations—propounded in recent years ;[2] as well as about the composition of the Plays, and the personal references contained in them. Most Shakespearean students are convinced that both the Sonnets and the Plays do contain *some* personal references. It is possible that further investigations may enable us to speak more confidently than we can at present about Shakespeare's life and experiences. It remains pretty certain, however, that in his later years at least he was not much addicted to the unlocking of his heart ; and we may still agree with Browning in thinking that, in so far as he ever did

[1] The view maintained by Samuel Butler and some others, that the Sonnets were addressed to a friend named William Hughes, does not appear to be based on adequate grounds, and is probably quite erroneous.

[2] The very ingenious speculations of Samuel Butler are nearly all unconvincing ; and the perhaps even more ingenious suggestions of Mr. Acheson, Mr. F. Harris and Mr. John M. Robertson (which are, to some extent, contradictory of one another) are highly doubtful. Sir Sidney Lee does not commit himself to much ; but even some of the few things to which he is inclined to commit himself must be admitted to be questionable.

so, he was 'the less Shakespeare.' It was not characteristic of his general attitude; and it is pretty certain that he did not intend to make a public revelation. He would probably have wished, as little as Tennyson, that 'the many-headed beast should know.' In this respect at least Plato and Goethe were not altogether like him; though it is true that they also preferred, in general, to express their thoughts and their experiences through the mouths of others. The reserve of Shakespeare is a more striking feature in his character than it is in theirs; and it is a feature that is quite emphatically English. It is this that has made it possible for people, not absolutely insane, to throw doubt on his authorship and almost on the very fact of the existence of such a person. Perhaps the author of the Homeric poems may have resembled him in this. It is the sign (if there was any single author) of a man of strong individuality, going his own way independently of others. It was the greatness of his individuality that enabled him so fully to include and comprehend all others. His reserve was in no way a mark of weakness, any more than the 'meekness' of the founder of a great religion was—a meekness that never interfered with the most fearless and strenuous action. It is noteworthy that in the latter case also the existence of the person has been doubted by some.

That this potent individuality was not unaccompanied by pride is perhaps sufficiently evidenced by several of the expressions in the Sonnets. Some of these may be conventional, part of the stock-in-trade of the Sonnetteer; but in some cases at least the utterance seems rather too full-throated to be other than sincere. It does not appear, however, that the pride that is there displayed is at all egoistic or conceited. It is accompanied by the acknowledgment of superior excellence in others and even by the confession of discontent with what he most enjoyed and envy of the qualities that others possessed. In his practical dramatic work, this attitude is seen in

his evident admiration of his contemporary Marlowe, and readiness to imitate his methods. In this connection I may note that it has always seemed to me that Goethe's repudiation of the charge of egoism, on the ground that he was never to be found in the path of envy, is unconvincing. The genuine egoist, like Sir Willoughby Patterne, envies no one. The proud humility of Shakespeare indicates at once a happy self-confidence and a readiness to appreciate and rejoice in the merits of others. Goethe, I think, had essentially the same features, but perhaps less finely balanced. He could not quite let himself go, either in his self-confidence or in his appreciation, in the way that was natural to Shakespeare's richer humanity. Of all the extravagances in Mr. F. Harris's characterization of Shakespeare (and I think there are many) surely one of the most extravagant is the assertion [1] that 'he was inordinately vain and self-centred.'

The exuberance of his nature showed itself also in a practical energy and adaptability to circumstances, which are, I think, characteristically English. We do not know how he set to work when he arrived in London; we have only vague and unreliable traditions; but we do know that he was described by an envious rival as a Johannes factotum, and that his success was singularly rapid.[2] It seems pretty certain that his special poetical power was of late development. He was not one of those who 'lisped in numbers.' There is no real evidence that he wrote anything that could well be described as poetry before he was 25; [3] and almost all his great work appears to have been done in the 20 years when he was between 28 and 48. There are grounds for thinking that his earlier

[1] *The Man Shakespeare*, p. 401.

[2] I find it difficult to reconcile these facts with the view that Mr. Harris appears to take of Shakespeare as having been from the first a sensuous dreamer.

[3] Samuel Butler dates some of the Sonnets as early as his 21st or 22nd year; but it seems clear that his grounds for deciding on this time are quite inadequate

years were filled with very varied experiences; but, no doubt, he was, like Scott, 'making himself all the time.' The work that he was to do required a comprehensive vision of life; and it is certainly not uncharacteristic of his nationality that he should have begun by being much more active than reflective. This at least seems probable. That he had a love of hunting seems obvious. We know, however, also that he devoted himself to his dramatic work, in spite of a distaste for some of its aspects, with an almost unparalleled zeal during the best part of his life. Such devotion is perhaps not characteristically English; but the energy involved in it is the power of setting himself doggedly to work. It is somewhat characteristic also that it seems to have had material prosperity and the prospect of retirement among its aims. It is doubtful if he can quite be taken as an instance of pure art for the sake of art, like the somewhat un-English Blake. And if it is true that his disposition was essentially more in the direction of comedy than of tragedy, that also is an English trait, which he shares with Fielding and Dickens. English melancholy is not the luxury of grief; it is the sadness that accompanies the eager pursuit of a somewhat elusive happiness. I am not convinced, however, that he was more at home in comedy than in tragedy. His greatest works are tragedies; and some of his most careful students (among them Mr. Bradley) think that it is in the utterances of Hamlet that we come nearest to his own mind.[1] Carlyle, indeed, has said[2] that 'in no point does he exaggerate but only in laughter. . . .' He heaps all manner of ridiculous nicknames on the butt he is

[1] Mr. F. Harris takes this view very strongly, but he finds portraits of himself in many of Shakespeare's plays. I suppose, like other artists, he drew from the life; and his own life must have been better known to him than that of anyone else; but it is easy to exaggerate the extent to which he made use of his own experiences.

[2] *Heroes and Hero-Worship.*

bantering, tumbles and tosses him in all sorts of horse-play; you would say, with his whole heart laughs. This is true chiefly of the middle part of his literary life. He came to maturity in comedy earlier than in tragedy. But, in so far as it is true that he exaggerates in laughter (which perhaps he only did so far as was necessary for stage effect), may it not have been partly that his laughter was not quite as spontaneous as his more serious reflections, a little more forced to satisfy the 'groundlings'?

That there is a certain carelessness in his writing can hardly be denied. There is evidence that he wrote with great rapidity; and, though Ben Jonson, or his informant, evidently exaggerated in saying that 'he never blotted a line,' it is quite certain that several of his plays were very carefully revised; yet it is probable that with him, as with Goethe, the golden stream flowed on apace, and it was not always pure gold. He seems to have taken very little pains to have his works properly edited; and it seems pretty certain that he was often content to mix up even some of his finest creations with the contributions of writers of a very different calibre.[1] His chronological and geographical absurdities are well known. He peopled every age and every country with Elizabethan Englishmen and their familiar surroundings. Sometimes he is guilty of something that may be described as bombast; though, in this respect, it is easy to exaggerate his defects. It has to be remembered that he wrote for the stage, on which the tones and colours have to be somewhat heightened. Mr. Chesterton refers[2] to the following passage as an instance.

> 'Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
> And in the visitation of the winds,

[1] He did not, however, empty his note-books into his works, as Goethe sometimes did. Though in some respects careless, his artistic conscience seldom failed him.

[2] The *Victorian Age in Literature*, pp. 15–16.

Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them
With deafening clamour in the slippery shrouds,
That, with the hurly, death itself awakes!'

Even without allowance for stage-effect, it does not appear to me that this passage really oversteps 'the modesty of nature.' Anyone who has experienced a violent storm at sea on board a sailing vessel would, I think, acknowledge that it admirably describes the appearance and feeling. One seems to be in the midst of it. With the possible exception of some passages in Swinburne, I should doubt whether anything could be quoted in English that renders so well the spirit of the sea in storm. Still, I believe it cannot be denied that Shakespeare sometimes becomes turgid. He seldom strove to 'do better than well.'[1] I believe he would have regarded minute accuracy and over-refined polishing as pedantic; and, in a certain royal indifference to such petty details, I think he displays a characteristic that is eminently English. In respect of the exuberance that has just been referred to, I should think that his nearest parallel is to be found in Dickens; and probably it is true of both that they tend especially to be a little over-exuberant in humour.

With regard to the tendency to pose, I do not think that Shakespeare can be charged with this. But he probably found in dramatic representation a sufficient outlet for the expression of his humours. Poetry in general may, indeed, be described as a kind of pose; and,

[1] 'When workmen strive to do better than well,
They do confound their skill with covetousness.'

But he always strove to do *well*, and he generally did better without striving. He was careless only in what he regarded (perhaps rightly) as unessential for his purpose. The carelessness of his work has sometimes been grossly exaggerated. The skill of his artistry has been strikingly brought out by Mr. A. C. Bradley in his book on *Shakespearean Tragedy*. As Carlyle said, 'The very perfection of the house, as if Nature herself had made it, hides the builder's merit.' Coleridge also laid stress on this.

in his pure poetry, Shakespeare is, I suppose, not wholly free from a certain tendency to conceits or euphuisms, though he knew very well also how to turn them into ridicule. It is pretty clear at least that he outgrew this tendency.[1]

That he has a form of realism that is essentially English we have already sufficiently noted. But he is not a realist in the sense of simply copying Nature, still less of giving only its baser and more disagreeable aspects. Rather, with all its gentle satire, he tends to look at things through a kind of glory, especially in his earlier and later writings. Certainly in his middle period there is an occasional approximation to pessimism. But he evidently recovered from this.[2] I think of him as being at first a little like Prince Henry (but with more sympathy and less physical vigour), afterwards like Romeo (qualified by Mercutio), then with a touch of Jaques (qualified by Falstaff and by a good many others), then like Hamlet, and finally developing into an attitude of almost super-personal benignity that is best represented by Prospero. Of him certainly it could be said, as of few others,

> 'The setting sun and music at the close,
> With the last taste of sweets, is sweetest last.'

Perhaps it would be true to say that in his early writings we see most evidence of his individual temperament; in the middle ones what he learned by the experience of life; in the latest what he developed into—in the quaint Aristotelian phrase, his τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι.

Mr. Bradley has pointed out, as one of Shakespeare's

[1] It depends a good deal on the interpretation of some of the Sonnets, whether they are regarded as evidence of posing. Some of the artificialities are derived from Petrarch. It seems to be true, however, that this kind of artificiality found a specially congenial soil in England (one can hardly imagine it flourishing much in Scotland or Ireland), and that Shakespeare, though not without some protest, pretty readily fell in with it.

[2] Even Mr. F. Harris, who takes a very tragic view of Shakespeare's life, partly admits this.

most notable limitations, that he does not appear to have cared for dogs. With the qualifications that he allows, this would seem to be true ; [1] but it has to be remembered that the feeling that anyone has with regard to dogs depends a good deal on the kind of dogs with which he happens to have been acquainted. He may not have been very familiar with them except on the hunting-field and on the laps of ladies ; and it is not in these circumstances, as a rule, that the deeper kinds of friendship with dogs have been formed. But I should be inclined to class Shakespeare's attitude in this respect along with his general attitude towards human beings. He was perhaps not as much attached to his poor relations in general as many later writers and even some earlier ones have been. He was not eminently democratic in his sympathies—at least if to be democratic means to be a believer in human equality. In this also I think he is characteristically English. The tendency to believe in human equality is, on the whole, rather French (and perhaps American, and to some extent Scotch) than English. It may be doubted whether he could have drawn such characters as Jeanie Deans or Dandie Dinmont as sympathetically as they were drawn by Scott (though certainly he also was no democrat). But, of course, the material probably did not exist in Shakespeare's time. He has pity for those in humble positions ; and he rather likes to represent those in high positions as envying the more humbly placed ; and he has a similar feeling for the lower animals ; [2] but I think one perceives, on the

[1] At least I am inclined to let it pass, though I have a good deal of sympathy with the slight doubts that have been expressed by Sir F. Darwin (*Rustic Sounds*, p. 227.)

[2] On this, however, I wish to add a note on what I think is a common misinterpretation of a reference to the beetle. Isabella in *Measure for Measure* makes the often quoted statement

> 'The poor beetle that we tread upon
> In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
> As when a giant dies.'

whole, that he is not altogether at home on these lower planes. In one of his Sonnets there is a reference to a jaded horse ;[1] but it does not appear to be particularly sympathetic. I suppose he intended us to smile at the sentimentalizing of Jaques about the deer. On the other hand, it would be a mistake to suppose that he was specially inclined to worship at the seats of the mighty. He had seen too much of 'captive Good controlled by captain Ill.' Both in his Plays and in his Sonnets he makes it very apparent that few things were more antipathetic to him than 'man, proud man, dressed in a little brief authority.' He seldom takes any one in the highest station as a hero. I have urged that even Henry V is not really an exception. If he were, he would be almost the only one. Shakespeare can hardly conceal his aversion to such men as Cæsar and Alexander ; and he draws the Homeric heroes almost from the point of view of Thersites ;[2] and several of the English kings are probably painted by him as rather worse than they were.[3] The flattery of Elizabeth and James at the end of *Henry VIII* was probably not written by Shakespeare. It is the meanest and most contemptible of his monarchs that speaks of the divinity that hedges a king. When Ruskin said that he was 'a Tory of the old school—the

This is often taken as an expression of sympathy with the beetle, meaning that, when it is crushed, it experiences a great pain like that which a dying giant feels. This would pretty certainly be untrue. But surely the context shows that what is meant is rather the reverse—viz., that, at the actual moment of death, the giant feels no more than the beetle (which may very well be true). Isabella expresses herself somewhat awkwardly. She is not naturally eloquent, and the blank verse has to halt for it.

[1] No. L.

[2] The chief exception is of course Ulysses, whose character is sympathetically drawn. But Ulysses did not on the whole sit in the seats of the mighty. He was a counsellor rather than a ruler. At least it is thus that Shakespeare seems to conceive him.

[3] There seems to be some ground for thinking that this is true, in particular, of Richard III. But no doubt Shakespeare was following popular traditions.

school of Homer and Scott,' he did not venture to add 'the school of Shakespeare.' There is nothing that seems more obvious about Shakespeare, throughout the whole of his writings, than that the kind of man he really liked —the kind he was anxious himself to be—was the type of refined gentleman, cultivated, but free from pedantry, neither subjected to others nor lording it over them. In his love for such a gentleman, he seems to me to resemble Tennyson more than anyone else; and it is a trait that is eminently English. In this connection it may be well to notice a mistake into which I believe we are rather apt to fall about Shakespeare. We hear so often about his having 'small Latin and less Greek,' and about his humble beginnings in London, that we are sometimes apt to forget that his father seems to have been a man of some substance, though temporarily embarrassed. My impression certainly is that Shakespeare always thought of himself as belonging essentially to the class of gentleman, not as one merely trying to raise himself to that position. And I think he was regarded by others in the same light. The epithet 'gentle Shakespeare' seems to me to convey this meaning; for the term 'gentle' was not at that time used with its modern connotation, but rather that which it has in Shakespeare's own writings—e.g. in the phrase 'he's gentle and not fearful,' or in the characterization of Brutus—which might very fittingly be applied to himself—

> 'His life was gentle; and the elements
> So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"'

The fact of his not having much Latin and Greek would probably not be thought much of a derogation from his gentility in an age when the Universities were still resorted to by the poor, and when 'Statists' were apt to think it 'a baseness to write fair.' A pedant would probably have been more likely to be denied the title of gentleman than an ignoramus. At any rate, Shakespeare was neither

the one nor the other; and it seems certain that he wanted both to be and to be thought a gentleman. Here also his attitude was a quite typically English one. Even Mr. Harris, who, as we have noticed, is inclined to deny that he was characteristically English, admits that in this respect he was. He even ventures to affirm that Shakespeare was snobbish.[1] But if to be snobbish means, as Thackeray maintained, to have a mean admiration for mean things, it is pretty certain that such an attitude could not be ascribed to him. It was the love of beauty, culture and refinement that moved him.

That the dominance of moral conceptions, which is characteristic of the national consciousness, was also a feature in the character of Shakespeare, seems pretty obvious. Moral judgments are perhaps not as explicit in his work as in that of Dante; but they are much more purely moral. Dante's are obscured by an elaborate codification of the virtues, by perverse theological dogmas, and by political prejudice. Shakespeare's, though of course not so definitely formulated, are in general clear and unmistakable. Though mixed breeds are recognized, the sheep are on the whole separated from the goats. Othello has his weakness and Iago has his strength; but we are left in no uncertainty as to which is to be preferred. The way in which the moral characteristics are developed has been very admirably brought out by Mr. A. C. Bradley in his book on *Shakespearean Tragedy*. It is of course true that he makes no effort to conceal the defects of his heroes or the attractive qualities in his villains, and that, especially in his later plays, he recognises the possibility of repentance even on the part of the worst. Even Angelo, one of his most repulsive creations,[2] is left with

[1] *The Women of Shakespeare*, pp. 218–221. See also *The Man Shakespeare*, pp. 227, 234, 384, etc.

[2] I am doubtful, however, whether Shakespeare was wholly responsible for this character. There seems to be clear evidences of other hands than his in the composition of *Measure for Measure*.

the chance of a new life; and Mariana's comment 'they say, best men are moulded out of faults,' may have been one of Shakespeare's own convictions. But he never confuses the colours. He never leads us to feel that a fault is not a fault. We enjoy Falstaff's wit and detachment from conventions; but we are not at all tempted to approve his actions. We admire Henry's good sense and efficiency, but we are led to feel—even if we do not wholly understand—the limitations in his self-knowledge and in his moral outlook. Shakespeare's judgments are clear and decisive, but they are sympathetic and impartial. Hence his strong moral interest is quite free from cant and hypocrisy, and has no tendency to the cruelty which is sometimes ascribed to the English. In this he is not unique; but I think it may be said that, in this serene imparitality, he is not quite typically English. The sterner morality of Milton or the surly virtue of Johnson are on the whole more characteristic. At least, when we find a generous toleration like that of Shakespeare, it is generally associated with a certain indifference to moral distinctions, which we do not find in him. He was probably somewhat averse to Puritanic morality —Mr. Harris may perhaps be right in suggesting [1] that he could not even understand a fanatic—but he was certainly a warm worshipper of essential goodness.

Mr. Harris contends [2] that heroism 'was not his *forte*.' In a sense this is probably true; but I think it would be better to say that he was not a lover of strife. Certainly he had not much of the delight of battle that we find in Homer and Scott, and even to a less extent in Milton and possibly Wordsworth. Mr. T. R. Glover says [3] that 'Virgil draws battle-scenes, not because he loves them, but because he must draw them.' I should suppose that the same is true of Shakespeare. He was emphatically

[1] *The Man Shakespeare*, p. 261.

[2] P. 127. Much is made of this throughout Mr. Harris's book on Shakespeare, especially pp. 108–141.

[3] *Virgil*, p. 50.

the poet of love and not of strife. His contemporary Marlowe had probably more of the spirit of struggle and adventure. This is one of the respects in which I think Shakespeare was more akin to Shelley than to Fielding. In describing military action he tends to become bombastic and unconvincing. One feels that he is not quite in his element, except when he is bringing out the more squalid or the more pathetic aspects of warfare. But in this, I believe, he is not altogether uncharacteristic of his people, which is not rich in war-songs nor notable for *élan* in battle, but only for its dogged determination to persist and endure.

Another defect that some are inclined to ascribe to Shakespeare is that of overmuch individualism. Though he deals to a considerable extent with historical events, he does not very definitely bring out their general significance. Even in painting the actors, he gives more prominence to their passions than to their more deliberate thoughts and purposes. Hence it is perhaps true to say, for instance, that in the Roman plays the characters are more English than Roman. They have not the Latin clarity of purpose. So far as this is a fault, it is pretty obviously an English one. But I think one ought to bear in mind the limitations of the dramatic art. It is necessarily concerned mainly with individual passions, rather than with an epic survey of large events. The prologues in *Henry V* seem to be intended to remedy this defect to some extent. However much one may admire a *justum et tenacem proposite virum*, it must be admitted that he could not easily find a prominent place in a drama. Hence the men and women of resolute purpose in Shakespeare's Plays are generally wicked. Even such a genius as his could hardly have made either a comedy or a tragedy out of the life of Marcus Aurelius. But such subordinate characters as Kent, Horatio, Banquo, and others, as well as several of his women, seem to show that he was quite capable of appreciating this calmer and more resolute type.

On the whole, the conclusion to which we are led is that Shakespeare, in spite of certain Olympic qualities which raised him above national limitations and almost above the limitations of frail humanity, was yet thoroughly English in many of his characteristics. And, in spite of a good many gibes at the English (which are also quite characteristic of the English temperament), it is very obvious that he had a strong patriotic feeling for his native land. It shows itself to a large extent in the form of criticism of national vices, such as drunkenness and instability; but this critical form of patriotism is also typically English. Yet it is well to remember also that his outlook was essentially cosmopolitan. The most charming of his plays have an Italian setting; the most deeply meditative of his men is a Dane; the most subtly drawn of his women an Egyptian; his most profoundly tragic figure is a Moor; and the most majestic of his visions is localised in the still vexed Bermoothes.

It may be worth while to notice, in conclusion, a criticism that was passed upon him, in a highly appreciative Essay,[1] by Emerson. Emerson says: 'He converted the elements, which waited on his command, into entertainments. He was master of the revels to mankind. Is it not as if one should have, through majestic powers of science, the comets given into his hand, or the planets and their moons, and should draw them from their orbits to glare with the municipal fireworks on a holiday night, and advertise in all towns "very superior pyrotechny this evening." . . . The Egyptian verdict of the Shakespeare Societies comes to mind, that he was a jovial actor and manager. I cannot marry this fact to his verse. Other admirable men have led lives in some sort of keeping with their thought; but this man, in wide contrast. Had he been less, had he reached only the common measure of great authors, of Bacon, Milton,

[1] *Representative Men*, V.

Tasso, Cervantes, we might leave the fact in the twilight of human fate; but that this man of men, he who gave to the science of mind a new and larger subject than had ever existed, and planted the standard of humanity some furlongs forward into Chaos—that he should not be wise for himself—it must ever go into the world's history, that the best poet led an obscure and profane life, using his genius for the public amusement.' I am not so sure of this. Probably some of the stories about him have lost nothing in the telling. His 'obscurity' means mainly that he did not afford much of a target for scandal. It is no doubt true that the public means of his early life led to some degree of 'public manners.' But could such a work as his have been done by anyone who had not 'sounded the bass strings of humility,' as well as risen to its most heroic heights? He is the most perfect of dramatists largely because, though with some degree of nausea, he lived most fully in the atmosphere of drama—not, like Emerson himself, with the sound of pine-trees and the air of a church triumphant, but in sight of the efforts, the sorrows, the sufferings and the sins of frail humanity. He means so much for us because he was in all things tempted as we are, and not without the consciousness of weakness and sin. And I certainly agree with Mr. Harris in thinking that whatever weaknesses he had can be detected in his works as well as in any other records of his life. Unlike Walt Whitman's animals,[1] he did sometimes 'lie awake in the dark and think about his sins.' He touched pitch, and yet in the end he was not defiled. He was not a saint or a secluded philosopher. England, on the whole, is not the land of such. It is characteristic of a country in which it has always tended to be the case that men play at their work and work at their play, that its most

[1] I am afraid real animals are not always as happy as he represents. Mr. Wells, in *The Undying Fire*, gives a truer picture of their general condition.

famous man should be 'master of the revels to mankind.' But, on the whole, we may very well take the attitude recommended by Samuel Butler [1] and 'be thankful that he was what he was, and did what he did, without asking questions for conscience sake.'

It is hard, indeed, to see in what way he could better have fulfilled his special function than he did. The criticisms that have been passed upon him seem to amount to little more than that he was neither a Puritan nor a Stoical philosopher—nor even a Superman. Perhaps Nietzsche might have said that he was *menschlich, allzu menschlich;* but most of us would hardly care to press this as a fault. At any rate, I think it can hardly be denied that most of the defects that may fairly be ascribed to him are rather characteristic of his country, though not characteristic of some of the more extreme types that are to be found in it. The characters in his plays that have been supposed to embody some of his own experiences are pretty clearly English. Hamlet, though nominally a Dane, could probably be used to illustrate the English character almost as easily as Henry.

[1] *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, chap. ix.

CHAPTER VI

CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

LET us recur to Mr. F. H. Bradley's statement, that the chosen home of Moral Philosophy is believed to be characterized by hypocrisy and cant. It can hardly be supposed that the one aspect of this home is, in any direct way, the cause of the other. English moral philosophy is, in general, singularly restrained. Butler and Bentham may be taken as two of the most typical English writers on Ethics; and it would surely be difficult to find any trace of cant or hypocrisy in either of them. Widely as they differ from one another, they are both remarkable for the moderation of their claims. They do not make any lofty pretensions, but rather base their appeals on the simplest and most obvious facts of human nature. If they were charged with a touch of cynicism, it is a charge that could be more easily substantiated; and this is a charge that could still more easily be brought home to Hobbes. There may be other writers in whom some traces of cant or hypocrisy could be detected; but I am pretty sure that the great majority of English writers, and especially those who are most free from foreign influences, may not only plead not guilty, but are actually farther removed from such a fault than the writers of most other countries. It may, however, very well be true—and perhaps this was all that Mr. Bradley meant to imply—that both our interest in moral philosophy and our tendency to a certain kind of hypocrisy can be traced to a common source. Perhaps they may both be explained by the

prominence of moral ideas in our ordinary practical life, and by the fact that these ideas are generally of a somewhat conventional type. I should be disposed to grant that this is the case ; and I may point to one circumstance in particular that gives it a certain support. When people seek to characterize more definitely the kind of hypocrisy that they ascribe to the English, they very commonly describe it as Pharisaism. The ground for this lies of course in the bitter denunciations of the Pharisees by Christ, and especially in His description of one of them who went up to the Temple to pray. How far that one is to be taken as typical, and how far the general denunciations of their hypocrisy were just, we have not very much ground for determining.[1] Probably Christ did not mean to imply that all Pharisees were hypocritical, any more than that all publicans were humble. But we may at least assume that *some* Pharisees were open to the charge. Now, Pharisaism in this sense would seem to have been somewhat prominent among the Jews, not because they had anything that could be called Moral Philosophy, but rather because their moral ideas tended to be of a somewhat conventional type. And, in so far as the English are justly chargeable with a similar fault, I believe it to be traceable to the same cause. If their moral philosophy has any blame in this matter, it is only because it is not philosophical enough. And perhaps this was what Mr. Bradley meant. But I am not sure that the charge comes with an altogether good grace from him. All this, however, we shall be better able to judge about when we have inquired what exactly is to be understood by conventional morality, and what is its place and value in human life.

[1] Dr. Israel Abrahams has defended the Pharisees against charges of this kind. 'If a genuine Pharisee,' he says, 'ever thanked God that he was not as the publican, he would only have done so in the spirit of the famous utterance : "There, but for the Grace of God, goes John Baxter (Bradford ?)."' *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, p. 58.

The words Ethics and Morals both suggest a connection with customs ; and certainly much of what is commonly understood by morality consists of customs that are different in different times and countries. On the other hand, it would be difficult to point to any time or country in which certain qualities such as—

> 'Kindness in another's trouble,
> Courage in your own'

would not be recognized as morally good. Morality, as commonly understood, includes some things that are everywhere and always acknowledged to be good, and some that are differently regarded by different peoples and in different conditions. The former may be said to lie in the nature of things : the latter are more or less conventional.[1]

As instances of pure conventions in the ordinary conduct of life, we may take the rule that foot-passengers on the pavement keep to the right, and that the traffic on the open streets keeps to the left. There are obvious grounds for the latter rule ; the former seems to have grown out of conditions that no longer hold. They both vary in different countries, and in different parts of the same country. The one rule—though, so far as I know, not embodied in any actual law—is, more or less, of the nature of a law. I suppose that anyone who did not observe it would be liable to punishment. A breach of the other, I believe, could hardly be treated as a punishable offence. But certainly some blame would attach to anyone who, on a crowded street, deliberately violated it. This is,

[1] The word 'manners' used to be commonly used for the more conventional aspect of morality. When Shakespeare regretted that 'public means' tended to breed 'public manners,' he probably meant a good deal more than we are apt now to understand by the term. Similarly, when Wordsworth invoked the spirit of Milton to 'give us manners, virtue, freedom, power,' he seems to have meant by 'manners' the more external aspects of morality and by 'virtue' its inner source.

no doubt, a somewhat trivial convention; but it may be taken as typical. In itself there is very little foundation for the rule; but, as it is a recognized rule, it is of some importance that it should be observed. As Schiller says, 'Lass uns die alten, engen Ordnungen gering nicht achten.' They are a necessary foundation for social order, even when the grounds on which they originally rested have become obsolete.

But when a large number of the recognized rules of conduct are seen to be somewhat of this character, it comes to be felt that they are highly arbitrary; and men begin to revolt against them. It becomes the mark of the superior person to become unconventional. As we have seen, it appears to be largely Falstaff's freedom from convention that makes him, in spite of his obvious faults, an interesting character, and, in the midst of artificial poseurs, almost an admirable one. Unfortunately he had nothing better to put in the place of the conventions that he despised. But there have been times when a critical attitude towards conventions has had a special prominence and value. Among the Ancient Greeks the Sophists called attention to the conventional character of many of the commonly recognized principles in the organization of societies; and they had at least the merit of awakening thought on the general structure of human associations. Plato's *Republic*, as well as several of his other writings, were intended to show that the principles of social order are not entirely of this character, but depend, at least to a large extent, on permanent features in the nature of man. But the revolt against conventional morality has reappeared in several quarters in our own time. Nietzsche, in particular—a writer very similar to some of the ancient Sophists—has characterized the commonly recognized principles of the morality of Christendom as constituting a 'slave morality,' and has sought to set forth new principles for the guidance of 'masters.' Even he, however, recognized that the commonly received

conventions have some value for the mass of mankind. Other writers—such as Guyau, Nordau, etc.—have criticized the conventions of our time; and they are sometimes referred to as Immoralists. This is hardly a fair designation, though in some cases they have been willing to accept it for themselves. What they are really opposed to is conventional morality: they generally recognize another morality of their own. It was only in a special sense that Nietzsche sought to be 'beyond good and evil.' But, as Mr. Bradley has said, 'The man who seeks to be better than the world, unless he is a heaven-born genius, is already on the threshold of immorality.' Few are able to disentangle the conventions from the fundamental principles. Perhaps the English, owing to their impatience of systematic reflection, find it more difficult than most other peoples. But at least their moral philosophers try to help them in this. I think it is not very fair to associate the moral philosophers with English deficiencies in this respect. But it is the acceptance of conventions as ultimate principles that supplies the basis for that kind of self-satisfaction that is referred to as Pharisaic. Conventions may be pretty easily observed, but the strict observance of them is generally restricted to a select few. The Pharisee prides himself on doing things that he conceives every one should do, but that not every one could be expected to do. It is as if he were to say—'I am thankful that I am not as other men. I always keep to the right on the pavement—not like this benighted heathen, who rushes to the left.' Schopenhauer—that 'curmudgeon of genius,' as Caird called him—made a boast somewhat of this kind. Still, it is right to observe the rule of the pavement; and, if you don't know it, it is worth while to learn it. The same applies to most of the rules of etiquette; and people who have no definite principles of morality have not much else to guide them. An Englishman may take pride that he is a gentleman, and not a tradesman; and that

he has the manners and breeding of his class. He may, no doubt, be content with smaller distinctions, after the manner of Dogberry.

> 'I am a wise fellow; and, which is more, an officer; and, which is more, a householder; and, which is more, as pretty a piece of flesh as any is in Messina; and one that knows the law, go to; and a rich fellow enough, go to; and a fellow that hath had losses; and one that hath two gowns, and everything handsome about him.'

But when moral ideas are recognized as supreme, excellence in this respect becomes the most obvious ground of self-congratulation. It is true that some may think it a still higher distinction to be above morality. But these are the *crême de la crême*. The ordinary Englishman may be sufficiently satisfied by being up to it. He may even be satisfied with the pretence of it. Then he is hypocritical in the most ordinary and vulgar sense—blatantly, like Richard III, more subtly, like 'honest Iago' or Pecksniff, or more curably, like Angelo, in *Measure for Measure*. But he may not be strictly hypocritical at all. We have no reason to suppose that the Pharisee did *not* fast twice a week and give tithes of all that he possessed. But to pride himself on that is self-righteous; and it is chiefly this that is thought to be the characteristic fault of the English.

But when Socrates said that virtue is knowledge, or when Carlyle urged that all intellect has a moral basis, or when the Jews summed up their social commandments in the injunction 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' they meant by Virtue, Morality and Commandments something very different from those external observances on which the Pharisee prided himself. Nor are the moral virtues, as Aristotle describes them, conventional; though it is true that many of the illustrations that he gives, and even some of his general descriptions, are applicable only to the particular type of society with which he was most familiar. The deeper meaning of

morality which is shown in such uses of the term is sometimes said to be religious rather than simply moral. This is partly a verbal question; but, on the whole, I think it is not quite correct, or at least somewhat misleading. The recognition of morality as one of the eternal values, or as essentially related to such values, may be said to involve a religious attitude; but fundamental moral conceptions may be entertained without this foundation. Duty may be acknowledged and loyally performed without the feeling that it is the 'daughter of the voice of God,' and that by which the stars are preserved from wrong. 'It is of the very structure of morality,' says a religious writer,[1] 'that it demands a motive as well as acts. Let us take a person practising a set of virtues, such as justice, industry, public spirit, benevolence, and the like, upon a ground connected with the life of the soul—i.e. simply because it is right—his practice is immediately invested with the unearthly greatness of its motive. . . . But let us take a person practising such virtues because they are popular, because the age requires them, because they are part of the machinery of success in the world, and though the virtues themselves are the same, it is evident that the possessor of them is a very different person from the other.' The latter attitude may be said to be that of conventional morality; but it is doubtful whether the former is necessarily a religious attitude, at least, if it is to be so described, that of such moral teachers as Socrates or Antonine would have to be called religious, and certainly that of the Ethical Societies, which have recently been referred to as merely moral. When Aristotle says that all the moral virtues must be accepted from a sense of their beauty (τοῦ καλοῦ ἕνεκα), he may be said to be recognizing their religious basis; and the

[1] J. B. Mozley, *University Sermons*, II. 'The Pharisees.' Objection might be made to some parts of this statement—e.g. that the virtues 'are the same'; but we cannot here pursue such criticisms.

same is certainly involved in his doctrine that the moral virtues exist for the sake of the 'theoretical life'; but neither of these conceptions is much emphasized in his actual treatment of the moral virtues; and it seems to me at least that there is something intermediate between conventional morality and religious morality. To put it shortly, one may love one's fellow-men without loving God, though one can hardly love God without loving one's fellow-men. In other words, we can have genuine moral ideas without any clear apprehension of the eternal values on which they rest, though the apprehension of those values must impart to them an added sanctity. And I certainly think that the morality that is based upon the love of man—the morality of Abou ben Adhem—is very far removed from a merely conventional morality. But it would not have satisfied Mause Headrigg; and, on the whole, it would not have satisfied Plato or Aristotle.

Some of the remarks that are here made are suggested by the very interesting volume of essays recently published by Mr. Bosanquet, in which, among other things, the relations between morality and religion are discussed.[1] He illustrates his treatment by reference to the ideas of the Scottish Covenanters as described by Scott in *Old Mortality*. 'It is not an accident,' he remarks,[2] 'that "morality" in a certain sense has been the *bête noire* of religion; not, for example, that Scott has put in the mouth of a woman of almost perfect saintliness such words as these: "Mony a hungry, starving creature when he sits down on a Sunday forenoon to get something that might warm him to the great work has a dry clatter o' morality driven about his lugs." The characteristic term for the preaching so stigmatized, which he repeats by her mouth more than once, is "fizzenless," that is, fushionless, foisonless, without sap or life, without the principle of nutrition.' I think it is well to remember,

[1] *Some Suggestions in Ethics*, chap. v [2] Pp. 97–8

in connection with this, that people in Scotland have generally thought that Scott did some injustice to the Covenanters in his representation of them in *Old Mortality*. He generally refers to them as 'fanatics,' and was pretty clearly not in sympathy with their attitude. Hence it is a little misleading to quote him as if he were a supporter of the view in question. He is rather to be regarded as bringing it into some degree of ridicule. This had, indeed, already been done by an older and perhaps intrinsically more powerful Scottish writer. Burns, in *The Holy Fair*, has a satirical passage about the kind of preaching in question:

'Smith opens out his cauld harangues
On practice and on morals;
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs
To gie the jars and barrels
A lift that day.
What signifies his barren shine
Of moral pow'rs and reason?
His English style and gestures fine
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
But ne'er a word o' faith in.'

It is true, however, that, though Burns and Scott were somewhat satirical about this attitude, it is essentially a Scottish attitude, and is on the whole to be contrasted with the English one. We may see it in Knox and Carlyle, if not in Burns and Scott. And it is hardly fair to suggest, as Burns does, that Socrates and Antonine would not have agreed with it. It is the point of view from which a morality based on expediency or social conventions, or even on a table of the virtues, is seen to be of little worth without some deeper view that connects it with the Eternities or with the essential structure of the Cosmos. I believe it is true to say that most Scottish people feel the need for this, and most English people do not. But

I think it may be added that the former are often inclined to turn their religion into that sort of fanaticism to which morality is almost a *bête noire*, or in which at least morality tends to be superseded.[1] The finer religions seem to me, in general, to be rather of the nature of a blossoming of morality in the sunshine of philosophical interpretation and imaginative expression. Mr. Bosanquet is inclined to identify the deeper attitude with the conception of 'My Station and its Duties'; but I should think that that is just the kind of doctrine that Mause Headrigg would have regarded as 'fizzenless.' It is too like the view of 'some auld pagan heathen.' Surely, Mause Headrigg did not think much about her Station and its Duties, and surely she did very emphatically seek to be better than the world. Whatever we may think of her particular views, her righteousness certainly exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees.[2]

It may help us at this point to notice that it is not merely from the point of view of religion that conventional

[1] Some other religions show a similar tendency. The following story about a Mussulman drinking wine may serve as an illustration. 'He looked faintly round to see that no very strict Mussulman was looking, and put it to his lips. "Drink boldly, Cadi," said a voice, "it is no harm." "No," said the unshrinking believer, laying his hand upon his beard and looking firmly to heaven, "*Haram, haram kateer*" (it is a sin, a great sin), and drained it to the bottom. The crime of his act was redeemed by the greatness of his faith; and though an erring man, he remained an unswerving Mussulman. It was a beautiful illustration of the Calvinistic genius and tendency of Mohammedanism. . . . The Cadi, who never swallowed a drop without loudly proclaiming that he had sinned, was supported from the table in a state bordering upon stupefaction.' (*An Irish Gentleman*, by M. G. Moore, pp. 63–4). Compare this with Burns's *Holy Willie*.

[2] Perhaps the difference between a merely moral attitude and one that is essentially religious may be more definitely brought home to some minds by a quotation from Mr. T. R. Glover's striking book on *The Jesus of History* (p. 109). 'Solomon Schechter, the great Jewish scholar, once said of Oxford that "They practise fastidiousness there, and call it holiness."' Unfortunately, Oxford has no monopoly of that type of 'holiness.'

morality seems unsatisfying. From the point of view of art it is liable to an even more fiery attack. The doctrine of 'Art for Art's sake,' is pushed by some so far as not merely to deny that Art should have any direct moral significance, but even to affirm a certain antagonism between the point of view of Art and that of Morality, thus making Morality the *bête noire* of Art as well as of Religion. Oscar Wilde might be referred to as a prominent example of this attitude; but it may be found in much more unexpected quarters. Wordsworth is sometimes sufficiently scornful of the 'moralist.'

> 'A moralist perchance appears,
> Led, Heaven knows how! to this poor sod;
> And he has neither eyes nor ears;
> Himself his world, and his own God.'

It is assumed here that the attitude of the moralist must be a Pharisaic one, in contrast with that of the poet or artist. In some cases the attitude of the artist in this respect may almost be identified with that of a kind of religion. It is at least somewhat difficult to say whether it was art or religion that provoked William Blake's attacks on conventional morality. He usually identifies his attitude towards morality with that of Christ. Nietzsche, on the other hand, who regarded himself as an opponent of Christian morality, seems to look at it also partly from the point of view of an artist, and partly from that of a very heretical religion. Something rather similar might be said of Walt Whitman, who was somewhat akin to Blake. Swinburne's book on Blake may be referred to in this connection. The following passage may be taken as typical: 'This principle, which makes the manner of doing a thing the essence of the thing done, the purpose or result of it the accident, thus reversing the principle of moral or material duty, must inevitably expose art to the condemnation of the other party—the party of those who (as aforesaid) regard what certain

of their leaders call an earnest life or a great acted poem (that is, material virtue, or the mere doing or saying of instructive deeds and words), as infinitely preferable to any possible feat of art. Opinion is free, and the choice always open; but if any man leaning on crutches of theory chooses to halt between the two camps, it shall be at his own peril—imminent peril of conviction as one unfit for service on either side. For Puritanism is in this one thing absolutely right about art; they cannot live and work together, or the one under the other. All ages which were great enough to have space for both, to hold room for a fair fighting field between them, have always accepted and acted upon this evident fact. Take the Renaissance age for one example: you must have Knox or Ronsard, Scotch or French; not both at once; there is no place under reformers for the singing of a Pleiade.'[1]

It is pretty clear that there is some exaggeration in this. A reference to Milton is enough to show that there is no necessary antagonism between Puritanism and art.[2] Surely his *Comus*, for instance, is as finely artistic as it is sternly Puritanic. Even Swinburne has to admit, rather grudgingly, that some fine poetic artists (such as Shelley and Victor Hugo) have been animated by a strong moral purpose. Dante is one of the most conspicuous instances. Indeed, I should have thought that Blake's dominant aim of 'building Jerusalem' was essentially a moral purpose; and there is hardly any play in Shakespeare that can be appreciated without the recognition of moral distinctions. What is true in the contention of Swinburne and others is that it would be fatal to the artistic spirit to treat it as simply subsidiary to morality. It would be as absurd for art to aim directly at moral goodness

[1] *William Blake: A Critical Essay*, p. 88. There are some even more emphatic utterances in the same book.

[2] Reference may be made to Mr. Bosanquet's remarks about this—especially p. 233.

as it would be for morality to make the direct pursuit of what is beautiful its sole purpose. What it is right to do (for instance, to keep to the proper side of the road) has often no particular beauty in itself, it may even be rather ugly; but it is one of the conditions for the promotion and maintenance of a beautiful order of life. But here, as in many other instances, there is a danger of the substitution of the conditions for the end. Some extreme types of moralism concentrate their attention so much on the rules of conduct that they almost forget the beautiful life that the rules are intended to subserve. It is this tendency that the artist naturally resents. Yet surely art also becomes somewhat 'fizzenless' when it is content with some casual grace or prettiness, and refuses to take account of the sometimes stern and ugly conditions on which the realization of the larger types of beauty depend. Even Swinburne does not wholly deny this. 'Change or quibble,' he says,[1] 'upon the simple and generally accepted significance of these three words, "beauty," "accurate," "virtuous," and you may easily (if you please, or think it worth while) demonstrate that the aim of all three is radically one and the same; but if any man be correct in thinking this exercise of the mind worth the expenditure of his time, that time must indeed be worth very little. You can say (but had perhaps better not say) that beauty is the truthfullest, accuracy the most poetic, and virtue the most beautiful of things; but a man of ordinary or decent insight will perceive that you have merely reduced an affair of things to an affair of words.' I admit that such an identification as Swinburne here suggests would be worthless; but I cannot admit that an attempt to deal thoroughly with the relations between truth, beauty and goodness would be a bad expenditure of time; and I think it would at least be well to give some attention to this question before expatiating on an irreconcilable conflict between a sound

[1] Pp. 98–9.

morality and an unfettered art. I hope I am not insensible to the astonishing charm of much of Swinburne's own poetic achievements; but I suppose even his greatest admirers would hardly maintain that even in this respect they are superior to the work of Shakespeare, Goethe or Hugo, to whom the moral problems of human life were constantly present. It may be that to Dante they were almost too overwhelmingly present. There is certainly a place in art for the lighter joys and sorrows of existence as well as for visions of heaven and hell.

However, any attempt to deal fully with the relations of art and religion to morality would be far beyond the scope of such an essay as this. But I have thought it worth while to refer to the case of Blake, because his attacks on Puritan morality appear to be made both from the point of view of art and from that of religion. Perhaps the quotation of a single striking passage may help us to understand his attitude:[1]

'Was Jesus *chaste*? or did he
Give any lessons of chastity?
The morning blushed fiery red;
Mary was found in adulterous bed.
Earth groaned beneath, and heaven above
Trembled at discovery of love.
Jesus was sitting in Moses' chair;
They brought the trembling woman there.
Moses commands she be stoned to death:
What was the sound of Jesus' breath?
He laid his hand on Moses' law;
The ancient heavens, in silent awe,
Writ with curses from pole to pole,
All away began to roll;
The earth trembling and naked lay
In secret bed of mortal clay—
On Sinai felt the hand Divine
Pulling back the bloody shrine,
And she heard the breath of God
As she heard by Eden's flood:

[1] The passage is given more fully, with comments, in Swinburne's book, pp. 152–4.

"Good and Evil are no more;
Sinai's trumpets, cease to roar;
Cease, finger of God, to write
The heavens are not clean in thy sight.
Thou art good, and thou alone;
Nor may the sinner cast one stone.
To be good only, is to be
A God, or else a Pharisee.
Thou Angel of the Presence Divine,
That didst create this body of mine,
Wherefore hast thou writ these laws
And created hell's dark jaws?
My presence I will take from thee;
A cold leper thou shalt be.
Though thou wast so pure and bright
That heaven was impure in thy sight,
Though thine oath turned heaven pale,
Though thy covenant built hell's gaol,
Though thou didst all to chaos roll
With the serpent for its soul,
Still the breath Divine does move—
And the breath Divine is love."'

Blake here refers to an incident which is in the minds of many who rebel against Puritanic morality. Oscar Wilde refers to it in a somewhat similar way in his remarkable utterance *De Profundis*. It is well, therefore, to inquire what the exact point of the reference is. What was the attitude of Jesus towards the woman taken in adultery? He did not 'condemn' her—not at least to be stoned; but it seems sometimes to be forgotten that he added 'Go, and sin no more.' With regard to the sanctity of the family, he was stricter than Moses had been; and he recognized adultery as a ground (the *only* legitimate ground) for divorce. It would be a serious error, therefore, to regard him as an antinomian. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. He did, indeed, oppose himself rather strongly to conventional regulations—such as those relating to the rigorous observation of the Sabbath. But he was very far from abolishing—as Blake appears to suggest—the distinction between Good and Evil. Even Nietzsche did not really do that. When

the sanctity of conventional rules is denied, and the extreme punishments attached to their violations are repealed, the real distinction between good and evil is only made more apparent. 'When the half-gods go, the gods arrive.'

So far as I understand the attitude of Jesus, its essence consisted in the emphasis that it laid on the inner and spontaneous character of goodness. External rules, external compulsion, external punishment, were abhorrent to him. It was in this sense, if I understand him rightly, that he taught the doctrine of non-resistance to evil. Evil is not, indeed, to be allowed to triumph: but it is to be overcome by good—not crushed by an external force, which would only be an added evil. The passions that lead to evil are not to be destroyed by a simple negation, but rather dissolved in a more absorbing passion or quietly set aside by the 'expulsive power of a new affection.' Licentious love, for example, is not to be approved; neither is it to be stamped out by hate, but rather submerged in a deeper and purer love. How far he meant to press this view, as applying to the action of States, is doubtful. He seems to have recognized a place for Cæsar as well as for God; and to have admitted that, if his kingdom were of this world, his servants would fight. It does not appear that he really faced this problem. He was content to plant his grain of mustard-seed, and leave it to grow. But his general principle is clear enough. It is that, wherever possible, what is evil should be overcome, not by simple resistance or suppression, but rather by the sympathetic development of the elements of good that are contained in it. Hence, though he disapproved of vice, he disapproved even more strongly of those who sought to suppress it by violence or under severity, especially when he believed that their antagonism to it was hypocritical. He preferred to consort with publicans and sinners, rather than with the Scribes and Pharisees. He would probably have agreed with the Bishop who

said that he would rather have England free than England sober; but still he would have hoped to bring about sobriety by the cultivation of higher interests. Whether he would have approved of the subsequent addition of St. Paul, that the law may be regarded as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, is perhaps doubtful; but it may possibly be held to be covered by the saying that he came not to destroy, but to fulfil.

Now, if I understand him rightly, Blake's attitude was essentially the same, though he expressed his meaning with less clearness and with more impatience and paradox. He was certainly not, in any true sense, an immoralist. His life, by whatever standard we judge it, appears to have been a singularly blameless one, and characterized by some of the highest moral qualities. It would be difficult to point to any of the moral virtues, as they are described by Aristotle, in which he was seriously deficient; and there are few in which he did not positively excel. He certainly showed plenty of courage, both in the narrower and in the wider sense; and the same may be affirmed with regard to temperance. He was strong also in liberality, and he had plenty of righteous indignation, and was not without a pleasant wit—a quality which Aristotle includes, somewhat quaintly, among the moral virtues. He was faithful, though perhaps sometimes a little exasperating, in friendship and honest in his public actions. It must be allowed that he was often brusque and violent, and he was no doubt deficient in fairness. But similar defects could be pointed out in the case of many men who are generally regarded as eminently virtuous. Again, he paid respect to the recognized rights of property, and his domestic life appears to have been on the whole happy—though it certainly seems that in this particular the result was due rather to a fortunate choice than to any merit on his part. Further, it would be difficult to point to anyone who recognized more fully the conception of 'My Station and its Duties.' He devoted

himself whole-heartedly to the great work that he felt to be his proper vocation. On the other hand, it must be allowed that he was very unconventional in his manner of life, often violent and arrogant in his speech, paradoxical and sometimes licentious in his writing,[1] and in everything self-confident and self-willed to an extent that can hardly be commended. It is probable that there was a touch of actual insanity in him; but this can hardly be reckoned as a *moral* fault. But, on any fair view of moral excellence, the merits must surely be held very greatly to outweigh the defects.

We naturally ask, therefore, why one who was on the whole so exemplary in his life (for most of his defects could be paralleled in others who have never been regarded as immoralists), and one who was so enthusiastically a follower of the central conception of Christ, should yet have felt himself, and been felt by others, to be out of harmony with his surroundings in a professedly Christian community. The answer to this may, no doubt, be found partly in the element of self-will and love of paradox that constituted his weakness,[2] and especially in the fact that he seems not to have been at all prepared to recognize that law may be accepted as in some degree a necessary step for the realization of freedom. No

[1] I think one has to take account of a somewhat sardonic humour in the writings of Blake. This has to be allowed for in a good many great teachers. The part that humour played in the discourses of Socrates is well known; and Mr. Glover's suggestion (*The Jesus of History*, p. 50) of a smile on the face of a still more famous prophet, in some of his more extravagant utterances, is a much needed comment. Even Milton, who 'joked with difficulty,' quotes with approval the saying:

> 'Joking decides great things,
> Stronger and better oft than earnest can.'

[2] Mr. De Selincourt—a sympathetic critic—says of him (*William Blake*, pp. 22–3) that he was 'completely lacking in the breadth and sanity of outlook which endow a man's work with temperance, humility, and graciousness, and teach him the virtue of speaking in such tones as his fellows can enjoy and understand.'

doubt freedom, without any basis of law, is in constant danger of degenerating into licence. Milton's condemnation—

> 'Licence they mean when they cry liberty,
> For who seek that must first be wise and good,'

may be partly applicable to Blake. But this is hardly a sufficient answer. To get a more complete one, we must inquire in what sense it is true that the civilization of modern Europe is to be described as Christian. This is a large question ; but it may be possible to give a partial answer to it in a comparatively short form.

The general answer would seem to be that the central conception in the ethical teaching of Jesus has not been very fully adopted throughout Christendom—hardly as fully, I should think, as the central conceptions of the ethical teachers of China have been adopted in that country. This may be partly due to the loophole that was left in the Christian teaching by the apparent recognition of Cæsar as an authority distinct from and co-ordinate with God. At any rate, it seems true to say that the repressive conception of morality has continued to prevail very largely under both the Catholic and the Protestant forms of Christianity. Catholicism was closely connected with the Roman Empire, and it absorbed a good many of the ethical conceptions of the Greeks and Romans, combining them with those of the founder of Christianity and his immediate disciples in a rather unsatisfactory compromise. It rested essentially on an external authority, rather than on the simple appeal to the heart of the individual, which was its original basis. Its teaching was accompanied by a good deal of intolerance and persecution, as well as by a good deal of self-repression in the shape of penances of various kinds—not always wholly voluntary. It was largely against this repressive form of morality that the great revolt of Luther was directed. His reformation was in the main an appeal

for individual freedom and for the satisfaction of men's natural impulses. This aspect of it is specially expressed in the famous lines—

> 'Wer liebt nicht Wein, Weib und Gesang,
> Der bleibt ein Narr sein lebenlang.'

An attitude of this kind, however, if it is not to degenerate into a somewhat coarse animalism, calls for a large measure of spiritual interpretation. Without a sufficiency of this, the need of repressive methods begins to be again felt; and, in Luther's own country, these have tended in the main to take the form of State regulations. In England, with which we are here more particularly concerned, the case is different. Here it is no doubt true to say that the State captured the Church; but the State has become more and more democratic and tolerant, so that it does not very much appear as an external authority, but at most as a somewhat aristocratic influence; and over against this we have to reckon the strong influence of the Puritanic movement. It may on the whole be affirmed that these influences, working together, have produced a state of affairs not altogether unlike that which existed among the Jews at the time of Christ; i.e. a state in which there is no powerful external authority, but strong traditions and conventions. These traditions cannot be very emphatically described as Christian. Samuel Butler does not greatly exaggerate in saying of some characteristic English types [1]—'tolerators, if not lovers, of all that was familiar, haters of all that was unfamiliar; they would have been equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted, and at seeing it practised.' This may partly explain why there was a call for such a man as Blake to reiterate some of the central conceptions out of which Christianity grew in opposition to these somewhat dead conventions; and some paradox may be excused in the attempt to

[1] *The Way of All Flesh*, chap. xv.

sweep them away. Yet it is not altogether to be regretted that the efforts to remove them are not immediately successful. In the moral life, as in the life of the State, the sudden withdrawal of restraints might very well result in sheer anarchy. What is wanted is the substitution of intelligent principles of conduct for blind subjection to law or tradition; and this is an achievement that it is by no means easy to bring about. What Blake appears to have been chiefly anxious to emphasize was the very sound doctrine, that love is essentially the fulfilment of the law. 'There is an abstract reason,' says Mr. De Selincourt,[1] 'that robs life of its warmth and dictates to men the course of action they would be right to follow if their hearts were not warm, but cold. But the human heart is not cold, it is warm; and it is better—Blake's last word is here—to be sinful, so only that we keep it warm, than to freeze it with the banns of a Pharisaical holiness.' But it is well to remember that real licentiousness does not keep the heart warm. Rather, as Burns said, 'it hardens a' within and petrifies the feeling.' Blake would apparently have accepted St. Augustine's injunction—'Love and do what you like.' Unfortunately, it is not quite clear that love could always be regarded as his strong point. He was not like Walt Whitman, of whom in some ways he reminds us. His lines about Fuseli (too disgusting to quote), and several of his other sayings and doings, rather suggest that he often found it particularly difficult to love his fellowmen. Indeed, one is sometimes tempted to wonder whether those 'pharisees' upon whom he vented his scorn were in reality more self-centred and self-satisfied than he. It is commonly said that men are apt to compound for sins they are inclined to by damning those they have no mind to; but I am not sure that it is not almost as common a practice to condemn in others the very faults to which we ourselves are prone. Angelo, in *Measure for Measure*,

[1] *William Blake*, p. 55.

might be taken as an instance. It is so much easier to see the speck in our neighbour's eye than an even larger chip in our own. I fancy Blake had something of this defect. He liked to dream of sins to which he had no temptation, but denounced the spiritual pride and lack of sympathy which, in a different form, were his own conspicuous failings. Still, it is undoubtedly true that there is one kind of love that is the final inspiration of all that is excellent in life—what is commonly called 'the love of God,' i.e. the love of perfection, the love of what is eternally beautiful; and certainly of that kind of love Blake had a great deal

It is, no doubt, true that, if Blake had acted strictly in accordance with some of his theories, he would have run counter, not merely to conventional morality, but to any intelligible morality. He evidently thought, for instance, that there was a positive value in sinning, for the sake of earning forgiveness. This is a view somewhat akin to that which has often been held as to the necessity of 'sowing wild oats.' The element of truth in it is that innocence is not the same thing as virtue, and that sometimes men do advance to virtue through a fall from innocence. But it does not appear that Blake acted in accordance with his theory. The impression that one gets of him is rather that he was always a man of singular innocence and simplicity [1]—almost to be described as a saint—who sometimes dreamt of vicious and bizarre actions; just as a peaceful citizen may sometimes fancy that there is something glorious in a warlike enterprise, without being really tempted to embark in one. According to one tradition (which Swinburne rejects) he and his wife once sat naked in their garden. He certainly seems to have thought that it would be a good thing to emulate

[1] It should be noted, however, that his moral simplicity was accompanied (as I believe it often is) with a great deal of practical sagacity. His famous warning to Thomas Paine may be referred to as an illustration. See his *Life* by Gilchrist.

Adam and Eve as far as possible. He lived at a time when —partly under the influence of Rousseau—a good deal was written about the 'noble savage'; and I believe it is true to say that the views that were then put forward about primitive simplicity have not been wholly disproved by more modern research. At any rate, though there are a good many reasons against making a general practice of going naked (and it would seem that, in practice at least, Blake yielded to some of them), it can hardly be contended that there is anything *immoral* in the suggestion. It would be a very unconventional thing. Carlyle, in *Sartor Resartus*, took clothes as the symbols of conventions in general. But it must be borne in mind that, though it is a fatal mistake to substitute conventions for moral principles, it is hardly less fatal to assume that conventions may be lightly disregarded. It is said also that Blake at one time thought of adding a second wife to the extremely excellent one that he already possessed. Here again it may be urged that the general arguments in favour of monogamy are pretty conclusive, and it is probably right that it should be supported by law as well as by convention. But in countries in which the custom is different, it is certainly not immoral to follow the recognized practice; and it is open to any one to argue (as Plato did) that, in certain circumstances, some other practice would be better. If Blake had any serious moral defect, it was probably what Hegel described as the 'guilt of innocence'—the fault of standing too much aloof from the life of the people. 'Innocence is his secret,' says Mr. De Selincourt[1]: he had a 'childlike trust in goodness.' It has been suggested that some of his peculiarities are to be ascribed to his Irish ancestry.[2] Certainly he could hardly be regarded as typically English. Ireland is

[1] *William Blake*, pp. 22 and 28.

[2] See Colum's *My Irish Year*, p. 74, and Chesterton's *William Blake*, pp. 4–6. Also *Æ : A Study of a Man and a Nation*, by Darrell Figgis, pp. 84–5.

said to be the 'isle of saints,' but it is not so emphatically the isle of sense—not the land of active beneficence and co-operative goodness. However that may be,[1] it seems absurd at least to regard Blake as an example of one who was devoted to Art for Art's sake. Whatever we may think of his views, he surely preached them pretty vigorously in his art. He was essentially one of the prophetic artists, though certainly not a conventional one ; and he was a very good representative of the antagonism of the serious artist to conventional morality. He has been well characterized as a 'Christian Nietzsche.'[2] His opposition to conventional morality is in reality very similar to that of some of those religious enthusiasts to whom reference has already been made. According to one of his own phrases, he 'marches on in fearless dependence on the divine decrees, raging with the inspirations of a prophetic mind.'[3]

It has seemed worth while to dwell at some length upon the attitude of Blake, because a definite instance serves better than general statements to bring out the sense in which a certain sort of morality may become a *bête noire* to men in whom the essential spirit of the moral life is strong. Men who feel the deeper significance of human goodness and the infinite claims which it makes upon the heart and life are peculiarly repelled by the smug self-satisfaction of those who think they have fulfilled their obligations by observing a few rules of behaviour or cultivating a limited number of virtues. And I suppose it is true that Aristotle's highminded man or the wise man of the Stoics was justly chargeable with this defect, as well as the Pharisee

[1] It appears to have now been quite definitely shown that Blake had no connection with Ireland. See *William Blake*, by Mr. A. Symons, pp. 24–6.

[2] His relation to Nietzsche is well brought out by Mr. Symons, *Ibid.*, pp. 1–9.

[3] A good analysis of Blake's general attitude will be found in the book on *Psycho-analysis*, by Miss M. K. Bradby, pp. 70–4

in Judea or in England. The man who is conscious of the infinite demands of the moral ideal is well aware that at every step he stumbles, and is constantly in need of redemption and forgiveness. But this need not be taken to mean that the recognized rules of a particular civilization may be ignored, or that it is not worth while to cultivate the acknowledged virtues. What is objectionable is the supposition that, in conforming to a particular code for the individual life, or in maintaining a particular order of society, we have realized the eternal pattern which, as Plato said, is 'laid up in heaven,' and never completely embodied on earth. It is felt that the finer forms of art and religion are, as it has been put,[1] 'not concerned with dead things, with ethics and moralities, but with the fount from which these things arise, and in connection with which they are not dead, but alive.' It is in this sense, I believe, that a religious attitude may be rightly said to be opposed to established morality.[2] If I understand him rightly, it is this that Mr. Bosanquet seeks to bring out in the essay to which I have referred. But it has to be remembered that the religious man or the artist is often liable to develop the same sort of spiritual pride and limitation of outlook as that to which he objects in the moralist or 'philistine.'

It is pretty generally thought that the somewhat conventional attitude towards morality that has now been referred to came to a head in the Victorian age. On this subject the following vigorous statement by a recent writer [3] may be quoted :

'A good many people have been asking why we underestimate the Victorians, and pointing out that their epoch was one of great genius. This is undoubtedly true, but I think that what most

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[1] *Æ*, by Mr. Figgis, pp. 49–50.

[2] For some characteristic examples of the antinomian attitude in religion, reference may be made to *Religious Thought and Heresy in the Middle Ages*, by Mr. F. W Bussell, pp. 187–195.

[3] Miss L. Winstanley in *The New Statesman*, June 22, 1918, pp. 230–1.

of us blame in Victorians is not so much lack of genius as lack of sincerity. Tennyson, for instance, when he "let himself go," wrote poems like *Maud*, full of poetry, but unrestrained, erotic, and more than a little morbid, containing in fact a strain not unlike Baudelaire. His public protested vehemently, and Tennyson took refuge in perfectly safe works like *The Idylls of the King*, which express nothing of what he really thought or felt, but only the things which he considered, and his public considered, becoming to the Poet Laureate of a widowed Queen, a lady combining a somewhat gloomy disposition with most impeccable virtue.

'Or take, again, Carlyle! His true creed of life was Prussianism He believed that the strong man ought to rule lesser men with a rod of iron, that all the lesser men needed to do was to obey the strong, and when he made Frederick the Great his hero, he showed that his conception of heroism did not include either chivalry, honour, loyalty, or good faith, and was not inconsistent with thorough scoundrelism. Carlyle's doctrines, in fact, were almost purely like those of Nietzsche, but they were "camouflaged" with such a mass of high-sounding morality that many people have accepted him as a quite serious moral teacher.

'Or consider Thackeray! He was really a cynic of the school of Swift and Voltaire; he could hardly draw a good woman, and he allowed his best man—a soldier, too—to be henpecked to death —a cynical stroke if ever there was one. But Thackeray disguised himself with so much sentimentality that we find many people claiming him as a defender of the domestic sanctities instead of acknowledging him to be what he is: a man who teaches women to dislike and distrust men, and men to dislike and mistrust women. This is why so many of us object to the leading Victorians: so many of them are not what they seem—they are really wolves camouflaged in sheep's clothing, and this sort of moral confusion is the foundation of all other confusions.'

I quote this because it seems to me to bring out very clearly what is meant by English hypocrisy. Some of the statements, no doubt, are open to criticism. Tennyson's *Maud* may be said to be largely dramatic, and at most only the expression of a passing mood in the author's mind; and it may be too much to say that the *Idylls* 'express nothing of what he really thought or felt.' The charge against Carlyle may be too severe on the great enemy of cant. He never quite reconciled himself to Frederick as a hero; and the identification with Nietzsche was repudiated by Nietzsche as emphatically as it could

have been by Carlyle. Carlyle's conception of a Hero was really different from Nietzsche's conception of a Superman. It included some qualities more nearly akin to those represented by Christianity [1]; and, in general, he relied more on the definite achievements of the past than in dreams about the future. But it is at least true that Carlyle never explained what he called the 'exodus from Houndsditch,' i.e. the rejection of the Jewish conception of the universe. He may have been right in thinking that the world—i.e. the English world—was not ripe for it; but that is just the point. His force of language often concealed a congenital caution. Thackeray, in like manner, confessed quite frankly that he would have preferred to write in a different style—more nearly to that of Fielding—if his public would have stood it. Even now it seems true to say that the British public does not readily stand anything that is much opposed to traditional opinion. Tennyson boasted that England is

> 'The Land, where girt with friends or foes
> A man may speak the thing he will.'

Certainly, he *may*——!

Whether the comparative reticence of our writers is altogether to be regretted or condemned is another matter. There is much to be said on behalf of reticence. The present tendency away from it cannot be commended without considerable reserve. It is not certain, for instance, that it would be a good thing to have an English Voltaire or an English Nietzsche. It may be well also sometines to assume a virtue if you have it not. Hypocrisy is the homage that vice renders to virtue; and it must be allowed that it is a homage that is due. But at least it ought to be recognized that it is not quite the genuine article. 'It is better, perhaps,' as Meredith says,[2] 'to

[1] Compare also the conception of the 'aristocratic man' set forth by Mr. Wells in *The Research Magnificent*, which is somewhat different from either of the others.

[2] *Richard Feverel*, chap. xviii.

pay our homage to virtue. At least it delays the spread of entire corruptness.' But it is well, I think, that the present age is showing some signs of revolt against the dominance of convention in morality and religion. As an instance, I may quote the words of one of the most promising of the young poets of whom we were bereft by the war [1]—

> 'I do not know if it seems brave
> The youthful spirit to enslave,
> And hedge about, lest it should grow
> I don't know if it's better so
> In the long end. I only know
> That when I have a son of mine,
> He shan't be made to droop and pine,
> Bound down and forced by rule and rod
> To serve a God who is no God.
> But I'll put custom on the shelf,
> And make him find his God himself.'

Brave words! But, after all, it is only the few who can be expected to embark on such a perilous voyage of discovery. The majority, I suppose, will always rest their morality and religion, to a large extent, upon tradition; and it must be remembered that there is some force in the remark of Mr. Bradley [2]—'We should consider whether the encouraging oneself in having opinions of one's own, in the sense of thinking differently from the world on moral subjects, be not, in any person other than a heaven-born prophet, sheer self-conceit.' But at least the prophets deserve a hearing; and even those who are neither prophets nor the sons of prophets may often be able to discover imperfections in the ideas and practices of their times—especially in those aspects of life with which they happen to be most familiar.

I have dwelt upon tradition in morality and religion as the things that are most central in human life. But I

[1] Chas. H. Sorley, *Marlborough and Other Poems*, p. 10.
[2] *Ethical Studies*, p. 181.

suppose it is obvious enough that, in a conventionalized society, the force of tradition is seen in other aspects of life as well. Our visitors from other countries are often impressed by the prevalence of rule of thumb in our industrial methods. We make discoveries in science, but do not utilize them in practice. This, however, is an aspect of tradition that I prefer to leave to others who know more about it. It is more visible and less deeply seated than the other forms of tradition; and it may be expected to be more easy to remedy. I may, however, quote the following summary that has recently been made [1] of the general results of the blind following of tradition that are to be found in our national life. 'The teaching of our best schools . . . is almost entirely in the hands of athletes and grammarians of the dead languages. We choose as our governors amateurs of whom we demand fluency, invincible prejudice, and a resolute blindness to dissentient opinion. In commerce we allow ourselves to be overrun by a multitude of small and mostly inefficient traders struggling to make a living by the supply of goods from the narrow and ageing stocks which are all they can afford to keep. We allow the supply of our food-stuffs to be largely in the hands of those who cannot afford to be clean. . . . We allow a large proportion of our skilled workers to waste skill and energy on the manufacture of things which are neither useful nor beautiful, on elaborate specialist valeting, cooking, gardening for those who are their inferiors in social activity and value.' I do not say that this summing up is altogether just; but it seems to contain enough truth to give us cause for serious reflection.

[1] *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, by Mr. W. Trotter, p. 136. Compare also what is said by Mr. Graham Wallas about the 'power of blind habituation in the North European races.' *The Great Society*, p. 78.

CHAPTER VII

THE SISTER NATIONS

In what has been so far stated, we have been concerned almost exclusively with England, though occasional references have been made to other parts of the United Kingdom. It is natural to concentrate our attention, in the first instance, upon the 'predominant partner,' not merely because it is the largest and most powerful factor in the common national life, but because, through the use of its language and the absorption of its literature, as well as by the fact that it contains the central seat of government, it has necessarily a pervasive influence upon the other members within the union, and provides the characteristics that are most prominently in the minds of those who seek to form a judgment upon the nation as a whole. Even strong Irish Nationalists, such as Mr. Yeats, are apt to spend a good deal of their time in England, and to show in their works many traces of English modes of thought and feeling; and the same is perhaps true even more emphatically of Scottish writers, such as Carlyle. The Welsh are even more inseparably mixed up with the English, especially in those parts of England that border upon Wales. In the general intercourse of life all educated people in these islands are constantly using the language of Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth, and can hardly fail to be in some degree influenced by their spirit, as well as by many inferior influences of a very different kind. This much is no doubt true even of the United States of America—perhaps

even truer than it is at least of Ireland and Wales; and in fact many of us are still apt to think of the people of that great nation as belonging also to the Anglo-Saxon community. One of them at least—Henry James—did, in the end, adopt England as his country; and yet, if he belonged by origin to the United Kingdom at all, it would seem that it was with Ireland that he was most properly connected. But Ireland, Scotland and Wales differ from the United States in having, for the present at least, their seat of government in England, as well as many of the formative influences of their lives.

There is another reason also that makes it almost inevitable that, in studying the British character, we should give the greater part of our attention to the character of the English. It can hardly be denied that that character is peculiarly complicated and difficult to understand. We have seen that the most apparently contradictory qualities are ascribed to it even by careful and competent judges. The English are said to be proud and modest, overbearing and tolerant, cruel and good-natured, sincere and hypocritical, religious and worldly, poetical and unimaginative, sentimental and matter of fact, eccentric and conventional, businesslike and careless, persistent and unreliable. In fact, there is hardly any conceivable quality, except meekness and loquacity, that has not sometimes been declared to be their special characteristic. I have tried to determine in what sense these apparently contradictory qualities may rightly be ascribed to them; but I am not at all confident that I have succeeded in placing them properly. In the end, one feels forced to fall back upon the view that they are a people with complex and diverse natures, having many humours and not a few poses. Now, the characters of the sister peoples are also in many respects by no means easy to determine with any precision; but I think it is pretty clear that they are relatively simple—partly, no doubt, because the conditions in which they have grown up are less

rich and varied. Hence it seems possible to say what is necessary about them within a much shorter compass.

It has been customary to ascribe a good deal of the difference between the English and the other three peoples to the fact that the former can be broadly described as Anglo-Saxon, while the others contain, in varying degrees, a strong Celtic infusion; and the general difference between the Saxon and the Celt has often been pointedly emphasized. It would perhaps hardly be possible to give a better summary of the general impression about this than that which has been supplied by A. H. Keane.[1] 'The Kelt,' he says, 'is still a Kelt, mercurial, passionate, vehement, impulsive, more courteous than sincere, voluble or eloquent, fanciful, if not imaginative, quick-witted and brilliant rather than profound, elated with success, but easily depressed, hence lacking steadfastness, and still as of old *novarum rerum cupidissimus*. The Saxon also still remains a Saxon, stolid and solid, outwardly abrupt, but warmhearted and true, haughty and even overbearing through an innate sense of superiority, yet at heart sympathetic and always just, hence a ruler of men; seemingly dull or slow, yet pre-eminent in the realms of philosophy and imagination (Newton, Shakespeare).' Recent anthropologists, however, while admitting the influence of Celtic culture and traditions, are rather inclined to doubt whether the Celtic (i.e. what is now usually called the Alpine) race is very purely or numerously represented in any part of the British Isles. 'In the main,' according to Mr. Mackinder,[2] 'the races of Britain are either Teutonic or aboriginal and pre-Celtic.' It seems to be admitted, however, that there is a considerable infusion of the Alpine race in Wales and in parts of Ireland; and that some passed over from these countries to Argyllshire and some other districts in Scotland and to those

[1] *Man: Past and Present*, p. 532. 'Philosophy,' at the end of the passage, evidently means mathematical and physical science.

[2] *Britain and the British Seas*, pp. 184–5.

parts of England that border upon Wales. The aboriginal Mediterranean peoples appear to have left traces in most parts of these countries, but perhaps most notably in Wales. Hence it would seem that we are hardly entitled to believe that the antithesis between Saxon and Celt carries us very far in distinguishing between the different peoples. On the whole, the differences between them are probably due fully as much to climate and other physical conditions, and to various historical circumstances, as to distinctions of race. But all these influences have told somewhat differently upon different parts of the same country; so that general statements are apt to be misleading. Probably Wales is, on the whole, the most homogeneous country within the British isles; but, in the few remarks that I have here to make, it will perhaps be most convenient to begin with Scotland, as that with which I am best acquainted.

1. Scottish Characteristics.—The distinction between the Scotch and the English is not very sharply marked. The inhabitants of the southern parts of Scotland and those of the northern parts of England do not appear to differ widely from one another either in race or in social traditions. The conspicuous differences are those between the north of Scotland and the south of England; but these differences have a considerable effect on the general life of the respective countries; and they have been supported by various historical circumstances. The differences between the northern and southern parts of Scotland are commonly described as those between the Highlands and the Lowlands; and many people have tended to think of the distinctions between these as being largely due to the difference between the Celt and the Saxon. This view appears to be not altogether erroneous, but it is probably to a large extent misleading. What is described as the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum* is no doubt in the main an inheritance from the old race of Scots who crossed from Ireland, bringing with them

a good many Celtic traditions, and occupied certain parts of the Highlands. But it appears to be now generally believed that this race forms only a small proportion of the inhabitants of the north of Scotland. The outlying islands are chiefly occupied by Nordic races from the continent; and it would seem that these races are widely spread throughout the Highlands; and, of course, they have become intermixed with the southern peoples as well. It is believed also that there is in some places a considerable infusion of the aboriginal Mediterranean race. The Picts are now, as I understand, generally regarded as belonging to that race. The Normans also left their mark on the country (not to speak of Spaniards and others). Thus the Scottish people are, like most other peoples, of very mixed origin, and inherit many different traditions. The long survival of the clan system, with its intense but narrow loyalties and its almost incessant feuds, has tended to preserve something of the perfervid spirit even among many who have little racial kinship with those from whom the country derived its name; and this spirit has probably gained an added strength from the somewhat dour nature of the Norsemen. At any rate, it seems to be this element of somewhat combative and restless intensity that chiefly distinguishes the typical Scot from the more equable and tolerant Englishman. He tends sometimes to be fervid in his religion, sometimes in his business, sometimes in devotion to his family, his friends or his country, sometimes in the pursuit of ideal aims, sometimes only in that of his own private interests. His general character is that of a slowly burning fire. The relative slowness, which distinguishes him on the whole from the Irish and Welsh even more than from the English, is probably most noticeable in the more purely 'Nordic' parts of the population. I suppose mountain-dwellers are generally somewhat slower than those who live on the plains. The comparative slowness and intensity of a large part of the population

cause them to appear to be lacking in the sense of humour; but this can hardly be said to be a general characteristic. In the southern parts of the country at least a 'pawky' humour is generally somewhat strongly developed—a little grim, but not sardonic. On the whole, however, it seems true to say that the Scottish people in general are somewhat slower than the English, more cautious, more inclined to think before they speak or act, less fond of amusement, more earnest and stubborn, less tolerant, more inclined to estimate people by their personal qualities rather than by their social position. 'Highland pride' is proverbial; it is partly connected with the exclusiveness of the clans; but the besetting sin of the Scotsman, in general, is rather conceit than pride. His estimate of himself, as of others, is based on what he believes to be his personal merit, and he is generally inclined to rate it pretty high. Hence he is more sensitive than most Englishmen to personal affronts, and he is a little apt to 'nurse his wrath to keep it warm.' He does not take what Meredith calls a 'thwacking' or a criticism so readily, and he does not so easily forgive it. The English tend to think the Scotch too calculating and self-seeking—they commonly use the word 'canny' in this sense—and lacking in the lighter graces. The Scotch, on the other hand, are apt to think the English somewhat superficial, lacking in earnestness, too fond of comfort and pleasure. They tend to think the jokes of the southerner as 'fizzenless' as his moralizing. Carlyle reciprocates the 'imperfect sympathy' of Lamb.

All the smaller nationalities, in contrast with the English, have to some extent the characteristics of a people who are either actually poor or at least whose traditions are based on a condition of comparative poverty. This is certainly true of the Scotch. 'In Scotland,' Emerson says,[1] 'there is a rapid loss of all grandeur of mien and manners; a provincial eagerness and acuteness

[1] *English Traits*, iv.

appear ; the poverty of the country makes itself remarked and a coarseness of manners ; and, among the intellectual, is the insanity of dialectics.' This is perhaps less true now than in Emerson's time, but there is still a relative simplicity in Scotland. Even at the time of its more conspicuous poverty it may be doubted whether there was as much degrading poverty in Scotland as in many parts of England. The peasantry, as described by Burns, had a good deal of inward happiness, and ' buirdly chiels and clever hizzies ' were developed under conditions of considerable hardship. They are not very fond of empty show. They have a preference for things that are simple and unpretending. Their sentiments are deeply rooted, and tend to attach themselves with peculiar readiness to what is old and even a little faded. Such songs as ' Auld land syne,' ' The auld house,' etc., may be taken as illustrating this. The feeling is somewhat similar to that expressed in the Latin *eheu fugaces*, or *tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis*. It differs from the English attachment to what is old, in which what is old is still possessed. The English would say rather *nec nos mutamur in illis*, or, with Shakespeare, ' No, time, thou shalt not say that I do change.' In the Scottish sentiment, on the other hand, change is admitted ; but the value contained in the past is not wholly lost. The attitude expressed in such songs has too much sincerity to be called sentimental. It is not a pose. Indeed, the Scotch are, in general, singularly undramatic and undemonstrative. Their feeling for independence is perhaps more intense than that of the English, but seems to be rather more negative. They are chiefly anxious to be left alone ; whereas the Englishman desires room to expand. Burns's little poem ' Naebody,' ending ' If naebody care for me, I'll care for naebody,' is not uncharacteristic. Hume and Adam Smith are a good deal responsible for the spread of individualism in England. In general, the distinction between intensity

and extensiveness marks the difference between the two peoples. The Scotch have not the natural generosity, magnanimity, tolerance and general expansiveness of the English. Zeal is perhaps their most striking excellence. What their hand finds to do, they do with their might. They are often very generous in their actions, but rather on principle than by a natural instinct, and usually within more definite limits. 'The Scotch,' says Beddoe,[1] 'are a generous race. . . . They may be parsimonious for themselves, but they are liberal for public objects.' When they form friendships, their attachments are often singularly warm. Burns and Scott were conspicuous instances of this characteristic; but so, on the whole, was Carlyle—like the dog of Heraclitus and Plato, he attacked only those whom he did not know. They tend to concentrate on definite ends, and are often extremely practical in pursuit of them, rather than to expand on a multitude of interests. They are more accessible to ideas than the English, and are more ready to apply them in practical affairs. Many of the practical applications of science have been due to them. It may suffice to refer to James Watt and Lord Kelvin, who are specially good instances of the intensive zeal which is characteristic of the Scotch. Yet their zeal sometimes carries them pretty far. The Admirable Crichton was a Scotchman, and so was Robertson Smith. But perhaps that kind of universality may almost be regarded as a speciality. A Scottish Shakespeare, with naturally comprehensive sympathies, is hardly conceivable. They tend to be more dogmatic and intolerant than the English; and it must be admitted that they have committed themselves to very extraordinary dogmas—such as the more extreme types of Calvinistic theology. It is in such matters that the rather too *perfervidum ingenium* is apt to lead to absurdities.

The difference between the Scottish attitude towards

[1] *Memories of Eighty Years*, p. 233.

morality and that of the English has already been referred to. The Scotch, in general, are not satisfied with traditional morality or external codes, and especially not with codes that depend on deference to the manners of a superior class. It is for this reason that they are apt to be suspicious of the 'English style and gestures fine.' Burns himself was perhaps sometimes led away by the affectation of these; but, in general, they demand a foundation that is more broadly human, and usually they seek for a religious or metaphysical basis. Their best writers tend to be speculative like Hume, or prophetic like Carlyle. This is partly accounted for by the more thorough and democratic character of their religious reformation. The tendency in this direction is, however, somewhat counteracted by the traditions of the rather feudal clan system in the north.

The democratic sentiments of the Scots—especially perhaps the lowland Scots—are seen in almost all their most notable heroes. Wallace, Knox and Burns are, on the whole, their most generally recognized representatives on different sides of the national life; and they were all men of the people. James Watt and Adam Smith, who represent other sides, are essentially of the same type; and so is Kant, who was of Scottish extraction, and retained at least the simple piety and democratic convictions of his race. Scottish democracy is perhaps rather more akin to that of the French than to that of the English. Béranger may be compared with Burns. In a good many respects, indeed, the Scotch have more in common with the French than with the English. R. L. Stevenson always felt more at home in France than in England, and in this I believe he was by no means unique. The Scotch are nearly all full of the sentiment that is expressed in 'A man's a man for a' that.' They believe in equality and fraternity as much as in liberty. At the same time, they have not usually much sympathy with what is described as 'levelling down.' They recognize

distinctions, but they are distinctions that must be based on 'sense and worth,' not on anything external. This is, I suppose, largely to be ascribed to the diffusion of popular education; and this again is closely connected with the more thorough character of the religious reformation in Scotland.[1] This helps to prevent the love of independence from turning into anarchy. The democratic sentiment turns easily enough into the recognition of an aristocracy of talent and moral purpose, as it did most notably in the case of Carlyle. Hume, Scott and Ruskin may also be referred to in the same connection. These might be regarded as representing, to some extent, an 'antithetical self' to the more purely democratic attitude. J. S. Mill was partly a conciliator between the two attitudes, though in the main on the side of democracy. Their democratic instincts have often been a help in British politics. Campbell-Bannerman's settlement of the difficulties in South Africa is a good illustration.

That the Scottish type is, on the whole, very different from the English, appears quite obviously throughout their literatures. The Scotch excel in love-songs and ballads and in poems of semi-humorous reflection, largely concerned wtih rural and domestic life. Sympathy with animals is a prominent feature, and a certain liking for things wild and uncanny. They often deal with quaint semi-humorous superstitions, to which the personality of the Deil is apt to be somewhat prominent. Some of these elements are probably derived from the Highlands, and perhaps more remotely from Ireland, and from the peoples of northern Europe; but they have become to a large extent domesticated throughout the country.

[1] Mr. Ramsay Muir has recently called attention to the way in which a certain thoughtfulness about life has been promoted among the Scotch by the fact that the first question in their Catechism is, 'What is man's chief end?' *Peers and Bureaucrats*, p. 97. The answer supplied to the question may not be very enlightening, but it tends at least to promote reflection.

The fondness of the people for these somewhat weird elements may perhaps be connected with their general tendency to sympathize with what is simple, lowly and elemental, rather than with what is conventional and over-refined. No doubt Burns purged out this element, as Cervantes purged out the chivalry of Spain. It should not be forgotten that it was Burns more than anyone else who brought back Wordsworth from the conventional style of English poetry to a style of greater simplicity. But it has a somewhat affected air with Wordsworth, and he tended to pass away from it again. Although the movement which he initiated has had a considerable influence on English literature, it has still left a very appreciable difference between what is characteristically English and what is characteristically Scotch. It is not much of an exaggeration to say that all purely English poetry is contained in Shakespeare. Of course, every notable writer has some characteristics that are peculiarly his own; but there is hardly anything in the work of any prominent English writer that cannot be paralleled in the work of Shakespeare. But there is nothing in Shakespeare like Auld Lang Syne, A Man's a Man for a' that, The Jolly Beggars, The Twa Dogs, The Farmer's Address to his Auld Mare, The Mouse, The Address to the Deil, Tam o' Shanter, etc. At least, if there is anything of the kind in Shakespeare, it is in the Scottish play *Macbeth*. The witches there are of the same family as those in Tam o' Shanter. Perhaps this may serve as evidence that, with fuller opportunities, Shakespeare might have dealt as sympathetically with the Scottish character as he did with the Welsh. No doubt it might be possible to point to some English writers who have produced work more or less similar in type to some of the poems that have been mentioned; but it is very obvious that they are not as characteristic of England as they are of Scotland. On the other hand, there is nothing in Scottish literature that is at all like *Paradise Lost* or

the plays of Shakespeare or Keats's *Ode to the Nightingale.* Perhaps the large outlook and cosmic imagination that is characteristic of these works requires a better established national life than Scotland has had. The lack of dramatic literature may be partly due to the sternness of the religious atmosphere; but I believe it is partly due also to a certain intensity of personal feeling which does not readily permit of posing. Plato's criticisms on dramatic posing are probably not very much needed in Scotland. The Scotch are in some respects even more reserved than the English. They are usually less demonstrative. But they seldom affect to be anything other than what they are. The Scotsman wears a veil, rather than a mask. When he expresses himself at all, he generally speaks from the bottom of his heart; whereas an Englishman often speaks, according to the Yorkshire phrase, 'off the top.' On the whole, what one has to say about the Scotch in general is that they are solid, but very slow and sometimes rather 'dour.' They are more thoughtful, but less subtle, than the English.

I am afraid it cannot be maintained that the Scottish people in general are strongly pacific. Their zeal, their dogmatism, and their love of independence, lead them pretty readily into contention. The joy of battle is, on the whole, more prominent in their literature than it is in that of England. It is very prominent in Scott, and hardly less so in Burns and Carlyle, as well as in many lesser writers, such as Campbell and Macaulay. This may be partly accounted for by the fact that it has so constantly been necessary in the past for Scotland to struggle for its freedom. England, though sometimes threatened, has generally felt itself to be secure.[1] It is to be regretted also that the military spirit in Scotland has often been fortified by what is called Dutch courage.

[1] The view expressed by Henry James in *The Middle Years,* that the sense of security is the foundation of most of the English characteristics, is worth attending to

The difference between whisky and beer may be more closely connected with the difference between the northern and southern peoples than most philosophers would care to acknowledge. 'Man ist was er isst,' is a saying that has but little force [1]; what one drinks is perhaps more significant. At any rate, I think it must be admitted that all sorts of circumstances conspire to generate differences in national temperament; and though

> Sages their solemn e'en may steek,
> And physically causes seek
> In clime and season,

they may not always hit upon the true ones.

This must suffice with regard to the Scottish type; and, being less familar with the other nationalities, I must touch more sketchily upon them, and rely more on the testimony of others.

2. Welsh Characteristics.—There is the same difficulty in characterizing the Welsh that there is in characterizing most other peoples. Though they are probably more homogeneous than the others, they are still not altogether homogeneous. It seems certain that different races are included in the population, though their exact origins have not yet been—perhaps never can be—quite precisely determined. They are commonly described as Celtic; and this term is probably more correctly applied to them than it could well be to any of the other sister nations. It is correctly applied at least in the sense that it calls attention to old traditions by which their national life and sentiments have been shaped and coloured. Recent

[1] Carlyle, however, was sometimes rather fond of dwelling on this kind of influence. One remembers his saying, when James Mill wanted some oatmeal, that it was pleasant to see the old man returning to the 'fundamental basis of his being.' Treitschke, on the other hand, liked to emphasize the difference between those peoples who imbibe the 'noble wine' and those who have to be content with the 'horrid Schnapps.' Of water-drinkers he seemed to take no account.

anthropologists, however, tend to avoid the term. How far the Welsh people is of Alpine stock appears to be a very difficult question to determine. Probably that race is more prominent in some parts of the country than in others; but it seems to be pretty certain that in all parts it is to a large extent intermixed with those aboriginal Mediterranean races which appear to have persisted here to a greater extent than in other parts of our island; and no doubt there is also a considerable infusion of the more Nordic type.[1] It is probably true, however, that the general way of thinking, feeling and acting by which the people is characterized has been more largely determined at least till quite recent times by the Celtic traditions than by influences derived from any other source. At any rate, here, as in many other places, in spite of racial diversities, there is on the whole a strongly united feeling of nationality throughout the country. The national language is well preserved, and the literature contained in it is highly valued; and some general characteristics are sufficiently prevalent to be taken as typical. The description of the Welsh that Meredith (himself partly an offshoot from that nationality) has put into the mouth of one of his characters,[2] though both the good qualities and the less good are—I suppose, intentionally—somewhat exaggerated. 'Welsh blood is queer blood, I own. They find it difficult to forgive; and trifles offend; and they are unhappily just as secretive as they are sensitive. . . . They have poetry in them; they are valiant; they

[1] A good deal has been written in recent years about the racial elements in the Principality. In particular, there is a paper containing a very interesting collection of materials on this subject, by Messrs. Fleure and James, in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* for 1916. The book on *The Welsh People*, by Rhys and Brynmor Jones, and Mr. Lloyd's *History of Wales*, Vol. I., may also be referred to. Rhys's book on *Celtic Britain* throws a good deal of light on the population both of Wales and of other parts of the United Kingdom. There are some interesting speculations also in Mr. N. C. Macnamara's *Origin and Character of the British People*.

[2] *Celt and Saxon*, chap. vi.

are hospitable to teach the Arab a lesson : I do not believe their life is their friend's at a need. . . . Offend them however, and it's war, declared or covert. And I must admit that their best friend can too easily offend them. . . . They have a ready comprehension for great thoughts.' Readiness both for good and for evil—but most often for good—is perhaps their most notable characteristic. They are ready in receptivity, in feeling, in perception, and in action. Enthusiasm is their strong quality, as zeal is that of the Scotch. They have the *perfervidum ingenium*, but it is a more quickly burning fire. It works more rapidly, but is perhaps less persistent. They do not, for instance, brood over injuries, but rather take prompt action, like that of Fluellen, though not always quite so drastic. They are generally described as choleric [1] and impatient, not perhaps exactly of that swiftly moving disposition

> 'That carries anger as the flint bears fire,
> Which much enforced shows a hasty spark,
> And straight is cold again,'

but, in comparison with some others, they might be so described. Most of the respects in which they are sharply contrasted with the English are almost sufficiently summed up by the distinction between the thin-skinned, sensitive and emotional type and that which is thick-skinned, dogged and heedless. Quickness of perception is one of their strong qualities. The judgments that they form may not always be accurate ; but they are generally arrived at rapidly and decisively, and are not often very widely astray on the main issues. Hence they are ready

[1] It may perhaps be worth while to note that to be choleric is not the same thing as to be warlike or even pugnacious. Warlike peoples, such as the Romans and Prussians, are generally cool and patient. Julius Cæsar was so in a pre-eminent degree. So was Henry V, as described by Shakespeare. The Irish, who appear to be a warlike people, are in some respects cool, though perhaps not very patient.

for emergencies and somewhat impatient of muddle and confusion. Fluellen could not stand the lack of Roman discipline in Henry's army. But the kind of order that they value is not one based on tradition, but rather on a clear survey of the situation. It is well to remember that Oliver Cromwell [1] was of Welsh extraction, and it may not be wholly fanciful that he owed to this some of his promptitude and power of organization. At any rate, the English are not likely soon to forget the help that they received from Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Rhondda in their time of trouble during the Great War. Their success seems to have been mainly due to their adaptability and comparative freedom from pedantic adherence to tradition. In another sphere the swift insight, organizing skill and power of clear and persuasive statement of Viriamu Jones were very prominent in the formation of the University of Wales. Other instances will readily occur to those who have been associated with the Welsh in any form of co-operative work. Robert Owen, the founder of co-operation, was a Welshman. Their clearness and love of order is seen in their written language, which is strictly phonetic. In the same way, the military discipline of the Romans is as apparent in the march of their periods as in the order of their cohorts. Similarly, the chaotic energy of the English appears in their spelling [2] as well as in their literature

[1] Not much emphasis can be laid on this. It may be worth while to note here, however, that some recent anthropologists are inclined to believe that the epithet 'roundheads' was not applied to the Puritans merely on account of the way in which they wore their hair, but was due to a more or less unconscious recognition that a considerable proportion of them belonged to a more broad-headed race than the dolichocephalic Cavaliers.

[2] To prevent misunderstanding, it may be well to state that I am not in favour of the introduction of phonetic spelling in English. I believe it would create more confusion than it would remove. But I am in favour of some moderate simplification, such as the dropping of the termination 'ough.' I would like to be allowed to write 'plow,' 'ruff,' 'thro,' etc. Similarly, I

and political institutions. The readiness of perception and imagination of the Welsh gives them much skill in artistic work, though possibly they lack the perseverance and largeness of outlook that are necessary for the highest forms of creative construction. Mr. Arthur Symons notes [1] that there is a 'sharp physical apprehension of things' in Welsh poetry, and that their writers are 'more definite, more concrete, closer to the earth and to instinctive emotion than most other poets.' They are apt to express themselves in enthusiastic bursts of song, rather than in the kind of monuments that are more lasting than brass. Their definitely patriotic poetry is noteworthy. It makes a deeper appeal than anything of the kind in English, and may be compared rather with the *Marseillaise*, the *Wacht am Rhein* and *Deutschland über Alles* (the meaning of which has, in general, been somewhat grossly misconceived in this country). In several respects the Welsh appear to bear more resemblance to the French than to the English; and, like the French, they are more apt to be vain than either proud or conceited. They are generally anxious for the approval of others, and they are also peculiarly warm in their appreciation of others who give them satisfaction. They are much addicted to hero-worship. Fluellen shows this, not only in his attitude towards Henry and his reference to Alexander and Mark Antony, but also in his admiration for Pistol on a first view. In this case the admiration was due to Pistol's bombastic utterances;

should be glad to see some of the political anomalies a little trimmed, but should despair of any attempt to introduce complete logical precision. In referring to what appear to me to be the characteristics of different peoples, I do not, in general, mean to imply that one people is superior to another. I am only trying to call attention to their various excellences and defects. But I believe that these are usually to be seen in small matters as well as in great.

[1] *Figures of Several Centuries*, pp. 394 and 398. I suppose it is the Mediterranean element, rather than the Alpine, that is mainly responsible for some of the more artistic characteristics of the people.

and it is probably true that the Welsh are more apt to be swayed by eloquence than most other peoples. Of course, Fluellen's attitude towards Pistol was very speedily changed; and perhaps there are some signs of slight rebellion even in his attitude towards Henry. He gives fair warning—'I need not to be ashamed of your majesty, praised be God, so long as your majesty is an honest man.' Meredith's phrase,[1] 'delicate Welsh natures, as exacting as they were delicate,' is characteristic. It is difficult to live up to the demands of a Welshman's hero-worship. He tends not to love at all, or all in all. His warmth of devotion to particular individuals often leads him to be unjust to others. Indeed, justice and the virtues most nearly allied to it are probably not among his strongest qualities. One would not naturally think of Rhadamanthus or Aristides or possibly George Washington as being akin to the Welsh. On the other hand, their quickness of perception, their readiness of sympathy and imagination, and their unique gift of persuasive speech, fit them in a special degree for the legal profession; and it has been noted that they have produced an unusual number of distinguished judges.[2] In public affairs they are perhaps a little too prone to think of men rather than of measures; and perhaps their estimate of men is not always based on 'sense and worth,' but rather on more superficial qualities. It is seldom based, however, as that of the English is apt to be, on merely external position or possessions. Some of their defects are perhaps due to lack of stamina. They seem, in general, to be better for a short gallop than for a long race. They probably suffer somewhat as a nation from being rather too small and too homogeneous. They have not, like the Scotch, had the benefit of the friendly mixture of peoples obviously heterogeneous. They have some of the characteristics that are said to belong to

[1] *Sandra Belloni*, chap. xlviii.

[2] See Mr. J. Vyrnwy Morgan's *Study in Nationality*, pp 456–8.

those whom the gods love. One thinks of them as young. 'Young Wales' (Cymru Fydd) has been a sort of watch-word in recent years, and perhaps their more mature glories are yet to come. At least there has been a great awakening in education and in literary interest. They certainly strike one as being very much alive, and they have been described as 'combining an obstinate vitality with a certain happy power of adapting themselves to new circumstances.'

3. Irish Characteristics.—Similar remarks could hardly be made about the Irish. Their chief glories belong to a somewhat remote past, when they were the torch-bearers of European civilization [1]; and what they chiefly suffer from is lack of homogeneity. Nor do they strike one, in general, as being at all deficient in staying power. Rather, it is sometimes claimed that they are peculiarly solid and reliable. Mr. Shaw has urged [2] that Nelson, who could hardly be characterized as other than a typical Englishman, was vain, rather than proud, erratic and variable in temper, with more than his fair share of the national tendency to pose; while Wellington, who was at least partly Irish (as Kitchener also was) was solid and reliable, a type of the 'strong, silent man' whom the English are supposed to favour, and one 'who stood foursquare to all the winds that blow.' This is open to some doubt, however. Nelson was cool and steadfast

[1] The love of what is old in Ireland seems to differ from the corresponding sentiment in England and Scotland. In England it is the attachment to old things that still remain as traditions or possessions. In Scotland it is a more regretful affection for what has passed away or faded. In Ireland it is the memory rather of the remote past, with a certain lingering hope that something of its splendour may yet be restored. See on this *Dawn in Ireland*, by Marie Harrison, chap. vi. The Welsh, though clinging to many old traditions, do not seem to me to have on the whole quite the same regard for what is old. Their quick perceptions tend, I think, to make them live rather more vividly in the present than most of the other peoples. But this may very well be a wrong impression.

[2] Preface to *John Bull's Other Island*.

enough when these qualities were specially needed. Like most Englishmen, he was at his best in time of difficulty. Wellington, again, was Anglo-Irish. At any rate, these cases can hardly be taken as quite typical of national temperament. Silence is certainly not the common attribute of the Irish, though the Anglo-Irishman has often a good deal of reserve. In general the Irish, if not so readily swayed by eloquence as the Welsh, and perhaps not specially notable for the kind of eloquence that persuades, are certainly not lacking in the ready flow of language. Their 'blarney' is proverbial. Even the uneducated Irishman has often a considerable gift of expression. 'An Irish peasant,' according to Mr. Padraic Colum,[1] 'when speaking, has in his mind a compelling sense of style.' Perhaps this ought to be connected with the Irish love of music, which appears to be more intense than that of any of the other peoples.[2] Burke is a good example of the kind of eloquence that is characteristic of the race. It is perhaps more impressive than attractive. It is apt to be somewhat extravagant in metaphor and entangled by its windings. It is probable that even the dithyrambics of Burke were less convincing than the stammerings of Cromwell. In ordinary intercourse, this tendency to a somewhat unbridled flow leads to the production of what are called 'bulls,' which are seldom pure absurdities, sometimes rather intentional paradoxes, with a certain pregnancy of meaning. So at least it is contended.

[1] *My Irish Year*, p. 87.

[2] This is much emphasized in *Dawn in Ireland* (pp. 84–5), by Marie Harrison. It is pointed out that music is often referred to by Irish writers as one of the necessities of life. One of them, for instance, describes Adam and Eve, when driven from Paradise, as being 'without wood, fire, house, music, or raiment.' Mr. Padraic Colum gives similar illustrations (p. 246). In fact, there seem to be so many instances of it that one almost begins to doubt it. But perhaps this is an Irish Bull. One suspects, I mean, that it may be a conventional phrase.

In action also, as well as in utterance, the Irish seem to be apt to be somewhat reckless; but they have an incomparable dash and grim determination. It is chiefly in war that their services have been conspicuous; but even in peace they retain something of the attitude of the warrior. The wise Goethe said that to be human meant to be a fighter ('und das heisst ein Kämpfer sein'). Burns has a similar sentiment—'Man is a sodger, and life is a faught.' The life of an Irishman is perhaps more so than most others. Few would subscribe more cordially to the saying of Nietzsche, that it is only a good war that can sanctify a cause. In a recent book,[1] in which the military characteristics of the British nationalities are described, 'the rapture of battle' is ascribed by the author to the Irish alone. They like both actual warfare and the war of words. They are strongly individual and naturally aggressive; but it is perhaps true to say that their aggressiveness is apt to take the form of somewhat futile invective.[2] They have neither the pride of the English, the conceit of the Scotch, nor the vanity of the Welsh; but they are more self-assertive than any of them. Even the gentle Goldsmith could not restrain this tendency (though, in his case, it approximated to vanity). The Brontës carried it to Yorkshire, where perhaps it was not much out of its element. It is perhaps well to remember that the vigorous fighter, William James (who felt so keenly the need for a 'moral equivalent of war'), was of Irish extraction; and I am rather inclined

[1] *The Irish on the Somme*, by Mr. MacDonagh. It is said that the Bavarians resemble them in this respect. See *Behind the German Veil*, by J. M. De Beaufort, p. 62. If this is the case, it would be interesting to compare the general conditions of life in the two countries. Perhaps they may both be somewhat deficient in other natural outlets for the competitive spirit. It is perhaps true also that racially they are not very far apart. In a similar way the Swabians have been called the Scots of Germany.

[2] The picture of 'The Tinker's Curse,' by Mr. J. B. Yeats, given in Mr. Colum's *Irish Year*, is a very striking representation (almost a symbol) of this weakness.

to ascribe some of the freakishness of Meredith to the Irish strain in his ancestry.[1] He was certainly rather fond of dealing with Irish types. The Irish are more averse to compromise than any other people in these islands. When they have got a pretty quarrel, they rather like to keep it up. It is chiefly this tendency that makes them so difficult in politics. 'Toleration,' it has been said [2] by a friendly observer, 'is not at all an Irish characteristic, and is perhaps the mental attitude which an Irishman of the baser sort least endures or forgives in an antagonist. Abuse him, curse him—he answers you with curses readier and more fluent than your own, then goes his way, and forgets the matter. Pass over his attack in pity or contempt, and he will bear you a grudge to the last hour of your life.' Their troubles are not all due to lack of sympathetic treatment on the part of the English, though no doubt many—perhaps most—of them are. They are not easily led. They are rather too critical to be hero-worshippers. They shine as iconoclasts. They love paradox, and their humour is sardonic.[3] Their most famous period in history was at the time when the Church was emphatically militant. To secure their devotion, it seems necessary to appeal to something supernatural or mystical. They can devote themselves to a Christ or a St. Francis, and they may be captured by the conception of a superman; but they are not readily controlled by a mere mortal, except perhaps by a great military leader. At any rate, they like a paternal rule, like that typified by Father O'Flynn. A

[1] He appears to have thought so himself. See Mr. Edward Clodd's *Memories*, p. 141.

[2] *Hurrish*, by Emily Lawless, chap. ix.

[3] Mr. Chesterton (*Shaw*, p. 236) says that 'there are two types of great humourists: those who love to see a man absurd and those who hate to see him absurd. Of the first kind are Rabelais and Dickens; of the second kind are Swift and Bernard Shaw.' The second (which perhaps inclines more to wit than to humour) appears to be the Irish type.

somewhat mystical institution, like the Catholic Church, appeals to them; and perhaps—though this is more doubtful—some of them would have been willing even to accept the rule of the Kaiser, with his 'old ally.' A sympathetic despot, with a vein of mysticism and some eloquence, might lead them as if with a magic wand. 'If there are two traits in the Irish people,' it has been recently affirmed,[1] 'which are universally accepted as traditionally characteristic, they are devotion to a leader, and especially to a leader of the aristocratic type, and an inclination to think and work in groups.' It seems doubtful whether they will ever fall into line with the Anglo-Saxon type of democracy[2]; but perhaps that type itself may have to undergo some modification; and, in fact, it is doubtful whether, in some of the rural parts of England at least, there is much more attachment to democratic rule than there is in Ireland. The real spirit of democracy has to be gradually cultivated.

So far, I have ventured, with a good deal of hesitation, to note some conspicuous features. But Ireland is a land of paradox, and it is peculiarly difficult to make statements about it without falling into self-contradiction. Mr. Chesterton has used the expression 'frigid fierceness' to express a common characteristic. I suppose it is not really frigid; or at least it must be compared with the quality that Milton ascribes to the glacial region in Hades. It

> 'Burns frore, and cold performs the effect of fire.'

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[1] By Mr. Lysagt, *Sir Horace Plunkett*, p. 95. See also *An Irish Gentleman*, by Mr. M. G. Moore, p. 323.

[2] 'It is very questionable,' says Mr. O'Hara (*Chief and Tribune*, p. 23) 'if there were ever anything at all approaching a majority of the Irish people in favour of a republican form of government. All the leanings and traditions of the race have been monarchial.' Similarly, Miss Emily Lawless declares (in *Hurrish*) that 'no Irishman—no Irishman born of peasant parents at any rate—is ever genuinely and at heart a democrat'; and Mr. Darrell Figgis (*Æ*, p. 76) refers to the Irish as 'a naturally aristocratic people.'

It is an attitude that may be contrasted both with the quick fire of the Welsh and with the slow fire of the Scotch. It is fire damped down, but all the more intense.[1]

Mr. Chesterton has also quoted the somewhat illuminating phrase of Mr. Shaw, that 'an Irishman has two eyes.' In itself this is not remarkable. The Cyclops is exceptional. But the meaning appears to be that an Irishman has a peculiar squint. His two eyes present different objects. Perhaps one may venture to put it differently by saying that an Irishman, even when most genuinely devoted to any object, preserves a certain detachment from it. His life is apt to be unsettled, and he is always in readiness to view things in a different light. Mr. Padraic Colum has noted[2] that Irish social life 'has two aspects: one shows a world of kindly friendships wherein the binding power of blood is strongly recognized—a community where the social sense has been cultivated and where social intercourse is a necessity; and the other aspect shows never-ending quarrels between families of the same blood, constant and vexatious litigation, outbursts of satire and invective.' It is perhaps specially true of Irish hatred, what Carlyle said of hatred in general, that it is 'inverted love.' Again, Mr. Colum says[3] of the Irish: 'They have intimations of a spiritual world, but these do not leave them "poisoned with piety." The religion of the Irish people is part of their existence, and they live with it easily and gladly.' This refers, I suppose, to the Catholic part of the population. Catholicism, being so much an other-world religion, does not interfere quite so much with the present life as Protestantism is apt to do. The Catholic Saint is a being apart, with a special 'vocation.' For the others, religion is more an affair of ceremony—often of kindly and inspiring

[1] There are some instructive remarks bearing upon this in *Byeways of Study*, by Mr. Darrell Figgis, p. 8. I suppose the phrase 'as loveless as an Irishman' is due to their apparent frigidity

[2] *My Irish Year*, pp. 92–3.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 63–4.

ceremony—than of the individual heart and conscience. Hence it is less exacting and less liable to produce hypocrisy. In this respect the Irish stand closer to many continental countries than the English; and many Europeans find it much easier to understand the Irish than the English, many of whom (and perhaps still more Scotch) are, in truth, 'poisoned with piety'—or perhaps rather with an acid substitute for it, having, in Swift's phrase, 'just enough religion to make them hate one another, not enough to make them love one another.' [1]

In all this I have, in the main, been following the views about the Irish that have been set before us by several recent writers who have some right to claim an intimate knowledge of the subject. I must confess, however, that I feel some doubt with regard to certain parts of what is now pretty commonly maintained. We have been eloquently, and on the whole convincingly, taught that the old conception of the 'stage Irishman' is a gross misrepresentation, though such recent writings as those of Synge, Lady Gregory, and others would seem to show that it was not without an element of truth. But is it certain that the view that we have been asked to substitute for it is a wholly right one? The difficulty in answering this is, as in other similar cases, that it is not always clear who are properly to be regarded as genuine Irishmen. It has been said [2] that 'there is only one people in Ireland —the Irish people.' But there are certainly many races; and it is not always easy to say what race we are thinking of when we select our types.[3] Most of those who are

[1] For the contrast between England and Ireland in this respect, reference may be made to Mr. Holdenby's *Folk of the Furrow*, chap. xiii. The difference is no doubt largely due to the difference of class from which the majority of the clergy are drawn in the two countries.

[2] Colum, *My Irish Year*, p. 275.

[3] Many of them would seem to have come originally from Spain; and it is perhaps not wholly fanciful to suggest that they retain some elements of affinity. See J. Beddoe's *Races of Britain*, p. 10. But such speculations are very uncertain.

best known to us in this country are of English or Scotch extraction; and the characters of these are, in general, very like those of Englishmen or Scotchmen, except that, in the case of the English at least, the coating of conventionality (often a rather thin coating at the best) has been rubbed off, and some sympathy for a poorer and simpler mode of life put in its place. A similar change may often be noted in Englishmen who have emigrated to Canada or Australia or elsewhere. The fundamental features of the character remain, but some of its accidents are transformed. Men like Swift, Wellington and Parnell seem to me to be essentially Englishmen, but Englishmen whose general outlook upon life has been somewhat changed by circumstances. When it is said that the Irish, in a certain emphatic sense, 'have two eyes,' I cannot but suspect that one of the eyes is an English one; and I am pretty sure that the 'frigid fierceness' of men like Swift and Parnell is almost as much English as Irish—or at least is characteristic of a Nordic rather than an Alpine race. I should be disposed to regard Goldsmith as a distinctly more representative Irishman.[1] *His* eye at least was single, and his body full of light. The fact that Blake has been supposed by some to have displayed Irish characteristics may serve to show how easily we may deceive ourselves about national types. Blake does appear to have borne a considerable resemblance to several typical Anglo-Irishmen; yet it seems certain that he was simply an unconventional Englishman—or at least an Englishman who

[1] What was previously noted (p. 75) about the race to which Goldsmith is believed to have belonged may appear to tell against this. It would seem that he was anthropologically akin to one who is generally thought of as typically English, and to another who is apt to be supposed to be typically Scotch (or perhaps Norman). It must be admitted that judgments about national characteristics are very uncertain. It would seem, however, that the type referred to is predominantly Alpine, and has consequently fully as much right to be associated with Ireland as with England.

was bound only by the conventions of his own making. This is a matter of some importance, especially when we are speculating—as we are almost bound to do—about the political destiny of Ireland. Most of those who are intimately acquainted with the country emphasize the fact that the typical Irishman does not value self-government. Many of the leaders in the movement for self-determination are of English or some other alien origin. This fact does not prove that self-determination would not be good for the Irish people, but it points to one of the difficulties that have to be faced in endeavouring to secure it and to render it effective. The phrase 'Sinn Fein' (at least if interpreted as meaning 'we ourselves,' rather than 'ourselves alone') does, no doubt, express the very spirit of self-government; and its use may point to the growing recognition that it is necessary for the people to work out its own salvation. But it seems to be commonly used in a way that does not quite bring this out; and it is doubtful how far it can be accepted as expressing the spirit of the people in general.

I suppose some of the peculiarities of the Irish are racial [1]; but others are due to climate and other physical conditions, and to social traditions, which vary considerably in different parts of the country, but are traceable in the main to Celtic sources. The fact that the country is deficient in mineral resources, and is consequently, in general, pastoral and agricultural, tends to differentiate it from the larger island. It serves to prevent concentration and to split the population into comparatively small

[1] The racial features are not uniform, but it seems to be thought that in some parts of the country the Celtic or Alpine type is to be found in a purer form than in Great Britain. Mr. N. C. Macnamara (*Origin and Character of the British People*, p. 156) considers this race to be of Mongolian extraction, and describes the Burmese as 'the Irish of the East'—just as the Chinese have sometimes been said to be the English of the East. Such resemblances between different peoples are instructive, even if they do not point to racial affinities.

groups. A country of this kind cannot easily be political, in the oldest sense of the word: it lacks the life of a *Polis*.[1] It may be this circumstance that accounts for the relative prominence and purity of the family life, to which many writers have called attention, and for the comparative intensity and exclusiveness of their social relations. A phrase used by Mr. James Stephens[2]—'Half a mile beyond himself was his frontier, and beyond that, wherever he was, the enemy lay'—may be somewhat enlightening in this connection. The lack of an organized system of popular education such as has long been established in Scotland must be a good deal accountable for weaknesses in social unity and in the development of the political sense. But I must leave such questions to those who have more knowledge of the country.

4. General Remarks.—All the peoples that are predominantly Celtic in their traditions seem on the surface to be more poetic than the English. The romantic elements in English poetry are mainly derived from them. Yet it would seem to be the Anglo-Saxon race (if we may speak of such a race) that has produced nearly all the greatest poetry. The English attitude of mind is so constantly symbolized by such images as John Bull and Mrs. Grundy (the one representing blundering action without thought, the other conventional propriety) that it is difficult to reconcile it with poetic production. Such a combination almost reminds one of the riddle of Samson, 'Out of the eater cometh forth meat, out of the strong sweetness.' But, as we have seen, there is another side to the character of the English. Is the apparent stolidity and lack of imagination in the English due rather to reserve than to lack of poetic feeling? Mr. Chesterton, as we have seen, calls attention to the reluctance of the English

[1] The lack of a good system of municipal government in Ireland seems to be one of the results of British misrule. This subject is discussed at length by Mr. J. J. Webb in his *Municipal Government in Ireland*.

[2] *The Demigods*, chap. ix.

to let themselves go in song. Or is Oscar Wilde's suggestion [1] the right one? He said of the Irish, 'We are too poetical to be poets. We are a nation of brilliant failures, but we are the greatest talkers since the Greeks.' Or is it the case that a mixture of races gives the finest result? Is it the mixture of the Saxon with the Norman and the Welsh that gives us our Shakespeares and Miltons? Racial speculations are very uncertain, but it seems pretty clear that a mixed race has some advantages. Or is the explanation to be found in Browning's paradox?

> 'Rock's the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare;
> Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
> Vainly both expend—few flowers awaken there;
> Quiet in its cleft broods—what the after age
> Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage.'

Perhaps it is well to remember at least that, though poetry is an expression of emotion, it does not come, in its highest form, from an emotion that is actually present, but rather, as Wordsworth urged, from 'emotion remembered in tranquillity.' 'The creation of beauty,' says Rabindranath Tagore,[2] 'is not the work of unbridled imagination. Passion when it is given its full sway becomes a destructive force like fire gone out of hand.' For this reason I can hardly accept the view that has recently been stated,[3] that 'it was his absolute abandonment to passion that made Shakespeare the supreme poet.' I believe it was rather his mastery of passion. The Greeks at least sought beauty in restraint; and perhaps we ought not to be surprised that a people that does not often express emotion should sometimes express it supremely well.

It is well to remember further that poetry is essentially an interpretation of reality. It is not a mere sport of

[1] *Life*, by R. H. Sherrard, p. 295. See also *An Irish Gentleman*, by M. G. Moore, pp. 293–4.

[2] Quoted by S. Radhakrishnan, *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, p. 137.

[3] F. Harris, *The Man Shakespeare*, p. 391.

idle fancy. Perhaps the 'Saxon' nature (however exactly it is composed) is more in touch with the solid earth, and needs only a spark from the more fanciful 'Celt' to enable him to build up his Aladdin's palace. A Glendower may call spirits from the vasty deep, but it is only for a Shakespeare that they come. One has to remember also the difficulties of language. If a small nation expresses itself in its own dialect, it lacks the inspiration of a large audience: if it tries to express itself in the language of a more numerous people, it is hampered by the somewhat foreign medium. Burns, for example, is shorn of the felicity and richness of his phrasing when he writes in English. But, after all, I suppose it is still true of the great movements of the human spirit that they are like the wind that bloweth where it listeth. It is vain to seek for complete explanations. No science is adequate to account for the growth of genius in particular times and places. There is, however, one further consideration that may be worth noticing at this point.

A good deal has been written about the great achievements of small nationalities,[1] and certainly there is much that may with advantage be emphasized on this subject. But it is perhaps worth remembering that the small nations that achieved great things never thought of themselves as being particularly small or insignificant. Judged by imperial standards, for instance, the Jews were a comparatively small nation; but they thought of themselves as the only people that knew their right relations to the universe, the only people that had a true conception of the divine government of the world and of what is meant by justice and righteousness. They regarded all others as heathens. Now, it may be admitted that there was some narrowness in this view; but it must be allowed also that it was a great source of inspiration,

[1] One of the most interesting of these accounts is Mr. J. Vyrnwy Morgan's *Study in Nationality*, which has more particular reference to the Welsh.

and did really help them to achieve results that have had a universal significance for all European nations. They sought to dwell, and did essentially dwell, on the highest pinnacles of human aspiration. They did not conceive that they were concerning themselves with what is simply Jewish, but with what is eternally human; and they were substantially right.

The Greeks, in like manner, were a small people, but they thought that they were the only people that was properly rational and human: the others were barbarians. This did not mean that they were unable to take an interest in other peoples or to learn from them. Rather their consciousness of their own superiority made it easy for them to take an intelligent interest in inferior peoples; just as human beings may take an interest in animals and admire their instincts and their powers. But, in particular, it saved them on the whole from undue absorption in their own peculiarities. They accepted themselves as human, not as a special variety of humanity; and it is largely on this account that their literature and their thought still appeal to us as applicable to ourselves. To some extent, they may be contrasted, in this respect, with the Romans, who, by their more extensive connections with different peoples, were led to think more particularly about their own peculiar customs and problems, and less definitely about what is universally human. Of course, there are some qualifications to be made in such a statement. Lucretius, for instance, is free from this defect; and may be contrasted, in this respect, with Virgil, Horace, and still more with Ovid and others. But, in the construction of their laws, at least, the Romans endeavoured even more decidedly than the Greeks to place themselves at a point of view that is simply human, not peculiarly Roman.

Now, the English are, on the whole, more like the Romans than the Greeks; but, partly from their isolation,

and partly from the mixed character of their stock, they have tended to accept their national customs, not as special peculiarities of their own, but rather as what is proper to humanity in general. Sometimes their attitude in this respect is open to ridicule. Emerson notes [1] their tendency, when travelling in foreign countries, to resent being described as foreigners, and to say, 'We are not foreigners; it is you who are foreigners.' Their self-centred arrogance has caused them to be described as 'the provincials of Europe.' But there is an element of strength in this attitude. It means that they ignore their own peculiarities, and think of themselves—in spite of these peculiarities—as simply human. Everywhere they make themselves at home, with the freedom (though without the graciousness) of the ancient citizen of the world—*Quo me cunque rapit tempestas deferor hospes.* We have already noted, in the case of Shakespeare, that, though he is characteristically and even patriotically English, though he tends to people even the most remote of his creations with English types, yet he is essentially cosmopolitan in his outlook, and is much more interested in what is universally human than in what is specifically English.

Now, I think it may be noted as a weakness in the Scotch, the Irish and the Welsh, that they are not only small nations, but have a certain tendency to think of themselves as small. This does not mean that they are not conceited: on the contrary, it is apt to be a source of conceit or vanity. They tend to be interested in their own little peculiarities to such an extent as to be partly prevented from giving their attention to what is broadly human. Burns is broadly human when he writes 'Auld Lang Syne' or 'A Man's a Man for a' that'; but he is somewhat provincial when he addresses the Deil, and still more when he addresses the Haggis or Scotch Drink. There is often a great deal of charm in such provincialism,

[1] *English Traits*, ix.

but it is the charm of something rather small and evanescent. It does not appeal to what is universally human, as the 'Ode to the Nightingale' or the 'Intimations of Immortality' do. Similarly, though there is a great charm in the recent revivals of Celtic traditions in Ireland, and though the literary movement connected with it is most hopeful and deserving of every encouragement, yet it may fairly be urged that, if a nation were to concentrate its attention on this kind of interest exclusively, it would really be treating itself as if it were a foreign country, studying itself for the sake of its peculiarities, instead of accepting itself as typically human. I may quote, in this connection, the saying of T. M. Kettle [1]: 'Ireland awaits her Goethe who will one day arise and teach her that, while a strong nation has herself for centre, she has the universe for circumference.' Still, if Ireland has not yet her Goethe, she may perhaps claim that, in Mr. W. B. Yeats, she has produced the most accomplished of living poets in England, and, in Mr. G. W. Russell (*Æ*) one who has certainly, in the best sense, 'two eyes'—one for his country and one for the Cosmos. Somewhat similar observations might be made with regard to Wales—a country that is coming rapidly to the front in education and in political idealism, but that still tends perhaps to be too acutely conscious of itself. In contrast with these smaller nationalities, the English have the merit, like the Americans (but in a more unconscious way), of assimilating all peoples who come to them and accepting them as English citizens, simply on the ground that they are human; and not much troubling to consider how one is distinguished from another.

It has seemed to me worth while to notice this, because I believe the conception of nationality, which has become rather prominent in recent years, may easily prove misleading. The movement in favour of the self-determination of distinct peoples has been strongly developed, and

[1] *The Ways of War*, p. 4.

seems likely to be still more emphatically pressed; and it can hardly be doubted that it is a good movement. But it is well to remember that there is a bad form of nationalism as well as a good one. The human race is essentially one. *Homo sapiens* is a single species; neither in its origin nor in its ultimate ideals can it be divided. It marches from the same rude beginnings to the same sublime ends. Sensible people are all of the same country—the πολιτεία τοῦ κόσμου. Men differ in their follies and vices; in their excellencies they are more nearly united. Now, it might be thought that the best way to secure that human beings shall march side by side would be to tie them together. But this obviously is not true of bodily marching. They can keep step better when each has complete control of his own movements. The same would seem to be true of spiritual advancement in individuals and of social development in nations. When they interfere with one another, they provoke antagonism; when they leave each other alone, they tend gradually to arrive at the same results. It is of the essence of every important human achievement that it must be gained by voluntary effort. This is the real ground for national self-determination. But when it is thus sought as a simple human right, it is not claimed for one people in the spirit of opposition to others, but rather in a spirit that is essentially cosmopolitan. Now, it is unfortunately rather easy to forget this. We have had a notable object-lesson in the case of Germany.

Germany in the days of Kant and Goethe was hardly a nation; but it was a group of nations bound together, pretty much in the same way as ancient Greece was —bound by ties light as air, but strong as the soul of humanity. Its outlook in those days was partly national and partly cosmopolitan. Its chief writers, notably Goethe, took habitually the cosmopolitan point of view; and, with this outlook, they gained for their country an extremely high place in the civilized world. They

were especially distinguished for their philosophy, their music, and their reflective poetry—things that have a universal appeal. But circumstances—especially the ambitions of Frederick on the one hand and Napoleon on the other, and, later, the masterful personality of Bismarck, led them to seek for a more definite form of national unity. They had, as separate nations, been marching side by side both with one another and with the rest of the world; but they decided to tie themselves together —or rather Prussia decided it for them—and this meant in the end to combine against the rest of the world. It did not conduce to their real greatness. They gradually lost their universal intellectual appeal, and became debased and mechanical. They developed the wrong kind of nationalism, or rather they had it forced upon them; and they appear to be now engaged in the work of liberation.

Now, in the case of the sister nations within the United Kingdom similar dangers may very well exist. On the one hand, it may be urged, and it is urged, that the smaller nations are apt to suffer from being too closely tied to the larger one, and that they might march better in co-operation with one another if they each had a more independent life. Evidently they are all different from England in character and historical development, though at the same time they have much in common. Boutmy, indeed, has declared[1] that 'an absence of all sympathy with the English and their customs is apparent in every word and deed of Scotch, Irish and Welsh.' This is certainly an exaggeration. I believe it is untrue even with respect to the Irish.[2] It is true that the ideals of the four peoples are markedly different—that of the English being, on the whole, the Gentleman, or, more generally, the man who *is* something; of the Scotch the

[1] *The English People*, p. 97

[2] See, for instance, *An Irish Gentleman*, by M. G. Moore, pp. 344-5.

Worker, the man who *does* something; of the Welsh the Seer, the man of insight; and of the Irish the Fighter or adventurer, the man who *struggles*.[1] It is true also that the three smaller nations tend to regard England in somewhat the same way as the southern Germans have tended to regard Prussia. At least they resent its self-satisfied assumption of superiority and its somewhat scornful indifference to their modes of thought and life. That there are some people in England who approximate to the Prussian model, and that they are occasionally a dominant element in the national life, can hardly be denied. And there are a variety of circumstances that make the smaller countries feel that they are more or less aloof from the ideas and customs of their larger neighbour. Scotland had for a long time a separate national life of its own, and tended to associate itself rather more closely with France than with England; and even now it has many features that are not only different from those of England but actually contrasted with them. Wales, again, has not had a similar record of independent development; but it has retained a separate language, and it has a more homogeneous race (or at least a more homogeneous tradition) than Scotland has; so that it has, in some respect, an even better claim to a separate life.

[1] This can, of course, only be taken as a rough indication of the differences. It may be worth while to note here the way in which the shortcomings of the four peoples are described by J. Beddoe, the well-known anthropologist (*The Anthropological History of Europe*, p. 188). 'How seldom,' he says, 'do the English produce a great orator, or the Irish a great engineer, or the Scotch a great actor, or the Welsh, though undeniably brave, a great soldier.' The remark about the English seems questionable. They are not usually very fluent, but they appear to have produced a considerable number of impressive speakers. I should have thought that 'a great musician' might have better indicated the characteristic defect. With regard to the Welsh, I understand 'a great soldier' to mean a great commander. Certainly, for the faculty of command (as distinguished from sympathetic leadership and wise co-operation) it is to the more Nordic peoples that we naturally turn. But what of Cromwell?

Ireland has the disadvantage of a divided people, especially in the very important matter of religion, and it cannot point to a record of successful self-government; but it is a separate island, many of the features and circumstances of which are markedly different from those of Great Britain, and it retains the memory of an older civilization than that which has belonged to any part of the larger island. Thus, on different grounds, they all have a *prima facie* case for a larger measure of self-development than they possess. On the other hand, it may be urged that the attempt to loosen their ties might tend to accentuate elements of antagonism, both without and within, which are at present held in abeyance. This is an objection which naturally arises most obviously in the case of Ireland, on account of the differences within the country both in race and in religion, and also on account of its separation as an island from Great Britain. The saying of Grattan is often quoted—'the channel forbids union; the ocean forbids separation'—but time tends to modify somewhat the importance of both conditions. It has to be recognized too that in Scotland and Wales also there are elements of possible antagonism which might become more obvious it they were acting in isolation in the development of their national life. England itself also, if not combined with the smaller nations, might develop in the future some of those elements of antagonism which were conspicuous in the past. What is desirable is that, wherever there are marked differences in race, language, religion, and in the general traditions of peoples, they should each be free to develop their own lives in friendly co-operation with one another, and also with the larger world outside. In this way they would be freed from the somewhat morbid concentration upon their own peculiarities which is apt to accompany the sense of subordination, to take their own national life for granted, and to look out with interest and emulation upon the lives of surrounding peoples. How this is to

be brought about it is not my business here to determine ; and, to prevent misunderstanding, it may be well to add that I do not know. But it is a difficult question, and I should think it is a matter for calm deliberation rather than for quarrelling. I may add also, however, that it seems clear to me that it cannot be decided by the simple expedient of declaring that they are distinct nationalities, and have a right to complete self-determination ; for the question how far they are to be regarded as distinct nationalities is one of the points at issue. They are all very much mixed up with one another, and, with the possible exception of Wales, they are all somewhat heterogeneous in their characters and aspirations.

NOTE.—It may be worth while to add a few words here on the alleged Celtic element in literature. Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch has recently pointed out (*Studies in Literature*, p. 155) that the mystical poets of the seventeenth century were nearly all of Welsh extraction ; and this fact, in conjunction with some others, has led to the view that the tendency towards mysticism is a specially Celtic characteristic. It may be so. But Wordsworth and Shelley have not been claimed as Celtic ; and the claim that has been made upon Blake seems to have broken down. Nor does there appear to be any evidence that the German mystics were predominantly Celtic. Even the circumstance that certain writers were Welsh does not necessarily prove that they were Celtic in the definitely racial sense of the term. There are grounds for thinking that some of the artistic tendencies in Wales are due rather to the Iberian than to the properly Celtic elements in the population. At any rate, questions of this kind are highly speculative. Anthropologists will probably be able to throw more light upon them in future. Meanwhile it is best to recognise that, in literature as in life, our chief characteristics are rather due to the intermingling of races than to the dominance of any single strain.

CHAPTER VIII

OUR PRESENT OUTLOOK

THE chief interest in a study of national psychology lies in the light that it throws on the possibilities that are to be found in the temperament and character of a people, the temptations and dangers to which they are exposed, and the heights to which they may be expected to rise. Such studies are specially important at a time of reconstruction like the present, when the whole of our civilization may be said to be in the melting-pot, and where we seem almost to hear 'the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come.' At such a time it is specially true that 'Character is fate,' according to the saying of Heraclitus; and it is more than usually important that we should understand what our character as a nation is.

In what has gone before, we have been largely occupied in noticing certain defects that have been alleged to be found in our national character. I have tried to do full justice to all the allegations. I may almost be said to have gone forth, like Balaam, with an adverse mission—'Come, curse me Jacob, and come defy Israel.' But, on examination, some of the grounds for cursing certainly appear to be not quite so formidable as a first view of them might lead one to suppose; and it may be that, in the end, we may have to turn back, like Balaam, and exclaim, 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.' But we must at least beware lest it should only be the voice of an ass that has stayed our cursing.

There are certainly some things in the life of our country on which we may legitimately pride ourselves, or at least take to ourselves comfort and hope; for some of the more favourable omens are not such as afford any actual occasion for pride—if indeed that is a sentiment that can ever be legitimately indulged. Many of our advantages are the gifts of fortune rather than the results of genius or virtue. Our insular position has given us a certain security for the development of our national resources—a security that in the future may count for a good deal less. It has also served to lure us forth on adventures by which we have secured possessions over the seas, which have increased our power and spread our race and language over the habitable world to an extent that has never been known before. The language would probably have gone even further if its structure (and especially its spelling) had been less arbitrary and chaotic. Our possession of readily accessible iron, and especially coal, has been a great source of material prosperity, which, however, may also in the future not be quite so conspicuous.

If we ask what use we have made of these advantages, the answer is not wholly one of which we have reason to be ashamed. We have developed methods of free government—partly, it may be, on account of the weaknesses and quarrels of some of our rulers—which have to a large extent served as models for the world. We have allowed the benefits of them to extend to distant lands; and they seem likely, on the whole, to extend their influence even more widely in the future. Our Newtons and Darwins have given us certain pre-eminence in scientific discovery, and in philosophical criticism (though perhaps hardly in construction) we have certainly not been backward. In invention also our country stands high. Nor can it be fairly said that we are altogether behind in progress of a more spiritual kind. In religion our country has certainly secured a high degree of toleration, and has often shown a notable earnestness

of purpose. In our morals, as we have seen, we are sometimes charged with hypocrisy; but it is doubtful whether the charge can be wholly substantiated, and, so far as it can, it means at least that some outward respect for virtue and good conduct is demanded. In poetry we have what is pretty generally acknowledged to be the supreme name, and many others that are at least high in the second rank—being, on the whole, probably not inferior in this respect to any other country except ancient Greece.

These are certainly considerable achievements which may not only yield us a reasonable gratification, but also some confidence in the effort to build Jerusalem. I am not sure that I know exactly what Blake meant to express by this term, but I take it to mean the establishment of a mode of human life worthy of the highest aspirations of which we are capable. Certainly it would ill become anyone who has shared the benefits that our nation has to give to ignore their greatness or accept them in a spirit of niggardly criticism. Our attitude should be rather that of one who says—

> 'Here and here did England help me;
> How can I help England?'

Still, we may perhaps help her best by trying to see in what respects she is still defective.

Now, as a general result of the survey which we have made, it would seem that the chief defect that can be plausibly alleged is that she tends to be somewhat too narrowly practical and conventional. Most of the other allegations turn, more or less directly, upon this one. On the general nature of the charge, it may be well to listen once more to Mr. F. H. Bradley. 'We have,' he says,[1] 'but little notion in England of freedom either in art or in science. Irrelevant appeals to practical results are allowed to make themselves heard. And

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, chap. xxvi., p. 450.

in certain regions of art and science this sin brings its own punishment, for we fail through timidity and through a want of singleness and sincerity. That a man should treat of God and religion merely to understand them, and apart from the influence of some other consideration and inducement, is to many of us in part unintelligible, and in part also shocking. And hence English thought on these subjects, where it has not studied in a foreign school, is theoretically worthless.' There is perhaps some exaggeration in this, but in the main it can hardly be denied. The purely intellectual pursuit of truth has seldom been a strong feature in English life, and has generally been somewhat discountenanced. It is stated,[1] for instance, that when Dr. Arnold was troubled by doubts about the doctrine of the Trinity, he was urged by Keble 'to pause in his inquiries, to pray earnestly for help and light from above, and turn himself more strongly than ever to the practical duties of a holy life.' It is true that English philosophy had a high reputation in the eighteenth century. It is amusing, for instance, to read in Gibbon's *Autobiography* that, when he visited France, 'every Englishman was supposed to be born a patriot and a philosopher.' But the collocation of the two terms is significant. Thought about moral and political questions has seldom been lacking in England, and it has often been very valuable thought. It is only the more purely speculative kind of thought that has been weak and hampered by prejudice. Dr. Arnold has been quoted[2] as maintaining that 'the one thing needful for a Christian and an Englishman to study is Christian and moral and political philosophy.' There is, perhaps, some reason to believe that things are improving in this respect, but if so a good deal of the credit must be assigned to Mr. Bradley. As regards art, the defect that is referred to is, I suppose, that which was more definitely noted

[1] *Eminent Victorians*, by Mr. Lytton Strachey, p. 184.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 194.

by the artist William McTaggart, when he referred [1] to the 'English dread of giving expression to his inmost promptings—a feeling which makes so much of their art commonplace.' The temperament of the average Englishman, as we have had to recognize throughout, is an active one. He is nearly always anxious to do something, whether it is worth doing or not. He hardly needs Goethe's *dictum* (emphasized by Carlyle), that 'the end of man is an action, and not a thought.' It may have been worth while to preach this to the Germans, but most Englishmen believe it upon instinct. Hence they do not care to dwell on ultimate ends, like truth or beauty. They prefer to concern themselves with something that can be immediately grasped, and are more ready to use means and instruments than to consider what the value of the end is. They heap up wealth without much thought of the vital ends for the sake of which it may be reasonably pursued. They invent machinery, but do not trouble much to ascertain whether it is used to relieve labour and increase health and happiness, or rather to displace labour and make its conditions more monotonous and uninteresting. They study ancient languages, and make them an instrument of trifling pedantry rather than the means of appropriating the wit and wisdom of those who originally spoke them. Their characteristic philosophy of life is utilitarianism : they pursue what is useful, but hardly pause to inquire what it is useful for. It is this defect in the English attitude that seems to lie at the root of the criticisms that have been passed upon British moralism. Conventional morality concentrates its attention upon certain modes of action which, if they are good at all, are good as means for the realization of a

[1] See his *Life*, by J. L. Carr, p. 205. Reference may be made also to Boutmy's *English People*, pp. 17–20, 39, 46–7, etc. Boutmy notes that English art tends to be didactic, and that science is generally valued in England only for its practical applications. It would seem, however, that, even for this purpose, it is often very seriously undervalued.

noble and happy form of human life. But this is apt to be forgotten. In the observance of the Sabbath, for instance —a characteristic institution which the modern Pharisee has taken over from the ancient, with the alteration of a day—the English (and even more the Scotch) seem sometimes to have forgotten the saying of the founder of what is still commonly supposed to be the national religion, that 'the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'; just as they are apt also to forget that other saying of his—'Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' Such errors are, of course, very natural and often very pardonable. All action is necessarily concerned more directly with means than with ends. It is only in the purely contemplative life—like that of Oriental sages—that the end is kept directly and steadily in view. Even an artist, however ardent and single-minded may be his love of beauty, has to concern himself largely with the preparation of his canvas and the mixing of his colours. Men like Michael Angelo had to work like Titans to achieve their beautiful results. The ends does, after all, come at the end; and it is not surprising that it should often be the last thing to secure attention. This at least is the defect to which the practical man is specially liable, and I think it is the defect that the critics of English moralism have rightly in view. In order to bring this out more definitely, I think it well at this point to quote a passage from Mr. Dickinson's *Letters from John Chinaman*, in which the essential points seem to me to be very well summed up.

'When I review my impressions of the average English citizen,' says John Chinaman,[1] 'impressions based on many years' study, what kind of man do I see? I see one divorced from Nature, but unreclaimed by Art; instructed, but not educated; assimilative, but incapable of thought. Trained in the tenets of religion in which he does not really believe—for he sees it flatly contradicted

[1] Letter IV.

in every relation of life—he dimly feels that it is prudent to conceal under a mask of piety the atheism he is hardly intelligent enough to avow. His religion is conventional, and, what is more important, his morals are as conventional as his creed. Charity, chastity, self-abnegation, contempt of the world and its prizes—these are the words on which he has been fed from his childhood upwards. And words they have remained, for he has neither anywhere seen them practised by others, nor has it ever occurred to him to practise them himself. Their influence, while it is strong enough to make him a chronic hypocrite, is not so strong as to show him the hypocrite he is. Deprived on the one hand of the support of a true ethical standard, embodied in the life of the society of which he is a member, he is duped on the other by life-worship of an important ideal. Abandoned thus to his instinct, he is contented to do as others do, and, ignoring the things of the Spirit, to devote himself to material ends. He becomes a mere tool; and of such your society is composed. By your works you may be known. Your triumphs in the mechanical arts are the obverse of your failure in all that calls for spiritual insight. Machinery of every kind you can make and use to perfection; but you cannot build a house, or write a poem,[1] or paint a picture; still less can you worship or aspire. Look at your streets! Row upon row of little boxes, one like another, lacking in all that is essential, loaded with all that is superfluous—this is what passes among you for architecture. Your literature is the daily press, with its stream of solemn

[1] John Chinaman is perhaps a little out here. It is in poetry that the best minds of the country escape from their limitations. It is true, however, that the appreciation of poetry in England is confined to a comparatively small number. Genuinely *popular* poetry is scanty. The sister nations would seem to be superior in this respect. The English poets, like the Latin ones, are essentially *docti*. The popular bard or minstrel belongs rather to the Celtic peoples—i.e. those who inherit Celtic traditions, whatever they may be by race.

fatuity, of anecdotes, puzzles, puns, and police-court scandal. Your pictures are stories in paint, transcripts of all that is banal, clumsily botched by amateurs as devoid of tradition as of genius. Your outer sense as well as your inner is dead ; you are blind and deaf. Ratiocination has taken the place of perception ; and your whole life is an infinite syllogism from premises you have not examined to conclusions you have not anticipated or willed. Everywhere means, nowhere an end ! Society a huge engine, and that engine itself out of gear ! Such is the picture your civilization presents to my imagination.'

This is at least the impression that it might well make upon the mind of a stranger. It must be allowed, of course, that the attempt to define ultimate ends is not an easy one ; and on this subject, a few remarks may not be out of place at this point.

When we ask ourselves what is the supreme end of man as man, I doubt whether we can give any better answer than that it is to be found in the production, the contemplation and the enjoyment of what is truly beautiful.[1] In making such a statement we must of course lay some emphasis on the ' truly ' ; and to determine what is truly beautiful is by no means easy. Perhaps nothing is, in the fullest sense, beautiful except the universe regarded as a perfect Cosmos—or God, if that term is preferred. But even in what is less perfect, it is true to say that when anything is recognized as really beautiful, as giving final satisfaction to our sense of harmony or order, there is no further question to be raised about its value. It is lovable in itself, not as a means to anything other than itself ; and love, as Browning says, ' is victory, the prize itself ; apprehended as a prize, a prize it is.' Everything else—even knowledge and virtue—can only be regarded as means to this, except (a notable exception) in so far as they are in themselves beautiful. Love,

[1] On the relations between beauty and goodness, I may refer to Mr. G. H. Palmer's excellent little book on *The Field of Ethics*

heroism, self-devotion, have a beauty of their own, and may be treated as having a place as aspects in the beauty of the whole ; and so may knowledge, in so far as it means genuine insight into the structure of reality. But most of the details of knowledge may rightly be held to be only means to the attainment of such an insight ; and so may most of the rules or conventions by which our conduct is regulated. To observe the rule of the road is of some help to the order and beauty of life ; sometimes it may even be a direct contribution to that beauty ; but it can hardly be counted an end in itself. Nor can the observance of the Sabbath or the recognition of the sanctity of the marriage tie, however useful and important may be the institutions that are thereby supported. To mistake such means for ends is to turn life into a slavish and pedantic routine. It is rightly stigmatized by Nietzsche as slave-morality. And it is certainly to some extent true that we have tended in this country to fall into an error of this kind. But there is probably hardly any country that is not liable to some similar one-sidedness. If we have, on the whole, made a fetish of conventional morality and practical utility, without sufficiently considering how far we are achieving anything that has intrinsic value, it is pretty certain that the Germans have made quite as fatal a mistake in making a fetish of knowledge ; and perhaps at an earlier age the Italians were similarly one-sided in their devotion to art. The French, with their excellent lucidity, have probably preserved a better balance ; but even in their case it may be urged that they have secured a balance rather than a harmonious unity. To find such a harmonious unity we should have to look to the ancient Athenians in their best age ; and even there we should find it only on a small scale and in few people. It might be urged that, from the point of view of national development, the error into which we have fallen, if we do not persist in it too long and too obstinately, is one of the

most venial. In justice to ourselves, it may be well to press this point a little.

Although it is possible to take different views about political development, and although the future of political institutions is a question on which it would be rash to dogmatize, yet it seems pretty clear that a vigorous development of national life is not possible without free citizens. In this sense most people, especially after the Great War, would admit that democracy must be aimed at, however much they may disagree about the best form of democratic organization. Now, as Montesquieu [1] and others have urged, democracy must rest on the virtue of the people. When people are *furchtbar frei*, they must also be *furchtbar fromm*. Otherwise, we can hope for nothing but a licentious anarchy. This I take to be the ultimate explanation of the increasing emphasis on morality that has accompanied the growth of our free institutions. An autocracy may maintain order by force, and a dogmatic religion by mystical terrors; but it is only by moral ideas that order can be maintained along with political and religious liberty. Now, it is no doubt desirable that moral ideas should be based on reflection. This is a subject to which I intend to return shortly. Perhaps some other peoples are in advance of the English in this respect—possibly the Scotch, possibly the Americans, possibly others—but, in general, we must expect, especially in the absence of a well organized system of education, that the moral ideas of most people, when not based on external authority, will rest largely on tradition and convention. Indeed, it seems inevitable that a great part of all men's lives should be regulated by some sort of rules. No one could well think out the details of his life entirely for himself.

[1] See *Spirit of Laws*, Book III, chap. v. 'There is no great share of probity necessary to support a monarchical or despotic government. The force of laws in one, and the prince's arm in the other, are sufficient to direct and maintain the whole. But in a popular state, one spring more is necessary, namely, *virtue*.'

One who attempted it would have to be always thinking about life and never living it. Organized science has been said to consist essentially in methods of economizing thought; and conventions are a similar economy of thought for the purposes of practical life. They serve a purpose in human life similar to that played by instincts in the life of animals. If the centipede, as has been suggested,[1] had to think about the order of moving its feet, it would never be able to move at all. So it would hardly be possible for a human being to act if he did not know and adopt a large part of the traditional modes of action among the people with whom he lives. In a given situation, he knows what is expected of him, and, unless he has some distinct reason for doing otherwise, he does what is expected. To act otherwise is to court disaster. It is to become eccentric; and it may be well to remember that eccentricity used to be supposed to be a characteristic of the English. It still is so in a good many cases of somewhat isolated individuals. In fact, an element of eccentricity is often to be found combined with conventionality in so intimate a way as to be hardly distinguishable from it;[2] just as, in certain writers, a highly individual manner tends to become an artificial mannerism. But for anyone who had to act in frequent trying emergencies, eccentricity would be almost criminal. It is in this sense that Mr. Bradley's saying is true, that the man who seeks to be better than the world is on the verge of immorality. This does not mean that he must

[1] 'The centipede was happy, quite,
Until the toad for fun
Said, "Pray, which leg comes after which?"
This worked her mind to such a pitch
She lay distracted in a ditch,
Considering how to run.'

Quoted by Mr. Palmer—*The Nature of Goodness*, p. 214.

[2] An interesting example of this will be found in the account of the character of Professor Newton, given by Mr. A. C. Benson in his *Leaves of the Tree*.

always act in the conventional manner. But it is only when he sees clearly some ground for acting otherwise that he is, in general, justified in diverging from the common practice. To return to the simple illustration that was previously used, it would be foolish, and might be criminal, to neglect the recognized rule of the road; yet there are special circumstances in which a man might very well act contrary to it. In the weightier matters of the law something of the same kind holds. There is a place for convention, and there is a place for individual initiation. Mr. B. Pares, contrasting life in this country with that in Russia, says [1]—'In England the average man may be a poor creature, but he is supported by a whole mass of traditions and conventions. He finds in every drawing-room a narrow but fixed code, to which he is likely to conform, unless he is either possessed of a strong will or liable to momentary hysteria. Not only what he is to do, but what he is to think and believe, has been settled in advance for him, and that not merely by a living autocrat, but by all his own antecedents.' That this has some advantage for the average man can hardly be doubted. But it is true that conventions are apt to take too strong a hold of us. 'The social English,' Meredith declares,[2] 'require tyrannical government as much as the political are able to dispense with it.' But it is a serious defect to need it in either sphere. It is to prevent this that ethical reflection is important; and England has on the whole been distinguished by a good deal of such reflection. Most of the philosophers in this country have been moral philosophers, and their reflections have helped considerably to lighten the weight of conventional morality. We have reason to rejoice that we have had men in this country whose work might be compared to that of 'Socrates or Antonine or some auld pagan heathen.' What is

[1] *Russia and Reform*, pp. 313–14. Maxim Gorki might also be referred to on this contrast. See his autobiographical sketches, *passim*.

[2] *The Tale of Chloe*, chap. iv.

to be regretted is rather that the influence of such work has not penetrated more widely than it has.

In this respect the philosophical traditions of this country may be contrasted with those of Germany, not altogether to our disadvantage. There is a not unnatural tendency at present to depreciate things German, and especially German thought on ethical and political questions, and I should be sorry to contribute to such depreciation, which is often based on ignorance or misunderstanding. But I think it is true to say that the strength of German thought is to be found mainly in its metaphysical speculations, and more recently in its elaborate studies (largely done in Austria) of problems in psychology and the theory of knowledge. It has never been specially strong in the treatment of ethics. Of course a good deal of valuable work has been done on particular ethical problems, especially in connection with the theory of value (and here again it has been mainly done in Austria). On the whole, it seems true to say that the only writers by whom German thought has been strongly influenced on moral questions are Kant, Fichte and Hegel, and Nietzsche. The first and the last of these are not quite typically German, Kant having some pretty obvious Scottish characteristics, and Nietzsche being probably a Slav. Kant is a great landmark in ethics, as well as in metaphysics; but his general theory of ethics is too formal to be of much practical help. His doctrine of a categorical imperative has considerable value, when it is understood in the sense in which he intended it as meaning a guiding principle of reason. But it is generally used rather in the sense of an absolute law imposed from above—a sense utterly opposed to the spirit of Kant's teaching. Fichte and Hegel may have helped to propagate this misconception by their emphasis on the supremacy of the State, though, here also, I believe it can be shown that it is only by a misinterpretation of their meaning that such a result can

be extracted from their teaching. Nietzsche, though valuable as a stimulant, is too violent and incoherent to be taken as a safe guide. In contrast to these, most of our English moral philosophers present a somewhat tame appearance. They usually appeal a good deal to common sense and experience, and seldom suggest any drastic revolutions; but they supply fairly well the kind of critical analysis of ethical conceptions which is needed as a corrective to the simple acceptance of tradition and convention. It seems to me quite absurd to suggest that they give any encouragement to cant and hypocrisy. They represent rather the 'antithetical self' in the national consciousness, seeking to supply the necessary correction to its want of reflective thought. What is chiefly lacking is a more definite attempt to make this reflective thought accessible to the body of the people.

I think it must be allowed that there tends to be some degree of what Taine has called 'intellectual poltroonery' in much of the intellectual work of our countrymen. Perhaps a more sympathetic critic might characterize it rather as a wise discretion. 'We are not,' it has been said,[1] 'a precipitate people, nor inconsiderate. We do not draw hasty conclusions from narrow premises, as abstract logicians are apt to do. Like good logicians, we are, on the whole, careful above all else that our *premises* are stated fully and allowed to operate, knowing that the conclusions will then come of themselves.' In practical matters, as Aristotle urged, what is chiefly important is that we should be sure of our minor premiss —i.e. that the particular case is one to which a certain general principle is rightly applicable. In this kind of logic the English are not notably deficient. Undoubtedly the Germans aim at greater thoroughness than is common in this country; and the French have a finer eye for the *mot juste*. The Englishman, on the whole,

[1] By Sir Henry Jones, *Principles of Citizenship*, p. 176.

does not aim so definitely either at completeness or at clarity. He does not much mind gaps in knowledge or a somewhat stammering expression. What he is generally anxious about is rather that what he says should be good sense and in good taste. He wishes to set forth the views of a cultivated person with decent feelings and a proper regard for the opinions of others (especially, no doubt, those of his own group or party), and for the practical consequences that may be thought to follow from his statements. He is not anxious to 'do better than well.' He is generally sceptical about the possibility of exhausting a subject, or of summing up his results in a perfectly conclusive phrase. In this, it may be claimed, there is often a kind of practical wisdom. It is not unlike the attitude that we find in the work of Aristotle, the master of those who know. But it must be admitted that it is apt to lead to the appearance of a somewhat pointless confusion.

Nor, again, should I be disposed to regard it as wholly wise to censure, without qualification, the general ideal of life that has grown up in England, and that is mainly associated with the conception of a gentleman. No doubt this ideal lends itself rather too readily to foolish pride and grotesque snobbishness. In its origin also it is too closely connected with the existence of a separate caste, enjoying wealth and leisure, having its own peculiar standards and conventions, and seeking to impose these on others. Even Nordau's account of the explanation of such conventions is not without an element of truth. 'The evolution of history,' he says, 'led in England to two results which apparently exclude each other—to caste rule, and the liberty of the individual. The caste which is in possession of wealth and power naturally wishes to protect its possessions. The rigid independence of the English people precludes it from applying force. Hence it uses moral restraints to keep the lower ranks submissive and amenable, and, among

these, religion is by far the most effective.' But if this was the origin of the English conventional standards and of the religious sanctions by which they have been supported, it must be allowed at least that they have been gradually acquiring a better meaning. A gentleman, for instance, did no doubt mean at first one who held a certain rank in society, enjoying some degree of wealth and leisure, and entitled to some special privileges as a consequence of his rank and possessions. Perhaps it still tends to imply a certain absence of any very absorbing devotion to work or of any very deep interest in intellectual problems.[1] But, even from the first, there was also some suggestion of certain qualities of mind and character, either in himself or in his ancestors, that justified his position ; and I suppose it is true to say that there has been a gradual—though certainly somewhat slow—tendency to substitute these—the idea of such qualities of mind and character from that of rank and wealth. Indeed, this change may even be said to have resulted from the attempt of the privileged class to impose its own ideals upon others. It could not communicate its privileges, but it might impart some of its better—and no doubt also some of its worse—qualities ; and it is only the better ones that can be permanently defended. The term still seems to suggest leisure ; but it is coming to be pretty generally recognized that every one should have some work and some leisure ; and that superiority is not shown by the possession of

[1] We may remember in this connection the gibe of the American, who, on being reproached for the absence of gentlemen in his country, replied, 'We have some ; we call them loafers.' On the other hand, it is said that a continental scholar, in conversing with Henry Sidgwick, remarked upon the absence of 'intellectuals' in England. Sidgwick is reported to have answered, in somewhat similar fashion, 'We have some ; we call them prigs.' The absence of a special class of intellectuals, such as is to be found in Russia and some other countries, is probably not altogether to be regretted. At any rate, the difference is striking. See, for instance, *Russia and Reform*, by Mr. B. Pares, pp. 308–9.

leisure, but rather by the proper use of it. So far as this is true, the term tends to become assimilated to that of 'sense and worth,' with the addition of a slight touch of chivalry, of beauty and refinement, which is certainly not to be despised. When thus modified, it has the advantage of representing an ideal of life that does not belong especially to any rank, any occupation or vocation; and, when it is thus interpreted, it is no longer an ignoble attitude of mind to seek to be a gentleman first, and to relegate one's special function to a secondary place. It seems to be true that in some other countries there is too much tendency for those engaged in special occupations to be primarily conscious of the unity of their particular and somewhat exclusive circle.[1] So far as it tends to avoid this, the characteristically English attitude may be defended; and it does seem to be true that the ideal which the term is used to express influences to some extent people of widely different stations and habits. 'Always,' it has been recently said,[2] 'your Englishman, however excited and of whatever rank, knows there are things a gentleman doesn't do.' Though it might be easy to find instances to the contrary, yet the general truth of this must, I think, be allowed. It is in this sense also that the famous saying of T. H. Green[3] has to be understood, that, just as Moses wished that 'all the Lord's people should be prophets,' so he desired that all Englishmen should be gentlemen. But it is doubtful whether the term can quite bear the weight of meaning that is thus put upon it. What we may fairly recognize

[1] On this I may refer to *My German Year*, by J. A. R. Wylie, p. 37.

[2] Hugh Walpole, *The Duchess of Wrexe*, a book that contains some striking pictures of characteristic English types. On the general place of the idea of a gentleman in English life, reference may be made to *The Decline of Aristocracy*, by A. Ponsonby, pp. 34–6, 90–1, 161–2, and Taine's *Notes on England*, pp. 174–6.

[3] *Collected Works*, Vol. III., pp. 475–6. Probably the saying was suggested by Blake.

is that, beneath the conventionality of English life, there is an ideal of conduct and feeling that is not to be altogether despised, a fundamental core of order and sanity, something that has been slowly won from chaos, and that should not lightly be allowed to slip back again. But it can hardly suffice for the future. Where so much of the temporary order that existed in our world has been swept away, we can hardly expect that our somewhat insular civilization will be permitted to stand much longer as it is. How it is to be reconstructed it would be rash to prophesy, but it may be possible to set forth some suggestions that arise naturally out of the previous considerations.

Before doing so, however, it may be well to add a few words here with reference to the charge of hypocrisy that has been so prominently before us throughout. It is evident that a moral ideal lends itself very readily to certain forms of deception. There may be intellectual and artistic humbugs, as well as moral ones ; but pretence is, on the whole, less easy to detect in the latter—especially when the standard of judgment is applied rather to inner feelings and purposes than to external actions. But it would be a mistake to conclude that the ideal is entirely vitiated by such abuse. It is easy enough to point to glaring inconsistencies. It is easy to contrast our professions of Christianity with the violence and self-interest that are often displayed in our deeds ; and it is not unfair to point to the greater frankness of continental Chauvinists in comparison with the hollow pretences that are apt to appear in the utterances of ours. But even an insincere homage to ideals may be taken as evidence that the ideals have some power. There are limits to the possibility both of self-deception and of the deception of others. It has been well said [1] that '*not the criminal code, but the counsel of perfection shows us what a nation is becoming ;* and he who casts on any

[1] *The Moral Ideal*, by Julia Wedgwood, p. 373.

set of duties the shadow of the *second best*, so far as he is successful, does more to influence the moral ideal than he who succeeds in passing a new law.' Self-satisfied as we may tend to be, our hypocrisy shows that we are not wholly self-satisfied. 'There is a point,' it has been remarked,[1] 'at which you can no longer persuade yourself that you are doing right when you are doing wrong.' 'The Englishman,' says another writer,[2] 'is seldom quite content to be himself; often his thoughts are troubled by something better. He suffers from the divided mind, and earns the reputation of a hypocrite.' Yet without this division, it is urged, there would be no prospect of improvement. 'You scorn the hypocrisy of pretending to be better than you are, and that very scorn fixes you in what you are.' We may remind ourselves again here of the divided mind of Shakespeare's Henry V, and contrast it with the undivided one of 'honest Iago.' Such considerations may at least serve in mitigation of the charge of hypocrisy, though of course they rest upon the admission of its substantial justice. The essential point is that it is worth while to cultivate ideals even if they take but little immediate hold on our practical life and serve largely as instruments of hypocrisy and self-deception. It is better, as it has been well put, to be a hypocrite than an idolater; better to pretend to worship the true gods than to bow down before the false ones openly and unashamed. But, of course, it would be better still to have a steady vision of the true ones and to follow them sincerely.

So far I have been content to base my defence upon a general admission of the justice of the charge; but I think one is entitled to go a good deal farther. The charge can only be admitted in the sense that it calls attention to a weakness to which the English are somewhat specially prone. But to say that they are prone

[1] *More Thoughts on the War*, by Mr. Clutton-Brock, p. 10.
[2] Sir W. Raleigh, *England and the War*, p. 132.

to it is not to say that they are constantly guilty of it. It is surely undeniable that there are many Englishmen who genuinely live in accordance with the ideals that they specially value, who are gentlemen in the finest sense of the word; just as in earlier times there were doubtless many Israelites without guile. It is worth while to maintain ideals for the sake of a few noble instances, even if they are also responsible for a considerable number of counterfeits. Comparisons are odious; but I believe it is generally admitted that the best type of English gentleman is not surpassed by any other type in the world. Perhaps in some countries the saint is more saintly, the scholar more scholarly, and the artist more artistic; but it may be doubted whether there is any in which the average man is more sensible and more decent.

'Taken as a whole,' a good critic has stated,[1] 'the English are not brilliant, but they are clear-headed: they are not far-sighted, but they see the fact before their eyes: they are ill-equipped with theoretical knowledge, but they understand the working of institutions, and have a good eye for judging character: they have little constructive imagination of the more grandiose sort, but they have an instinct for the "next step," which has often set them on paths which have led them far further than they dreamed: above all, they have a relatively high standard of individual character and public duty, without which no organization involving the free co-operation of man and man can hope to be effective.'

[1] *Nationality and Government*, by Mr. A. E. Zimmern, p. 161.

CHAPTER IX

NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

At the time at which I write, the reconstruction about which we are most deeply concerned is not that of the nation, but rather that of the world at large. We are waiting for the results of the Peace Conference, by which the future of the human race must be largely determined for some generations to come. We do not know what these results will be [1]; but at least it has been recognized in theory that the future well-being of the world depends upon the establishment of a genuine League or Society of Nations. Without this, it seems clear that there cannot be such a sense of security as would empower us to put our hearts thoroughly into the work of reconstruction within any particular State. But it is sufficiently apparent also that the larger reconstruction which is involved in the setting up of such a League or Society is only a preliminary step to the more detailed reconstruction that is to succeed it; and that, without the latter, the former would be almost certain to be followed very speedily by a fresh process of decay and dissolution. Whatever may be the defects of Herbert Spencer's phil-

[1] Since this was written these have been gradually disclosed. As might have been expected, they have not given much satisfaction to any people or to any party; but it is pretty generally recognized that, if the League of Nations can be established and maintained, the defects in the conditions of peace may readily be removed or rendered innocuous. Thus it is more than ever apparent that the future of our civilization depends upon the successful working of this bold experiment. But the League, in any complete sense, has not yet come into being

osophy in other particulars—and I certainly believe that they are many and grave—he has at least taught us that any real progress, whether in nature or in human life, involves differentiation as well as integration. If the world is to become a more completely united system than it has ever been before, it must also have an intenser life and a more ample freedom throughout its parts. The one condition is the necessary counterpart of the other. A union of peoples is only possible when its constituent elements are truly peoples.

Now, we have already noted, and indeed it is but too sadly apparent, that we cannot claim to be in all respects a completely united people. We are ourselves a society of nations, that are not perfectly in accord with one another; and, even within these separate nations, there are separate classes, conflicting creeds, and irreconcilable ideals. To discuss all the difficulties that are thus presented would evidently be far beyond our present scope. But the survey that we have been attempting to make may serve at least to call attention to some of the most vital considerations.

That we are ourselves a society of nations, differing in temperament and traditions, is certainly not in itself a circumstance to be regretted. It fits us all the better, even if not always through pleasing experiences, to take a leading part in a larger mode of association. 'Superficial moralists,' it has been well said,[1] 'try to get us to like some other nationality by emphasizing all the things we have in common, but war can never cease until we see the value of differences, that they are to be maintained, not blotted out.' In the case at least of the nations within the larger of the British Islands, the differences can hardly be said to present any serious difficulties; and they supply us with a variety of talents and interests

[1] *The New State*, by Miss M. P. Follett, p. 344—an extremely valuable contribution to the discussion of the problems of national reconstruction.

that often help us in time of need. It has been noted, for instance, that of the five delegates who have been selected to represent this country at the Peace Conference, not one is English in the narrower sense of the term. The case of Ireland is, of course, more serious; but it is surely not extravagant to anticipate that, in the general healing of the nations, some remedy will be provided for this among our other sores. It seems clear that the British Islands, like the Japanese, are too palpably a single group to be permanently divided. They might even, to all intents, cease to be separate islands—even, in a manner, cease to be islands at all. Already at least it appears to be practically decided that our friendship with France will be sealed by the construction of a Channel Tunnel between them; and it appears, on the face of it, that it would be just as easy, in a similar fashion, to unite Ireland with Scotland [1]—the part of Great Britain with which, on the whole, it has in the past had the closest and most friendly relations. Just at present, no doubt, the benefits of such an undertaking would hardly balance its cost. But at least I do not gather that the majority of the Irish people themselves, or even any considerable minority among them, desire complete separation, but only some form of independent control of their internal affairs. That some such devolution is in itself desirable is pretty generally allowed, though, no doubt, every particular method is open to some objection. It is generally agreed also that the self-government of our colonies, dominions and dependencies is a thing to be more and more encouraged and developed. On such differentiating tendencies it is hardly necessary to dwell.

When we turn our attention to reconstruction within a particular country, in the more limited sense of that term, it is the opposition between separate classes that naturally first attracts our notice. This is especially the case in England, where most other sources of difference

[1] See *Dawn in Ireland*, by Marie Harrison, pp. 212–13.

are largely in abeyance. Differences of race and language do not here occasion much trouble, and the general spirit of tolerance and compromise (sometimes, no doubt, of sheer indifference) causes even religious differences—at least when they are not complicated by some element of caste or social status—to be almost entirely negligible. But Labour troubles meet us on every hand. And when we inquire into the causes of these—not merely the temporary occasions of them, but their more deeply seated sources—we find that they reveal a cleft within the somewhat artificial unity of our civilization. In spite of the admissions that have been made in the preceding chapter, I am afraid it must be allowed that we are not yet a united people. The distinction between those who have possessions and leisure and those who have little else than perpetual toil continues to be a very real one. It is somewhat obscured by the large number of intermediate grades and by the comparatively easy transition, in certain circumstances, from the one condition to the other. When we look, however, at the two extremes, the contrast is sufficiently striking. On the one hand, we have the lord who owns extensive lands, and who is a little monarch within his own domain; on the other, we have the dweller in a city slum, who is little better than a slave, though he is the slave of a system, rather than of a private owner. The contrast between these two extremes is perhaps greater in England than it is in any other country that makes any pretension to freedom. 'No European country,' says Gissing,[1] 'can show such a gap as yawns to the eye between the English gentleman and the English boor.' There may be some exaggeration in this; the differences have probably been somewhat reduced since Gissing wrote by improvements in popular education and in the general conditions of life, but at least it cannot be denied that there is still too much slum and too little education in England. It is a thing that

[1] *Henry Ryecroft*, p. 127.

strikes our foreign visitors and by our own peoples from overseas, and it ought to be more fully recognized by ourselves than it commonly is. It causes us to be still divided into two pretty sharply distinguished classes. So far as this is true, it means that, though we are a nation, we can hardly be called a people; and it is this defect, more than anything else, that national reconstruction has to seek to remedy. It is vain to talk of a government of the people and by the people if there is not a people that is sufficiently one to be able to co-operate in government; vain to strive to make the world 'safe for democracy' if there is no genuine *demos* for which to make it safe; vain even to think of a Society of Nations, if the Nations to be associated are agglomerates of discordant elements rather than organic wholes. I am referring here more particularly to England, but the conditions in the sister nations, though different, are to a large extent coloured by those that are maintained by the 'predominant partner'; and to some extent the same conditions are to be found in other European countries, and are not even wholly absent on the other side of the Atlantic. The problem is essentially a world-problem.

Now, this is not a treatise on methods of social reform, and I do not intend to enter much into the consideration of particular methods of progress; but there are some reflections that spring so immediately out of the slight survey that we have made, that it seems worth while to set them down in this place. One reflection that suggests itself at once is that there is something abnormal and intrinsically evil in any separation between possession and use. The antithesis between creation and possession has been recently emphasized in a very striking way[1]; but it has to be remembered that human creation is not of an absolute kind. We create, in general, only by giving a fresh form to a material that is given to us; and, in

[1] Especially in *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, by Mr. B Russell, *passim*.

this sense, all our labour is creative. 'A small poet,' as Carlyle said, 'every true worker is.' Now, the free man works with materials that he owns, and which he can shape in accordance with his own ideals. The creative artist possesses his materials, and shapes them in the manner that he thinks most fitting. If he is hampered by the interference of another, his work must, almost inevitably, suffer. Now, it is an unfortunate peculiarity of our modern civilization that, to so very large an extent, those who possess do not create, and those who create do not possess. Of course, a statement of this kind must be taken with considerable qualifications; but surely it is sufficiently true to deserve serious attention. To some extent (again with very large qualifications) the distinction corresponds to that between town and country. The saying that God made the country, and man made the town, cannot be altogether accepted; but it does call attention to a somewhat important distinction. The owner of large country estates possesses property on which he may make great improvements, but which he can hardly much transform. His possession is, in the main, a gift of Nature. A town, on the other hand, is, in the main, inhabited by people who are engaged, directly or indirectly, in the transformation or rearrangement of materials which they do not possess, or possess only to sell. Even the land on which the town is built is generally the property of people who have but little direct concern in the work that is carried on in it.[1] I think we may see in such facts the source from which many of the troubles in our modern system of life have flowed, troubles that are specially conspicuous in our own country. If I am right in this diagnosis of the malady from which we chiefly suffer, it would seem to follow that,

[1] In some respects—especially from the point of view of town-planning—these things are better managed in Germany. See *Municipal Life and Government in Germany*, by W. H Dawson, chaps. v. and vi.

in any attempt to reconstruct our national life, we should try at least to make the cleavage between possession and creation somewhat less sharp than it is at present. In a complex society like that in which we live it could hardly be possible that every one, or even any large proportion of the population, should have complete control of the materials with which they work; but it is pretty certain that it is desirable that, as far as possible, such control should be secured, and it may be well to refer here to some methods that appear to offer some hope for an advance in this direction.

It seems clear that any method for this purpose must involve, in some form or other, a freeing of the land, so as to make it more directly accessible to those who use it either for agricultural purposes or for the building of towns and centres of industry. With reference more particularly to the former of these purposes, I cannot here discuss whether the best solution is to be found in State ownership or in the encouragement of a system of peasant proprietors. State ownership has had many advocates, but in recent years, partly in consequence of the more friendly relations between this country and France, the other alternative has been powerfully supported by such writers as Mr. Belloc and Mr. Chesterton. Mr. Chesterton, in particular, conceives [1] that our best hope for the merry England of the future is to be found in 'beginning by guilds and small social groups gradually to restore the personal property of the poor and the personal freedom of the family.' Small peasant properties, like those that are so widely distributed in France, are regarded as a chief means for such a restoration. Even at a much earlier date the advantages of such a system were pretty fully set forth by J. S. Mill.[2] The essential

[1] *Short History of England*, p. 241. The best general discussion on this subject is, I suppose, that which is contained in Mr. Belloc's book on *The Servile State*.

[2] *Political Economy*, especially Book II, chap. vi. The very

thing is that there should be such security of tenure as to make a man's possession at least sufficiently his own to enable him to put his full energy into work that is, in some degree, creative in its treatment. It has often been noted [1] that 'we have no peasant class like many other countries—the true conservative element in every country but out own.'

This, however, concerns reconstruction only from the point of view of the country. But there are great disadvantages in the complete separation between town and country, and we must now notice how reconstruction is to be viewed from the side of the town. Here also it is partly a question of freeing the land. Town-planning is an art that has been too much neglected among us, and this is at least partly due to the fact that towns can only be satisfactorily planned when the land that is necessary for their expansion is easily to be obtained. Nevertheless, something has now been accomplished in the establishment of Garden Cities and Garden Suburbs which may in time take the place of our slums, and prepare the way for a better social order.

Even as I write a book has been published [2] containing an interesting account of the plans for a new town, in which the opposition between the city and the country is to be abolished, and in which it is hoped that a new spirit of comradeship may be developed among all classes of the community. Such a community might well be expected to reproduce some of the best features of the old City States among the Greeks. Anyone who has considered the political writings of Plato and Aristotle

appreciative account there given has not, I think, attracted as much attention as it deserved. See also *The Greek Commonwealth*, by Mr. A. E. Zimmern, p. 228, and *Modern Germany*, by Mr. J. Ellis Barker, chap. xiii.

[1] S. Whitman, *Conventional Cant*, p. 112. See also Taine's *Notes on England*, p. 163, etc.

[2] *New Town: a Proposal in Agricultural, Industrial, Educational, Civic, and Social Reconstruction*, edited by Mr. W. R. Hughes.

must have been impressed by the importance which they attached to the limited size of a self-governing community. Rousseau also, to whom modern democracy is so deeply indebted, recognized fully that self-government in the best sense is only possible where the citizens are sufficiently accessible to one another to be able to take some personal share in the decisions that are formed, and not to be dependent entirely on what Whitman described as the never-ending audacity of elected persons. 'Democracy,' it has been said,[1] 'is meaningless unless it involves the serious and steady co-operation of large numbers of citizens in the actual work of government.' No doubt the increased facilities for travel and communication in recent times have somewhat altered the conditions; but it still seems to be true that in a comparatively small community, in which most of the important work both of town and country was carried on in close relation, it would be possible to develop the spirit of co-operative life and action in a way that is hardly possible on a more extended scale. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Even Germany may teach us some lessons in the management of the smaller forms of social unity. 'Impressed,' says Mr. W. H. Dawson,[2] 'by the larger autonomy enjoyed by German towns, I have even dared to ask the question, whether in this country—the proverbial home of free institutions—we yet really understand what true self-government means.' Such a community as that now referred to would provide fresh opportunities for learning to understand it by practice. At the same time, the fact that such a community would be a constituent part of a larger whole would save it from some of the most serious difficulties by which the old City States were

[1] *The Greek Commonwealth*, by Mr. A. E. Zimmern, p. 156.

[2] *Municipal Life and Government in Germany*, Preface, p. viii. The development of this kind of local government in Germany seems to have been mainly due to Stein. He learned from the example of England, but bettered his instruction.

beset. They perished chiefly because they were not strong enough to defend themselves against the larger States outside; and it is very apparent that the defects that enter into Plato's sketch of an ideal community are mainly due to his consciousness of the need for a strong defensive force. It was this consciousness that compelled him to recognize a special guardian class, to propose the abolition of the family within that class, to make its education consist largely in military training, and to regard democracy as a fatal delusion. If he could have regarded the whole of Greece as a large community within which the smaller ones were included, his outlook might have been very different. Now, a modern City State, such as has been suggested, while freely controlling its own internal affairs, would depend for its defence, not on its own individual efforts, but on the whole nation within which it lived; just as that nation itself might in future be dependent, in all normal circumstances, on the combined strength of a universal federation. In this respect also, as well as in many others, such a society would be somewhat sharply contrasted with the various communistic associations that have been attempted, with very chequered results, in America and elsewhere. 'However various,' it has been said,[1] 'the reasons given for the non-success of such experiments as Brook Farm, certain religious associations, and certain artistic and literary groups, who have tried to live together, the truth is that most of them have died simply of non-nutrition. The bond created had not within it the variety which the human soul needs for its nourishment.' The proposed 'New Town' would certainly be free from this defect.

Of course, it is not to be imagined that such a combination of town and country as is here referred to would be either possible or desirable in all parts of any nation's life. Farming on a large scale may have to be kept somewhat apart from town life, and some industries may always

[1] *The New State*, by Miss M. P. Follett, p. 39.

have to be segregated from agricultural pursuits. But the combination that is suggested seems to be, in many respects, an ideal arrangement, which it is worth while to endeavour to secure, wherever circumstances are such as to permit of it. Even one such community within a country might well be expected to have a leavening influence, by which in time the general conception of citizenship would be purified and strengthened far beyond the boundaries of the community itself. And it might gradually form the nucleus for a more thoroughly organic life, at least in the immediately surrounding district. It would work in with the existing tendency to secure a certain independence in particular parts of the country, especially when they are somewhat distinguished from other parts by circumstances of race or historical tradition. We might thus gradually secure a system of distinct modes of unity throughout the world, rising from the City (combining within itself, as far as possible, both town and country) to the District, the Nation, the Sovereign State, and the Federation of the Human Race. 'For in all societies in all ages the law of the larger unit tends to be held in less esteem than that of the smaller, and progress consists in making the spirit of the smaller, with its appropriate ideas and customs, transmute and inspire the larger.' [1] The danger of any large aggregation is that it may cease to be a society, and become a *crowd*. 'More and more is it evident that the real question of freedom in our day is the freedom of smaller unions to live within the whole.' [2] It is evident that the clearer recognition of this is what is chiefly needed at the present time for the solution of the political troubles in Ireland.[3]

No doubt such a reconstruction of the life of the com-

[1] *The Greek Commonwealth*, by A. E. Zimmern, p. 96.

[2] *Churches in the Modern State*, by J. N. Figgis, p. 52.

[3] For an account of some efforts in this direction, reference may be made to Mr. Darrell Figgis's book on *Æ : A Study of a Man and a Nation*, especially chap. iv.

munity might be expected, in the end, to involve some modifications in our general methods of government; but it would seem that, in any case, some such changes are imminent in many parts of the world. As General Smuts has recently said, 'The old political formulas sound hollow; the old landmarks by which we used to steer are disappearing beneath a great flood.' If the maintenance of the world's peace were recognized, as most of us hope it will be, as being mainly an international concern, and if more purely local affairs were managed separately by free Cities, Districts, and more or less autonomous Nations, the government of the Sovereign State would be able to devote its attention more exclusively to problems of national organisation on a more extensive scale. How the division would be made it is not easy to foresee with any definiteness; but it seems clear that it might be much easier than it is at present for such a government to take control of the larger aspects of national well-being, such as the land, the mines, the railways, the harbours, the supply of electricity, and the general relations between the undertakers of particular industries and the workmen whom they employ. Already there are signs of important changes in these great concerns. It seems probable that a government dealing mainly with these more vital issues would naturally be constituted in somewhat different ways, and perhaps elected by different methods, from those with which in the past we have been familiar. Even at present, for instance, it appears to be somewhat misleading to think of the members of our Imperial Parliament as the representatives of particular places. It would probably be better to think of them rather as the representatives of particular aspects of the national life. This is a suggestion that has already been a good deal emphasized by many writers,[1] and certainly, if

[1] See *The New State*, by M. P. Follett, pp. 260 *seq.*, and the ruthorities there referred to; also *Janus and Vesta*, by Mr. B.

different parts of the community are to acquire more independence in the management of their local affairs, it would seem that the State as a whole will have to concern itself chiefly with matters that are rather departmental than local, matters affecting the control of education, mining, shipping, international trade, and other large issues. It would be these, rather than particular districts, that would call for representation. No doubt the question of a second chamber would also call for some reconsideration. That there should be some check on the decisions of any one assembly, however representative it may be, would be generally allowed; but the House of Lords, as at present constituted, is hardly what anyone would at this stage of national development approve. It has already been to a considerable extent discredited, and its powers greatly reduced. If the Lower House were constituted by the election of representatives of the chief activities of the country, it would seem most natural that the Upper House should be representative rather of thought than of action, and that it should be essentially an advisory Chamber, with some power to delay, but not permanently to prevent, the legislative decisions of the Lower House. It might be composed of recognized authorities on sociology, the theory of government, economics, law, history, medicine, philosophy, psychology, theology, art, the natural sciences, education, scholarship, and other important subjects. They might be appointed partly by the Lower House and partly by such bodies as the British Academy and the Royal Societies. Such a method of government might go some way to realize the ideal State of Plato—not, indeed, in the form in which he sketched it, but in its essential meaning and spirit. It is doubtful, however, whether even this is quite what is ultimately desirable. It is possible that the best

Branford, pp. 282–5. Mr. Branford's view is that it would be best to have two Chambers based on different methods of representation—one territorial, as at present, the other vocational.

position for experts is that of permanent officials. What is wanted in a Senate is rather a large outlook upon the world and the wisdom that comes from long experience. What we wish to secure is, in the language of Mr. Bosanquet,[1] the 'expert in the art of life,' rather than one who possesses technical qualifications in any particular department. How such a Senate is to be secured I do not undertake to determine. Such ideals may still be somewhat remote, but it is well at least to think sometimes of possible changes in our methods of government, however remote the realization of them may be. It serves to free the imagination, and to save us from the sense of despair that is apt to beset us when we suppose that the kind of government that we now have—to a large extent one of blind struggle, swayed hither and thither by pressure from without, nearly always yielding to fear, and seldom simply to argument—is the only kind of government that we have any right to hope for. That kind of government at least can hardly suffice to deal with the great problems of the future.[2]

[1] See the interesting discussion on this subject in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. IX, especially p. 67. There is also some valuable discussion on the Second Chamber Problem in Mr. Ramsay Muir's *Peers and Bureaucrats*, pp. 95 *seq.*

[2] The great weakness of such a government lies in the shortness of its views. This is well emphasized by Mr. W. H. Dawson (*Problems of the Peace*, p. 346). 'It is unfortunately true,' he says, 'that England still far too often takes short views. There is so much in the national character and life that predisposes us to that fatal defect—our impatience of deep or exact thought, our excessive confidence in judgments that are purely intuitive, our contempt for any systematic and thorough grappling with our national problems, our incurable propensity for superficial generalizations, rough-and-ready solutions and short cuts, our want of imagination. The defect is perhaps even more encouraged by our very political system, of which we are justly proud, in that it teaches the statesman and the politician to be satisfied with the shallow success, lightly gained and lightly lost, that so surely rewards the dramatic surprise or the smart *coup*, to work for the present day and sup its applause, instead of patiently toiling for the future in silence and disregard, enjoying only by anticipation its recognition and its gratitude.'

It must not be assumed that, in referring to the control that would naturally be exercised by the Sovereign State over the larger forms of national enterprise, I mean to imply that the State would necessarily own the land or the mines or any other possessions that are at present the property of private owners or companies. In some cases it might; but it is very probable that the State could exercise a more impartial and beneficent control over undertakings that it did not actually own. Even the wisest of governments can hardly be as wise in matters of detail as those whose special business it is to carry on some particular kind of work; and in executive decisions, as distinguished from matters of legislation, 'it is a commonplace of human affairs that combined action is almost invariably less intelligent than individual action.' [1] But I think we ought to keep an open mind on this subject, and choose in the end whatever methods may appear, after careful reflection, to be the most efficient. There is probably still a good deal that we might learn in this respect from the organizing skill of Germany. Some remarks of Mr. W. H. Dawson [2] may be worth quoting in this connection. 'It has been of untold advantage to Germany that when, more than thirty years ago, it seriously began to develop its economic resources, it was not hampered by any hard-and-fast adherence to a definite line of policy in regard to the limits of public as compared with private enterprise. Germany is supposed to be a nation of theorists, England a nation of practical men; yet the doctrinarianism which made a fetish of individualism originated in the land of practical men; the land of theorists accepted both individualism and

[1] This statement is from Mr. W. Trotter's *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, p. 135. I think it is chiefly true of work of a creative kind, requiring unity of conception, and in cases in which the combination is of the nature of a crowd rather than a co-operative group.

[2] *The Evolution of Modern Germany* (1914), p. 207.

socialism just for what they were intrinsically worth, without prejudice for or against, and made an idol of neither. If Germany has, on the whole, gone as far in the direction of encouraging public enterprise as England went, up to a generation ago, in crippling it, the explanation may be found in the fact . . . that State initiative, originating in the time of patriarchalism and absolute rule, is the tradition of German government; hence it was easy and natural for the Germans to apply the principle of public enterprise and effort to modern conditions.' It seems probable that this is a kind of skill that we must in some degree acquire.

I have thought it well to set down some suggestions on these questions with regard to national reconstruction, not because I believe my views about them to have any special value, but because, at a time like this, it seems right that every citizen who has reflected on such subjects should seek to contribute what he can to the common stock of reflection upon them. We can hardly expect to find the most satisfactory solutions of such intricate problems at once; and it is probable that, whatever may be done, it will not be a final settlement for all time. To look for finality in human affairs would be too like the attitude of that amazing rustic who is said to have stood waiting for the river to flow by. 'Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis, at ille Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.' No doubt the stream of human history broadens as it flows, and we may hope that it will lose something of the turbulence of its earlier rushing; but it is pretty certain that it will not cease to move and change as long as the human race endures What we call civilization may be safely assumed to be still only at its rude beginnings.

There is one thing, however, that may at least be urged with some confidence. Whatever may be the future structure of our civic body, its healthy growth must depend on its animation by a genuine civic spirit. This

may at least be cultivated even while the body remains to some extent unformed. Hence the consideration of the best methods for the reconstruction of our educational system is one of the most fundamental of all our problems. In particular, the study of the most satisfactory methods of civic and moral education might well engage our attention, even while other problems, perhaps equally important, await solution. I proceed, accordingly, to set down a few reflections on our present methods of education, with special reference to this particular aspect of it.

The most typical form of education in England, at least till quite recent times, is that which is given in the great public schools; and it can hardly be doubted that it has had a good deal to do with the formation and perpetuation of some of the dominant characteristics of our people, especially of the ruling class. Some comments on this subject by 'G. A. Birmingham' may be worth quoting here, though allowance has to be made for that sardonic humour which one expects in an Irish writer when he is dealing with English affairs. Referring to the state of education about sixty years ago, he writes [1]: 'The education given at the English public schools in those days was the best in the world. It was indeed likely that a boy would emerge from it with small Latin, less Greek, and a contempt for French. He was almost certain to be ignorant of mathematics and natural science. But if he had any good in him at all, he learned to be a gentleman; that is to say, one fitted to be a leader of other men, either in battle or in politics. The boy from an English public school made an admirable captain of soldiers. He faced physical pain for himself without shrinking, and gazed on the sufferings of others without nausea. He was inured to suffering. Masters birched their pupils frequently. The boys fought battles with each other in which even the victors were hurt a great deal. Bullying was the sport of the strong; to be bullied

[1] *The Bad Times* (1908), chap. iii.

the common lot of the weak. Nowadays, thanks to the introduction of anæsthetics in surgery and the recognition of the dignity of surrender in war, a gentleman is no longer called upon to suffer or witness physical torture. Therefore there is no necessity to birch him excessively in his youth, or to encourage him to find pleasure in hurting those weaker than himself. He is still trained, however, just as he was trained then, in the other habits which go to the making of a gentleman. For a gentleman should have good manners, a high opinion of himself, and a capacity for concealing his feelings. The leader in political life must be properly contemptuous of the suffrages of the multitudes he courts. He must be able to hide anger, disgust, enthusiasm, high hopes, or an altruistic outlook upon life. He must smile when rage is in his heart, dine, without visible discomfort, with conscious liars; and pretend, when his soul is full of lofty ideals, to be occupied principally in finding room for his own head at the feeding-trough. The public school education is admirable still for the training of such men. It was even better adapted for its purpose fifty years ago.' A good deal of the kind of training here referred to is not unlike that which is given to the samurai in Japan; but it has characteristic English differences, especially the difference of not being so consciously planned. But when it is said that this is the kind of education that forms a gentleman, it is evident that that term is not used in quite the same sense as Green was using it when he urged that every one should have the education of a gentleman. What is really wanted is the kind of education that serves to develop a good citizen, and it is from this point of view that we have to consider English education.

If it is true that virtue is the necessary basis of a free State, it can hardly be doubted that the cultivation of it should be one of the main aims of democratic education. To some extent it is true that in England is has formed a considerable element in the education of the governing

class in the past. It has entered both into their studies and into their games, and has to some extent influenced other classes as well as those that have had the chief share in government. The conception that is expressed by the phrase 'playing the game' has done much to sustain a certain spirit of justice in the English people. A writer [1] who has some qualifications to express an opinion on the subject has recently gone so far as to say that 'games are to us almost a religion—perhaps the truest and most honourable form of worship that we have. At his games the Englishman loses his smugness and self-righteousness, and becomes perfectly natural.' There is at least nothing hypocritical in the conception of 'playing the game,' but like most things English, it is not a very exact conception. Before one could properly estimate its value, it would be necessary to ask what kind of game is specially in view. Most of our games take the form of competition between opposing sides, and 'playing the game' seems to mean partly observing its conventional rules and partly doing one's best to support one's own side. A conception thus formed does not necessarily lead to a very definite idea of fairness or justice, but it does probably help to carry people some distance towards such an idea. At least it discountenances pure self-interest and flagrant violations of established usage. But it does not help much towards the formation of reflective insight into what is right and fitting. We have to ask whether this desideratum is supplied by the more serious studies.

The education of those who have till recently formed the bulk of the governing class in England has been largely based on what are commonly described as classical studies. That these may be used with advantage for the inculcation of the civic virtues is very obvious. Nothing could well be better for this purpose than the study of

[1] The Hon. Neville Lytton in *Land and Water*, Jan. 13, 1919, p. 31.

the works of Plato and Aristotle. Those of Thucydides, Xenophon—not to speak of Homer, the Tragedians, and Aristophanes—also contain many valuable lessons. Indeed, the whole of Greek literature is saturated with political and ethical ideas, often supremely wise, and nearly always interesting and provocative of thought. Latin literature—which, on the whole, has usually been more thoroughly studied—is much less subtle; and the ideas that it contains have been so largely assimilated in the course of our own political development, that it may be doubted whether it can contribute many lessons that are really fresh from this point of view. On the other hand, it can hardly be denied that the Latin language supplies models of terse, lucid and accurate expression—qualities too often deficient in our own; and that its literature is eminently fitted to cultivate good sense, humane feeling, a broad cosmopolitan outlook, and the spirit of law and order. It may rightly be maintained that the study of both Greek and Latin literature, if properly pursued, brings the minds of the young into contact with the foundations upon which our European civilization rests, and supplies an element of culture for which the study of modern literatures can scarcely be held to provide an equivalent.[1] The study of the literatures of Greece and

[1] This seems to me to be the only really solid argument in favour of the prominent place of the ancient classics in education. It is sometimes urged that we cannot have a proper grasp of our own language without the knowledge of Latin and Greek, as well as some modern languages. But a comparatively slight knowledge suffices for this. It would be difficult to point to any poets who had a finer command of English than Shakespeare and Keats, both of whom had 'small Latin and less Greek.' Ruskin, who did not early acquire a scholarly knowledge of any language other than his own, could use his own in pretty effective prose. So could Cobbett and Dickens. On the other hand, the style of Johnson and even of Milton are hardly styles to be taken as models. It is well to remember that the Greeks themselves, whom we very rightly take as models, do not appear to have attached much importance to the acquisition of foreign languages, either dead or living. It is the life and thought of other peoples that it is important to understand, rather than their modes of speech.

Rome served in the past as a great bulwark against excessive Hebraism, and it may still serve as a bulwark against excessive utilitarianism. It may be doubted, however, whether the full benefit of such study is secured by the great majority of those who are initiated rather painfully into them. As Taine said,[1] 'They know the dry bones of antiquity, but are unable to feel its spirit.' And it is very probable that many of them would profit much more by the study of modern writers, or by contenting themselves with good translations of the more important of the ancients. In any case, the time that is necesary to extract what is really valuable from the Greek and Latin originals can only be spared by those who have a large amount of leisure at their disposal; so that for the mass of our citizens this gateway to wisdom must be regarded as practically closed. Indeed, it may be doubted whether it is desirable for any to give much time very early in life to the study of the foundations of our civilization. The foundations of things are generally the last things that can be profitably studied. It seems to be a sound principle in education to begin with what is nearest us.[2] It can hardly be denied that Mr. Ponsonby was right in affirming[3] that 'the preference for the "humanities" over scientific studies originates more from their being a distinction of class than from any æsthetic appreciation of their true value.' All the same,

[1] *Notes on England*, p. 311. Taine contrasts the pedantic English methods in this respect with the more liberal ones that are adopted in France. But probably there has been some improvement since he wrote.

[2] It may be urged, however, that it is well to learn some of the rudiments of Latin and Greek at an early stage, since, if we do not learn them when we are young, we are not likely to find time for them later in life. I admit that there is some force in this, but it is only an argument for a very moderate amount of attention to these subjects.

[3] *The Decline of Aristocracy*, p. 202. There are some very good remarks about this in Mr. Richmond's book on *Permanent Values in Education*, especially in the Preface by Mr. Clutton-Brock.

it would certainly be a bad day for England if her growing citizens should ever cease to have an opportunity of learning to appreciate the æsthetic, intellectual and moral value that is to be gained from this form of study.

The Bible, again, does undoubtedly contain some finer and more searching lessons on conduct than perhaps any other literature can show ; and its influence on modern life and thought has been so subtly pervasive, that it is difficult to understand modern European writings without some knowledge of its contents. Evidently a generation that should grow up in ignorance of Ruth and Job, of David and Solomon, of the Good Samaritan and the Sermon on the Mount, would be a generation sadly impoverished. Some other parts of the book are, no doubt, too obscure to be of much interest to the young. But it is still true, as Huxley used to urge, that it contains, for a large number of our citizens, almost the only great literature that they are likely to have an opportunity of appreciating. This is perhaps becoming less true ; but at least the references both to the Bible and to the Greek and Latin classics are so frequent throughout our own literature, that it is necessary to have some knowledge of their substance as distinguished from their language. But the kind of knowledge that is necessary for this can be acquired without any great expenditure of time and labour. It may almost be treated as play. Apart from this, the Oriental atmosphere of the Bible is somewhat foreign to the life of modern Europe ; and it is clearly not desirable to introduce the young at a very early stage into a world that is on the whole darker and ruder than that into which they are born. Moreover, it is difficult to dissociate the reading of the Bible from the dogmatic theology that has been based upon it ; and Gambetta's principle that ' the State must not identify itself with any dogma ' is now pretty generally accepted. Hence it does not appear that the time devoted in general public education to this study should be very great.

Modern literature, again, has the great disadvantage that its classics have not been so carefully sifted and interpreted as those of the more ancient writers. The greater ease of writing in modern times has tended to make our literatures more extensive and less intensively perfect, so that they seldom present quite as good models for study. They deal, moreover, to a large extent with questions that are still agitating people's minds, and that can with difficulty be treated in a non-partizan spirit. Modern history, also, though it contains plenty of material from which political and ethical ideas may be extracted, is so much involved in complicated issues that it can hardly be used at a very early stage for the purposes of such a study. For the purposes of early study something much nearer to the actual life of the young seems to be required.

On the whole, then, it seems clear that, if there is to be any serious attempt to instil sound conceptions on civic and moral questions into the minds of the young, or to elicit such conceptions from their own reflective consciousness, it is necessary to look for some rather more direct method of doing it than can be provided by the study of any particular literature or any particular period of history. How it is to be done in schools has been partly shown by the publications of the Civic and Moral Education League and by other books bearing upon the subject.[1] There is, however, I believe, a general tendency, among those most familiar with the needs of schools, to recognize that formal lesson, such as those that are given in France, are not of much value. In colleges, and perhaps even in the higher classes in schools, it can hardly be doubted that an attempt to supply a coherent philosophy of life should be made more universal than it has hitherto been in England. The Scottish Universities, to which, until recently, boys went from school

[1] The Report on *Moral Instruction and Training in Schools*, edited by Sir M. Sadler, should be specially referred to. The Editor's well balanced Introduction is highly instructive.

at a pretty early age, have had an honourable tradition in the way of supplying such a philosophy to all who pass through the courses for the Arts degree. In France, also, some attempt to study general philosophical conceptions has been commonly made at a pretty early stage. In Japan the study of ethics appears to be practically compulsory on all who seek to enter upon a university course. Some of the newer universities in England also have recently given philosophy a somewhat more prominent place among their courses of study; but the tendency to aim at a rather too early specialization prevents it in many cases from having its proper place and influence. The study of the general conceptions of ethics and social philosophy ought pretty obviously to have some place in the education of every one who is to become a citizen in a self-governing community. It is specially important, for the sake of the schools, that such a study should have a prominent place in courses designed for the training of teachers. This, of course, applies now quite as fully to women as to men. It must always be remembered that what can be done in schools depends almost entirely on what is done in colleges and universities. Progress in education necessarily begins from the top.

The unsatisfactoriness of most of the education that is provided in England has been recently emphasized by a large number of writers—most notably, perhaps, by Mr. Alec Waugh and Mr. H. G. Wells. There may be—probably is—some exaggeration in the pictures that have been drawn; but, even if only a fraction of it is true, it is a sufficiently appalling revelation. It should be admitted that some competent observers have given a much more favourable impression. Professor Burnet,[1] for instance, contrasts the best type of higher education in England with that in Germany, considerably to the advantage of the former; but, even if he is right in this, his contention only applies to the very best type. Mr.

[1] *Education and the War.*

E. G. A. Holmes [1] also, though a strong reformer, is at least adverse to the German model. So, on the whole, is Mr. J. Ellis Barker,[2] though his judgment is more evenly balanced. Monsieur Demolins,[3] who may be supposed to be a more unprejudiced observer than any of these, is even enthusiastic about the merits of English education. So, indeed, are several German writers—notably Ludwig Gurlitt.[4] What these writers chiefly emphasize is the comparative freedom of English methods. It is probable

[1] *The Nemesis of Docility.*

[2] *Modern Germany*, chap. xi.

[3] *Anglo-Saxon Superiority.* M. Demolins seems to have been specially impressed with some recent attempts to develop new methods of education in this country. But these are due to the growing sense of the unsatisfactoriness of the older methods; and, if M. Demolins had inquired more closely into the origin of the movements that he chiefly admires, I believe he would have found that many of those responsible for their initiation were not Anglo-Saxons, and not at all typically English. The Entente between the two countries has perhaps led to a certain amount of mutual admiration that cannot be wholly justified.

[4] *Der Deutsche und sein Vaterland* and *Der Deutsche und seine Schule.* Gurlitt is quite as severe as Mr. Holmes in his criticism of German educational methods. As an illustration of the danger involved in the emphasis on the mere acquisition of knowledge, he quotes (*D. D. u. sein Vaterland*, p. 119) the jingling lines of Rückert—

> 'Menschen von dem ersten Preise
> Lernen nicht und werden weise;
> Menschen von dem zweiten Range
> Werden klug und lernen lange;
> Menschen von der dritten Sorte
> Bleiben dumm und lernen Worte.'
> (Those who win the highest prize
> Do not learn, and thus grow wise;
> Those who earn the second grade
> Learning long are skilful made;
> He who gets the lowest class,
> Learning words, remains an ass.)

'Lernen nichte' is, of course, a bit paradoxical, but it hardly needs explanation. We have probably some reason to be glad that such men as Shakespeare and Darwin succeeded as far as they did (and *not any farther*) in eluding the schoolmaster. Wiese (*Letters on English Education*) may also be referred to.

that this is an advantage in the most favourable cases; whether it is good in the mass is much more doubtful. At any rate, what is urged is that the freedom that is commended is only comparative, it is subject to very grave restrictions; and, though it tends in some degree to promote individuality, it does not do much to cultivate reflection; and it is terribly hampered by the sense of status.[1] It can hardly be doubted that a more definite attempt to deal systematically, throughout the whole course of education, with the fundamental conceptions of good citizenship would go far to provide that element of thoughtfulness which would seem to be specially lacking in the English character, and would serve to guard against the dangers of political anarchy which many regard as somewhat imminent at the present time. It might help to inspire our citizens with the pursuit of genuine virtues, instead of the pharisaism, snobbery, cant and hypocrisy, which are at present, not altogether without reason, charged against us.

With a view to such a result, however, it is important that truth and beauty should be resolutely pursued, as well as goodness in the narrower sense. What is wanted is the attitude described by Goethe—

> 'Sich vom Halben zu entwöhnen
> Und im Ganzen, Guten, Schönen,
> Resolut zu leben.'

It is quite true that the emphasis on virtue, narrowly interpreted, tends to interfere somewhat with the disinterested pursuit of art and science; and although a good deal of work of a first-rate kind has been done in this country in both these realms, it has been done in the

[1] 'What we need,' says Mr. Clutton-Brock (Preface to Mr. Richmond's *Permanent Values in Education*, p. xxi), 'is an education that will enrich the life of all classes, of the poor and stupid no less than of the rich and clever; and we cannot aim at such an education, or even conceive it, unless we empty our minds of the sense of status, and of intellectual no less than of social status.'

face of apathy and discouragement, and without much attempt at their systematic development. Research has not had its proper place in our universities, and is only very slowly winning it. It is still insufficiently endowed, and in some departments is hardly recognized at all. Universities have been too much thought of as if they were little more than a higher kind of school. Professors have been expected to give instruction in the rudiments of their subjects, instead of devoting themselves to the advancement of knowledge. And there is at present extremely little provision for the prosecution of artistic studies. We have faculties of Arts in most of our universities, but they do not deal with art. We have not even a national theatre, and in the country of Shakespeare his plays are less often and less easily to be seen than in Germany. Architecture has also been very gravely neglected, with the result that both our houses and our public buildings lack beauty and harmonious arrangement—often even comfort and convenience. Town-planning is only beginning to be studied. 'Germany may be very bad,' as Mr. Figgis says,[1] 'but she has no scandal like our slums.' Literature, too, suffers from lack of organization ; but in this case no doubt the organization would be more difficult to provide.

In the matter of religion, also, we are somewhat sadly to seek. We are split up into sects, some of which seek to impose their crude and often hardly intelligible doctrines even upon the minds of young children—a circumstance which is largely responsible for the backward state of our popular education in general. There is scarcely any attempt to base religion upon a well-reasoned metaphysic ; and such attempts as have been made are to a large

[1] *Some Defects in English Religion*, p. 36. I suppose some qualification should be made on this statement. If Germany is comparatively free from slums, the housing conditions are in some respects worse than they are in this country. See *Municipal Life and Government in Germany*, by W. H. Dawson, especially p. 162.

extent neglected by our religious teachers. 'Englishmen above all men,' said Creighton,[1] 'refuse to think things out.' Free thought and rationalism, even intellectualism, are commonly used as terms of reproach; and, though agnosticism is a characteristically English attitude, avowed agnostics are generally regarded with aversion. It is perhaps right to value imagination, moral purpose, and the enthusiasm of humanity more highly than pure thought. It may be admitted that Mephistopheles went too far in describing reason and science as the highest of man's powers [2]; but they certainly are among the highest, and without them our practical activities, even of the noblest and most beneficent kind, tend to become a purposeless play or a confused rule of thumb.

It is, I should suppose, in some such ways as those that have now been indicated that we have to look for improvement in the future. We may look for it, I think, with a considerable degree of confidence. I believe it is still true of our people, as it was in the time of Milton, that it is 'a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious and piercing spirit; acute to invent, subtile and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to.' It is indolence, rather than incapacity, that is the source of our weakness—'intellectual sloth,' as Meredith expressed it (or 'poltroonery,' according to Taine); and this is surely not incurable. The extension of education has done much to cure it already. But probably the most that any generation can reasonably hope is that it may leave to its children a somewhat less 'tumbled house' than that which it has inherited from its fathers.

[1] Quoted by Mr. J. N. Figgis, *Churches in the Modern State*, p. 240.

[2] 'Verachte nur Vernunft und Wissenschaft,
Des Menschen allerhöchste Kraft.'

X

SOME GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding Essays I have been trying to feel my way towards some understanding of the dominant type or types of character in our national life, of the chief tendencies and modes of action and expression with which it or they are connected, of the main defects to which it is liable, and of the possibilities that are opened up for improvement in the immediate future. To some extent I have been groping in the dark, especially in dealing with the possibilities of improvement; and perhaps the conclusions to which I have been pointing have not been made sufficiently clear. On a good many of the main points, however, it has been possible to summon up such a cloud of competent witnesses that we can hardly have been led very seriously astray. But what, on the whole, we seem to find in our country is a somewhat complicated and discordant body, stumbling along, rather blindly and very slowly, from one condition to another, and not paying much heed to those who attempt to give a helping hand. Of the slowness we need not too greatly complain. There is, no doubt, a large element of truth in the saying of Carlyle—'All great peoples are conservative, slow to believe in novelties, patient of much error in actualities, deeply and for ever certain of the greatness that is in law, in custom, once solemnly established and now long recognized as just and final.' But yet they move; and it is important to try to see to what they are moving,

and whether it is good or bad. In order to understand this we have to have some insight into the characteristics of the people and into the forces by which they are liable to be influenced. Some of these depend upon the almost unfathomable peculiarities of race and inborn temperament, some upon the conditions of soil, climate, and physical surroundings. These do not readily change, though the methods of dealing with them may be gradually improved. But we have also to take account of the general movements of history, by which all nations are more or less affected. Some reference has been made to these at various points; but perhaps it may be worth while to try to sum up here the most important considerations that bear upon this aspect of the subject. It may be an idol of my particular cave; but I cannot help thinking that there are few better ways of viewing the general movements of history than in the light of the sketch of national transformations that was set forth in Plato's *Republic*.

Plato's *Republic* differs from most other Utopias—if, indeed, it should be classed among Utopias at all—in containing not merely the sketch of a model constitution, but also an indication of the difficulties and dangers to which such a constitution is liable. The model that he sketches is, in its leading features, aristocratic. He conceived that a genuine aristocracy must have a sort of priesthood for its ruling class—a priesthood free from the ties of family life and from the ownership of private property, and devoting itself unreservedly to the welfare of the community. This priesthood is to be supported by a military class, similarly free from mercenary and other private ambitions. Both these classes are to be carefully prepared for their work by an elaborate system of civic and moral education; but he does not conceive that any such system could be made effective in a purely mechanical fashion. It would depend for its success on the constant presence of a sufficient number of citizens

with a natural predisposition to devote themselves to the higher interests of life. The chief danger to which such a constitution would be liable would lie in the fact that a sufficiency of such citizens might not be forthcoming. In such circumstances, the spiritual influence of the priesthood would not be sufficiently powerful to prevent the emergence of military ambition. The aristocracy would thus be apt to degenerate into what he called a Timarchy, in which the conception of military honour would be the most prominent influence. But a constitution of this kind would also be highly unstable. The military class, when not restrained by the spiritual authority, would be sure to seize upon a large part of the wealth of the community, and the State as a whole would thus undergo a still further degeneration into plutocracy. When it reached this form, the ruling class would no longer command the respect of the mercantile and industrial classes, and there would be some kind of revolution, resulting in the establishment of what Plato called Democracy, but which, in modern language, would rather be described as a state of free competition and *laisser faire*. This again, Plato thought, would relapse into some form of despotic rule. Some ambitious demagogue would gain the supreme power. Of constitutional democracy, as conceived in modern times, Plato had, naturally enough, no real conception. Of good citizenship, on which such a democracy rests, he had a very clear conception ; but he thought that only the few could be expected to rise to any full conception of such citizenship. It is for us to prove that he was here in error.

Now, there has, of course, never been anything quite answering to Plato's description of the model State, and consequently never anything corresponding to the account that he gave of its decadence. But European history does, nevertheless, furnish us with many instructive parallels to the processes that he described. The Catholic

Church, in its palmiest days, supplied on a large scale something not unlike his priestly rulers; and the feudal system, with which it was for a considerable time connected, was not altogether unlike the form of military support that Plato had in mind. That the general system failed for lack of spirituality, and became little better than a military rule, is also pretty apparent; and it is clear also that it has, almost everywhere, shown a tendency to degenerate into plutocracy, that this has led to revolutions inspired by more or less definitely democratic conceptions, and that sometimes (as in the case of the great French Revolution) these have been followed by some form of despotic rule. With the consideration of all this, however, we are not here concerned. What we have to ask is, How far do such tendencies help us to understand the history and prospects of our own country?

As we have partly seen in the course of the preceding Essays, the general answer would seem to be that in this country, even more emphatically than on the continent of Europe, there never was anything at all closely resembling the model constitution of Plato. Although England, like other countries, was for a long time under the direct influence of Catholicism, yet its insular position, along with some other circumstances, kept it nearly always a little aloof from the main current of European civilization. The feudal system never got firmly rooted here,[1] and from a pretty early date there was some tendency to rebel against the dominance of Rome. Hence, as soon as there was an orderly form of government in the country at all, it was more nearly like Plato's timarchy than like his aristocracy. This timarchy existed in its most perfect form under the early Norman kings, qualified no doubt by the recognition of the spiritual authority of Rome,

[1] The checking of the feudal system in England seems to have been due, at least in part, to the wise action of the Conqueror. See on this *The State and the Nation*, by Edward Jenks, especially p. 141.

but in practical matters gradually shaking itself loose. Fortunately for the country, the military rule was also gradually weakened, partly owing to the fact that it was of alien origin; and, indeed, this has very generally been a weakness of the monarchy in England, and has helped to prevent it from becoming strongly autocratic. It was under the Tudors, I suppose, that it came nearest to this kind of dominance. But, in general, the ruling power in England has tended to be that of an aristocracy (not in the Platonic sense of the term), at first military, then territorial, and finally based almost purely on wealth. The rebellion against this form of rule, leading gradually to the establishment of democratic institutions, has worked very slowly. There has never been a definite break, like that of the French Revolution. And thus it happens that the British Constitution, more perhaps than any other that has ever existed, is complex, confused and irrational; and it is this circumstance, probably more than any other, that is responsible for most that is good and most that is evil in our national character and tendencies. It has caused us to be regarded as 'the provincials of Europe,' cut off from the more cosmopolitan influences by which at least most of the southern European countries have been moulded, and yet not definitely developing an independent civilization of our own. Formally we are under a monarchy; in our general aim we are a democracy; but in actual working we tend to be an oligarchy, leaning very strongly towards plutocracy. 'England,' says Boutmy,[1] 'supplies the rare example, so opposed to our ordinary experience, of a nation imbued to a certain extent with the spirit of democracy, but which has for the time reproduced—or permitted the reproduction of—an oligarchy.' We get some of the advantages of every type of constitution, but not the clearly marked benefits that may be secured from any. We are democratic almost in the Platonic sense of the

[1] *The English Constitution*, pp. 138–9.

absence of any definite principle,[1] but not in the sense in which the term is commonly understood in the modern world. We lack definite thoughts, definite purposes, definite ideals. Now, it is not to be denied that there are some advantages in this. Too often, it must be admitted, definite thoughts are definitely wrong, definite purposes definitely wicked, definite ideals definitely futile. But it is surely possible to have some clearness of vision without committing ourselves to any rigid system. An open mind need not be a blank mind. To be bound by traditions may be as bad a slavery as to be bound by dogmas or State regulations. What we want is genuine freedom, the freedom that can only be won by a continually growing insight into the kinds of good that it is best worth while to aim at in human life. Such an ideal is certainly not an end that can be suddenly secured. We cannot hope to win it by any hastily devised expedients. It calls for patience at every step. Some things, no doubt, are urgently needed in our national life, such as improved housing for our people and a more adequate system of national education. That some progress will be made in these respects in the near future does not seem to be open to any serious doubt. Most other things have to be carefully considered and tested before we commit ourselves finally to them. But, in general terms, it is clear that what is wanted is a real democracy, as distinguished from democracy in the sense in which Plato understood the term. The distinction is certainly a vital one. 'The road to ruin,' it has recently been said,[2] 'for an ignorant and selfish democracy is far shorter than for any other kind of misgovernment; the fall is greater, and the ruin is more complete. There is no builder of the common good who builds so nobly and

[1] It is of this kind of democracy that it has been said—'Democracy, if it means anything, means the rule of the planless man, the rule of the unkempt mind.' (H. G. Wells, *The Research Magnificent.*)

[2] *Principles of Citizenship*, by Sir Henry Jones, p. 173.

securely as a wise democracy; and there are no hands which destroy so hopelessly as the hands of the many.'

Much has been done in recent years to clear up the meaning of a genuine government of the people by the people. In particular, it is so well set forth in a recent book [1] by an American writer that I am tempted to give extensive extracts from it; but I must content myself with a brief reference. One of the chief points that the writer seeks to make is that democracy is not opposed to aristocracy—it includes aristocracy. In fact, it may be urged that the ideal aristocracy that Plato was aiming at is only possible on a democratic basis; and it has, in consequence, to be regarded as coming at the end, rather than at the beginning, of the process of historical development. It may be urged, against Plato, that despotism tends to grow out of democracy only when the people has failed to cultivate the idea of self-government. As Mr. Wells has put it,[2] 'there are kings and tyrannies and imperialisms, simply because of the unkingliness of men.' The kind of aristocracy that can exist without a democratic foundation is, as Plato rightly saw, necessarily unstable. It depends on just the right people securing and maintaining an effective control. There is no ultimate guarantee for this except the united will of the people, the general recognition of a common good to be promoted. An educated people, in which the spirit of citizenship has been gradually developed, may be trusted in the end to see that the most competent people secure control of those things that they are best fitted to manage. This kind of general wisdom of the people requires, no doubt, a long process of cultivation. It is, unfortunately, almost always true in human affairs, that all the wrong ways have to be tried before the right way is discovered. But it has, on the whole, been the good fortune of our own people that the process towards

[1] *The New State*, by Miss M. P. Follett, especially chap. xix.
[2] *The Research Magnificent*, chap. vi.

this discovery has been a gradual one, 'from precedent to precedent,' rather than one of sudden transformations. Many of the peculiarities of the dominant types in our national character depend on the fact that we are constantly clinging to the past, and yet striving towards a better future. We do not readily let go any good that has been achieved, however imperfect it may seem; and yet we do not readily acquiesce in the persistence of any evil, however firmly it may be rooted. These are certainly qualities that make for statesmanship. 'A disposition to preserve and ability to improve taken together,' said Burke, 'would be my standard of a statesman.' We have seldom been without such statesmen; and it is chiefly in these characteristics, I believe, that lie our strength and our hope, though they imply also some elements of weakness against which we have to be constantly on our guard. It must be apparent, I think, from the whole survey that has now been made, that our chief danger lies in a certain 'unbedingte Ruh,' a superficial optimism, a too ready and self-satisfied acquiescence in things as we find them. I have called many witnesses to this, and it would be easy to summon more. Creighton has been quoted as saying that 'the Englishman has no mind at all, he has only an hereditary obstinacy'—a statement that needs some qualification! A passage from Balzac [1] may help to clinch the indictment. 'The English,' he declares, 'are an image of their island, where the law rules everything; where in each sphere everything is uniform; where the practice of virtue seems to be the inevitable working of wheels that move at fixed hours. . . . Whatever she may do or say, England is materialistic—unconsciously perhaps. . . . She possesses in the highest degree the science of life, which adds a grace to the smallest details of materialism; which makes your slipper the most exquisite

[1] From the story called, in the English translation, *The Lily of the Valley*, pp. 207–212.

slipper in the world; which gives your linen an indescribable flavour; which lines and perfumes your drawers with cedar; which pours out at a fixed hour a delicious cup of tea, scientifically infused; which banishes dust, and nails down carpets from the very doorstep to the inmost nook of the house; which washes the cellar walls, polishes the door-knocker, gives elasticity to the springs of a carriage; which turns all matter into a nutritious pulp, a comfortable, lustrous and cleanly medium in the midst of which the soul expires in enjoyment, and which produces a terrible monotony of ease; which results in a life uncrossed and devoid of initiative; and, in one word, makes a machine of you.' Most of this, no doubt, is applicable only to a section of the community; but the general result is probably a far-reaching one. Recent events may have helped to stir us out of our lethargy; but it is fatally easy to relapse into it once more. We are constantly in need of something to disturb our complacency and make us feel the need for thought; and it is as a small contribution to that purpose that this series of sketches has been designed.

That this cool complacency has its bright side is of course not to be denied. In the great Railway Strike, for example, which has just been settled as these lines are passing through the press, there has been practically no violence, hardly even any ill temper. A country so resolute, and yet capable of so much patience and self-restraint, is one of which all good things may be hoped; and this hope is of such a kind as almost to imply, or at least to hasten, its own fulfilment. It is a spark of what Mr. Wells has called the 'undying fire.' In the midst of much that is discouraging, at a time when we are almost standing among the ruins of a world, we may remember Shelley's inspiriting injunction to

'hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.'

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