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EUROPE UNBOUND

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

FORM AND COLOUR.  
THE WORKS OF MAN.  
IN THE DESERT.  
WITH RIMINGTON.

# EUROPE UNBOUND

BY

LISLE MARCH PHILLIPPS

11

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high ;  
Where knowledge is free ;  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow  
domestic walls ;  
Where words come out from the depth of truth ;  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection ;  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the  
dreary desert sand of dead habit ;  
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought  
and action—  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

LONDON

DUCKWORTH AND CO.

3 HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

*First published 1916.*



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## INTRODUCTION

IN deciding to call this book *Europe Unbound* I was thinking, not so much of the unloosing of Europe from the bonds of Prussian tyranny as of the setting free, within ourselves, of those convictions and aspirations which the Prussian threat has helped to hold in check. I was thinking especially of the deeper and more perfect knowledge which, through fighting and sacrificing ourselves for it, we must attain of that ideal which has been our often unacknowledged guide in our forward progress, the ideal of liberty. The knowledge of the meaning of liberty, with all the infinite hopes for the future of mankind which it contains, and the instalment of that principle as the positive aim of European nations and steadfast bond of union between them, that we must hope will be the great lesson that the war will teach us.

The inexplicable is hateful. Man's instinct is to define, to establish some sort of order and sequence amid the seeming chaos of the universe. That which will not submit itself to reason threatens reason. A phenomenon like the present war, wide-raging, universal, plunging the whole of mankind, as we may almost say, into the darkness and tumult of a pre-civilised era, must needs, as it exists in itself, unexplained and uninterpreted, be horrible to the imagination. Yet if, unexplained, it threatens to unhinge the understanding by the havoc it plays with life's landmarks, explained, it may steady our minds by fixing them on what is reliable and permanent in our civilisation.

This war is different from other wars. All wars imply the existence of an inward antagonism, an antagonism of will, ideas, ambitions, leading up to the outward antagonism of act. But it has usually been the case that these inward antagonisms, the real sources of war, have rarely been vital or permanently important to mankind at large.

Mostly they have been antagonisms of kings or ministers, and have embodied state jealousies and ambitions more or less irrelevant to the national welfare. Hence when a certain amount of blood had been spilt and the available ready money squandered there was nothing to prevent a peace being patched up. The peace might not mean a reconciliation of the interests involved, but those interests being usually trivial, it mattered not whether they were reconciled or not. The national life grew past them, grew over them; the march of humanity left them far behind, so that the historians who by and by review those events seem to be wandering amid the ashes of extinct volcanoes.

But what if the inward antagonism does not pass, what if it is not only profound and irreconcilable, but permanent? In that case obviously there is not much use in discussing peace, for however much we discussed it we could not realise it. Even if we arranged terms and signed treaties and sheathed our swords, we should not have made peace so long as the inward discord remained operative. We might cover over the fire, but the flame would burn within.

What, then, do we base our confidence on? We base it on our belief that the principle we are fighting for is of more permanent value to mankind than the principle Germany is fighting for. Why is it that

Freedom's battle once begun,  
Bequeathed by bleeding sire to son,  
Though baffled oft is ever won?

Because, the answer is, freedom is of such supreme value

to humanity that once recognised it can count on the self-sacrifice and perseverance necessary to its triumph. In attaching ourselves to freedom we have attached ourselves to an ideal, the ultimate victory of which is assured by the progressive instinct of the race.

The knowledge of this should bring us not confidence only, but patience and serenity. Whatever we may have to endure at the long last freedom will win. And this being so it follows that there can be no better stay and comfort for us, no surer cure for restlessness and impatience, no more effective means of confirming our courage and resolution than a steady contemplation of the great idea for which we are fighting. To fill ourselves with the thought of liberty, and the realisation of its meaning, and the reasons of its inexhaustible, ever-expanding, and increasing value, is to fill ourselves also with its patience and its strength.

“Make not haste in the time of clouds,” an old friend of the writer once said, and it is true no doubt that decisions are difficult in seasons of great tumult. But war itself may illumine. No light have we,

Save what the glimmering of those livid flames  
Casts pale and dreadful.

Yet these have a searching quality. They eat away whatever is superfluous or dispensable, and expose what is structural and permanent. All goes save what we would die for, and what we would die for is that by which in fact we live. This it is which is the essential element in the life of the nation.

Strange, indeed, and mysterious are the instincts we call racial. The outgrowth of dead generations and a buried antiquity, they are still garnered and preserved in that unexplored, subconscious part of us which, compared to our active intelligence, is as the unplumbed depths of ocean compared to its ruffled surface of waves. Out of these depths rise to the mind's surface the beliefs and aspirations which we hold in common, which unite us,

and which we obey in moments of great crisis. They are the thoughts of our race, which, if we would safeguard our national identity, we must substitute at such times for personal predilections and personal standards of thought.

No arguments, or reasons, or explanations count for anything in these days which are not of that origin. The promptings of personal passion and prejudice are irrelevant to the present issue. The air is full of them, the newspapers are freighted with them. Yet they need not be answered or attended to. Time disposes of them. They drop back from the subject they touch as the waves that slap for a moment the sides of a great steamer drop back in the trough. In truth they express nothing but the incapacity of their authors to comprehend the nature of the forces that are in motion.

Following this line of thought my purpose in the present book has been to deal, however inadequately, not with the outward circumstances or immediate causes of the war, but with what I cannot help thinking are its real causes. I mean those slowly developing, intensely hostile, eternally incompatible philosophies of life of which the two opposing groups of the free and unfree nations of Europe are to-day the representatives.

Some passages in the following pages are taken from articles written for *Land and Water* and for the *Contemporary* and *English Reviews*, and for their permission to make further use of them I desire to thank the editors of those publications.

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SATWELL,  
HENLEY-ON-THAMES.



## CHAPTER I

### IDEALS OF THE WAR

Great wars are wars for great ideas, ideas on which the future of humanity depends—The idea of liberty on our side, the idea of dominion on the Prussian side are of this kind of importance.

THE object of this and the following chapters will be to attempt a definition of the inward motives and ideas which are contending in the present war. These give war its meaning. The outward act of war is always brutal, but as the physical aspect of a struggle of ideals it may be illumined and made splendid. And not that only, but it may be realised as the vehicle of thought, as charged with meaning. Widely indeed are those mistaken who proclaim war's stupidity. The wars of savages are stupid, because they are about nothing that matters; but the wars of civilised nations—wars waged to determine whether a higher or lower philosophy of life shall preside over the future of the race—so far from being stupid, are among the most profoundly interesting and significant events in history. They are, in fact, what Shakespeare is fond of calling them, the mighty *arguments* which, in their results, govern the destinies of mankind.

It is thus in the long run we judge them. Why do the names of Marathon and Thermopylae shine through the ages like stars? Because on those fields there met in physical combat two principles of eternal significance. Because it was not Greek and Persian who fought those

battles, but European liberty and Oriental despotism. Every soldier of Darius and Xerxes was dimly inspired by the hate which the passive East bears to the active West. They had their own "Kultur" to preach to the savages and pirates of the Greek islands. And so, too, every free-born Greek, as he leapt at the invader, was fired by the thought of the Greek love of liberty and the Greek citizenship whose representative and champion he was. Only people whose eyes see what is outward but whose minds cannot grasp what is inward grudge the blood which is shed in such a cause. But I ask the reader what should we understand of those actions—actions by which Western civilisation and the whole trend of Western thought were secured, and in whose after-effects we are still all of us living to this day—if all we saw in them was a certain number of Greeks and Persians hacking and stabbing each other with spears and arrows?

And so, too, what do we understand of the present war while we fix our gaze on the visible armies engaged, unless, while we watch them, we realise the ideas they represent and whose struggle is their struggle? It was not Greek or Persian that mattered in those long-ago engagements, but the theories of life for which they stood; and neither, to the world and to the future, is it Englishman or Austrian, French or German, who matters now, but the theories of life for which these, too, stand. This is our concern. We want to look at the war, if we can, in the light of history, tracing in it the victory or defeat, not of brief-lived human beings, but of thoughts whose influence is to pass on through the centuries of the future. The two orders of ideas, Western and Eastern, for which Greek and Persian fought, stand out now distinctly enough though all that was visible in that quarrel has long since faded away. And the time will also come when all that is mortal of the present conflict, armies and guns, and tactics and strategy, will be reduced to conflicting legends for historians to

squabble over ; but with the passing of all we know it by, the truth about the war will but emerge the clearer, for to the victory of one or other of the ideals now fighting for supremacy the men and women of the future will owe the lives they live and the thoughts they think.

How, then, shall we lay hold of those thoughts, the theories of life as I have called them, whose invisible war the visible war symbolises ? In an essay, intended but to hint at the nature of the subject, we must not expect more than briefly to indicate the conflicting principles. This, however, we may attempt.

It will be conceded by many, and will be made clearer, perhaps, by and by, that the principle which is more and more gaining a hold on European life, and is tending to harmonise the ideals and reconcile the endeavours of the European nations, is that principle of liberty which ensures to every national entity its right to be itself and to develop its character and individuality by the free growth of its own qualities and characteristics. Professor Sarolea, in a book which most people have been reading lately, has an interesting chapter on this modern, as it may be called, theory of freely formed national character, and the wonderful results, in richness and diversity, attained by a system which utilises the various contributions of all peoples. It is a thought which concerns us English people closely, for there is none which has more intimately directed our own policy and the growth of our Empire. But it concerns other nations also. It is tending to-day to be accepted as a European philosophy of life, and it is fraught with intellectual and spiritual consequences which are of absolutely first-rate importance to the future of mankind.

By and by, perhaps, we shall see how this motive operates, and how, especially in the eastern and southern parts of Europe, those States which feel its impulse feel it as the touch of life itself. But now let us go on to ask the further question : Is Europe united in the endeavour to realise this ideal, or are there any dis-

sentients among its nations? The question of itself turns all eyes towards Germany. Out of Germany, and more particularly out of the northern or Prussian part of it, there does come, and in very clear and ringing accents, a challenge to this theory of life. Prussia may be said to have been nurtured in the idea of dominion. It was the Prussian theory that development was to proceed by acquisition from without rather than by growth from within. With her the will to dominate even preceded the power to do so. The instinct of all babies to grasp and hold fast was Prussia's in a very singular degree. Not only has every addition to her stature been the result of forcible appropriation, but no State has so consciously and so carefully cultivated the power to grasp and hold and so consistently applied it. No State, as you may say, has so

Wrought

Upon the plan which pleased its childish thought.

Domination, the imposition of its own will upon others rather than their own free development, this is what has always been sacred in the eyes of Prussia.

But does she stand alone? What is the most salient of all facts about the government of Austria? It is—no one will deny it—that, placed as she is where many nations meet, and formed out of the fragments of many races, she has not set to work to form an empire based on the free consent of the component parts, but has striven to weld together, by outside pressure and force, a structure of power which the very development of freedom itself has steadily disintegrated. Here was a fitting ally for Germany, an ally whose thought was her thought. And where in the West could a third be found of like calibre? Of all nations there was one which, above all others, had made the theory of domination in its crudest form the inspiration of its policy, and which had, as it were, so incarnated that ideal that the casting off of its government had come to mean, for all incipient nationalities, the first step in the direction of freedom.

Turkey swiftly recognised what there was sympathetic to her own genius in the German-Austrian point of view, and ranged herself on the side of her spiritual allies.

Thus the ill-omened trinity was formed. The differences between each of its members are obvious. What, you would ask, had progressive Germany to do with effete Austria, or barbarous Turkey with either? But if, instead of looking for differences, we look for a resemblance, we shall find all three strictly united in their dependence on the same political principle. All three, we shall find, rely on the power to dominate, to enforce obedience, to inflict their will on others. And not only is this principle common to all three, but it is *vital* to each of them. To the Prussian (for Germany in this matter takes her orders from Prussia) it is the gospel which is to inspire his new world-empire; to the Austrian it is the tie which holds together the rather ramshackle empire he already possesses; while to the Turk it stands as the only kind of empire he has ever dreamed of as possible. Whatever influence in life, then, threatens this political principle threatens the life of Prussia, Austria, and Turkey, and would tend to unite them against a common foe.

While, therefore, an inquiry like the present will have to consider carefully this principle of domination which Prussia, Austria, and Turkey represent—its place in history, its limitations, the circumstances which have favoured its growth, and chiefly the causes which have led to its adoption by Germany—yet the very act of doing this will help to separate from it and define in its turn another ideal which is uniting in its service another and still larger group of nations. We just now spoke of the possibilities inherent in the principle of freedom and of the future opened up to humanity by the mere natural action of growth and self-development. This ideal is still in its dawn, nor are its intellectual and spiritual effects as yet fully apparent. Its gradual growth, its influence upon life, its place in Europe to-day,

and the rallying of the nations round it are points of view from which it may be regarded. If our ideas were abreast of our practice, we English might lay claim to the leadership of the forces of freedom. The evolution of this principle forms the backbone of English history, while our quite recent adaptation and use of it as an imperial bond uniting a society of free nations is an event of capital importance to the world at large. It is at this moment, when the principle of freedom emerges from a state of merely national to a state of universal consequence, that it meets on the world-stage the rival principle of dominion, similarly emerging out of national isolation, similarly presenting itself as a world-ideal, and led on to the attack by the armed might of Prussia. Not without cause is it that Germany reserves an especial hate for England, for, unprepared and unformidable in arms as we appeared, yet ideally we were the most irreconcilable of her foes. Moreover, from the moment we set about arming, and our recruits came streaming to the flag from all the English nations overseas, her instinct recognised the gait and aspect of that great ideal betwixt which and herself the combat is mortal

Before closing this brief survey let us add the testimony of the Balkans to that of the rest of Europe. The dominant motive in Balkan politics is the dominant motive in Balkan history. One great event overshadows that history, namely, the engulfing of the whole Balkan promontory and the blotting out of the civilisation of its nascent nationalities by the advancing tide of Turkish barbarism in the early fifteenth century.

To us, Western Europeans as we are, facing towards the Atlantic and America and the future of Western progress, to us the menace and challenge of the East, baffled by distance, have always come gently and scarcely intelligibly. Now and again when the collision has assumed a heroic aspect, and inspired noble poetry and art (as when Greek met Persian), we allow ourselves to be thrilled by the beauty, without quite understanding

the significance, of the event. But even when the peril came closer home to us, as when Charles Martel dealt with it on the plain of Tours, even then, though we start as at a clap of near thunder, we scarcely appreciate the meaning of the crisis. Europe, as we put it, "was saved from the Saracen." It would be truer to say that Europe was saved from one of the oft-recurring efforts of the East to substitute its own ideal of subjection for the Western ideal of liberty. The Persian, the Arab, the Turk all came to enslave, and their successive attempts constitute the most thrilling episodes in European history. Many tragedies were enacted during that fierce debate along the marches of East and West, and not the least was the tragedy of the Balkans. The tide of the Turkish invasion which had overswept the promontory was destined not to ebb until four centuries had passed. During that space of time this little group of nations lay helpless under a rule which embodied in its perfection the ruthlessness of Oriental despotism.

What is that mysterious instinct in Western races which wages so inveterate a war with the Eastern ideal ; which forbids acquiescence in the passive state of slavery ; which, even when conditions are hopeless, prompts the vain protest and desperate act of self-sacrifice ? Four centuries of Turkish rule could not extinguish that instinct in the Balkans. Those years have no history, no coherent record of events. Their only articulate accents are the occasional strains of poets whose verse still fed and kept alive (as an inspiration no matter how remote from reality) the instinct of freedom in the breasts of the people.

There is a legend of the west country which narrates that once upon a time the Cornish coast extended far westward, ere ages and the influx of the sea had engulfed it. Yet still, they say, the buried cities and fields can by some eyes be distinguished in the depths below ; and still, by some ears, the sound of the drowned bells of churches can be heard mixed with the murmur of the

Atlantic swell. In something the same way, during the Turkish influx, from the submerged races of Eastern Europe rise the strains of national poetry voicing an instinct which refuses to die.

Those years, I say, have no history, yet they were the years during which the character of the Balkan people was formed, and formed under such stresses that it can no more change than the character of rocks can change which were forged long since in the fiery laboratory of the earth's interior. Hatred of oppression, hatred of the passive and stationary attitude of a ruled people, a determination, be the time long or short, to number themselves among the free nations of Europe, such are the unshakable resolves of the Balkan races. A love of liberty which so prolonged a Turkish dominion could not quench may claim the right to be called unquenchable, and may be specified as the essential attribute of that people. Such attributes change never. They are so much the pith of the national life that, though obscured by temporary aberration, they never can be permanently superseded.

This is the determining factor to be borne in mind in judging of Balkan affairs. The dominant, or if not always the dominant, the deepest and most abiding motive of all—deepest in historical life and deepest in the hearts of the people—is the Balkan resolve to be of the West, to enter the community of free and progressive nations.

The present war, as we are all, I suppose, coming to realise, is merely the breaking out into open conflict of rival and incompatible principles of government, which for more than a century have been drawing, each to itself, the European units in sympathy with it. The idea of liberty, tested and tried by each nation in turn, has come to exert upon all those nations the bond of a common aspiration. France established the principle in France, Italy in Italy, England in England. Each in its own way, not without revolution and conflict and



bloodshed, they debated the point on the national basis and declared for liberty. That point reached, they had a mutual and common motive, which, if the day ever came when liberty was challenged in Europe, would at once assure united action on their part in its defence.

The day came. While liberty had been drawing its adherents into a well-defined group on the one hand, the opposite, the tyrannic principle, had been drawing its forces into a rival group on the other. Out of Prussia had come an inspiration to all tyrants, and all tyrants responded. Austria, whose whole political history has been a study in the ways and means of suppressing liberty, heard with delight a theory which ratified her own policy and dignified a record which has been thought to lack that quality, while with equal complacency Turkey accepted a definition of government justifying her own raw and bloody method of enforcing State supremacy and State uniformity.

Thus the groups were formed, and from year to year the tension grew as the two giant ideas, invisible, yet so terribly real, equipped and arranged themselves for battle. But when once battle was joined, it seemed the very guns themselves argued and explained the quarrel, and all the world could see that Liberty and Tyranny were engaged in the greatest and perhaps the last of their many struggles.

Under these circumstances the policy of the Balkan States would seem fore-ordained. Their history being the history of an aspiration after liberty, they should be knit to the cause of liberty in the present war by the profoundest instinct of their nature. And so in truth they are. National convictions are aspects of the national character, and are to be looked for in the substance of the nation itself, that is, among the masses of the people. Throughout the Balkan promontory the masses of the people are consistently with the Entente. The people have never varied. Their aspirations have never been

in doubt. Why, then, it will be asked, the record of vacillation with which we are familiar ?

Let me remind the reader that what we call Prussianism is neither more nor less than the instinct of tyranny in human nature. We identify it with a nationality, and no doubt Prussia, which has so assiduously developed the possibilities of the system, has given us cause to do so. But because Prussia has elaborated the idea and made the most of it, it is not to be supposed that she has, or ever has had, a monopoly of it. There always have been, and still are, autocrats besides Prussian autocrats. In every man's nature there is a touch of the Prussian. Certain pursuits and professions foster it. Wherever men are placed in control of others, and wherever the habit of authority has hardened into a fixed philosophy of life, Prussianism will find what it can feed on. Among a cluster of newly formed States, in which arms and intrigue are ever at work adjusting or inciting mutual rivalry, and among which the ambitions of party leaders, Government officials, and successful soldiers are stimulated by dramatic and ever-changing events—amid such an environment there is certain to exist a considerable fluctuating sympathy with the Prussian ideal, which perhaps will only need to be drawn together and united in a common centre to exercise a decisive influence on State policy. This is where Hohenzollern Court influence in the Balkans has played so important a part. Such a Court, amid the eddies and intrigues of Balkan politics, contributes a centre of reaction. It rallies to itself every group, clique, or profession which happens to be in sympathy with its own views, and draws them together under its own leadership. It cultivates and organises every tyrannous impulse at its disposition. All the autocratic embryos that are bred out of the discords of small States in the making have gathered round it ; and in this way the forces of tyranny, carefully marshalled, have often been able to dispute the will of a nominally free people. In

all the Balkan nations the same factors are to be looked for. The groundwork and substance of Balkan policy as a whole is popular loyalty to freedom and to the Entente ; its deflecting causes are to be sought in Prussian ideas sprouting here and there, but only formidable when under the control of a more or less Prussianised Court.

Greece, least virile, but cleverest of the group, inclines easily to the tyrannic on a small scale, while the army produces a diminutive breed of Prussians in considerable numbers. These only require centralising to become effective, and the work is done by the usual agent in such cases—a Court in touch with German ideas. Yet these, after all, are superficial influences which aim at defying rather than suppressing the national instinct ; nor can they, whatever be their success, alter the fact that not Constantine but Venizelos is the real representative of the Greek people.

So, too, Roumania, though geographically aloof, and willing to play the part of looker-on, reproduces the features we are familiar with. The Teutonic influence is duly embodied in her Hohenzollern dynasty, and operates still more effectively, perhaps, and intimately through the network of economic interests, organised by Germany, by means of which the business of the country is carried on. At the same time, apart from these intrigues, there exists in Roumania also the impulse of that popular love of liberty which is the heritage of the Balkan States. The Roumanian patriots, Filipescu and Take Jonscu, are among the group of statesmen whose mission it is to realise the Balkan ideal of a union of free States, an ideal which, as it rests on what is deepest in the character of the Balkan races, is likely to outlast all rival policies.

Of the nations which have definitely taken sides, Bulgaria is the only one, so far at least, in which the influences we have called Prussian have succeeded in dictating a policy in direct conflict with the national

ideal. The bitter rivalry with her neighbour, Servia, dexterously fomented and brought to a head by Austria in fulfilment of her usual design of Balkan disintegration, has no doubt had much to do with her decision. But the determining factor has been the Court. The Prussianism of King Ferdinand, German Prince and Austrian officer, was of the active kind which aspires to shape a policy. What he saw in the Balkan situation was an opportunity, not for a union of free States, but for the exercise of an individual ambition. It seemed the affairs of a petty State were not beyond the handling of a talent for intrigue, which he easily mistook for Napoleonism.

Yet in spite of all this we are not to suppose that the national instinct is extinguished even in Bulgaria. We all remember the deputations that waited on the King in the days when the issue hung in the balance, and how fiercely the representatives of the popular party protested against the contemplated decision, and even denounced the King to his face as a traitor to the national cause. Reports of revolts and mutinies in the early days of the war suggest that, hoodwinked as they have been, the Bulgarian people in their heart of hearts are not untrue to the Balkan tradition. Even there, and we should do well to remember it, it is the superficial extraneous influence which has triumphed, while beneath, stifled, inarticulate, the instinct of liberty still survives.

Finally, we come to the two States whose record is clean. In Servia and Montenegro the great motive only has acted. Not only have they shared to the full in that inspiration of liberty which has led the Balkan States out of the house of bondage, but there has been no obstacle in their case to the full expression of that ideal. They have been free of the Prussian influence. They have never had a Prussian Court to gather under its wing every tyrannical clique and party in the State and hatch out into practice their reactionary partialities. They only have been free of that infection, and they only have

acted up to the level of a common aspiration. By so doing, despite appearances, they have safeguarded their future, for they have allied themselves with what is permanent in Balkan history and character ; and the end, when the end comes, will justify not only their courage but their wisdom.

In short, what I would point out is that the Balkans—that little constellation of compacted States, a Europe within a Europe—reflect in miniature the European situation. Liberty and tyranny are at work there too, selecting their appropriate agents and enlisting their natural allies. Do not let us imagine, because tyranny makes most show, because the intrigues of courts and kings and Prussian agents play a leading part in Balkan affairs, that the faith which has sustained the people through so many dark centuries is extinguished at last, and that those whom the Turks could never enslave are offering themselves as slaves to the Hohenzollerns. It is not so. Let and hindered as they are, in more ways than we can well imagine, the Balkan people are among our staunchest allies. Let us do justice to them, and hold out our hands to them, remembering that the more confidence we have in them the more confidence they will have in themselves.

We have tried to indicate a point of view. If we succeed in our interpretation, we shall in the end come to see the shock of armies as the outward sign of an inward encounter of ideas. Behind the armies we shall see two philosophies, each aspiring, one by persuasion, the other by force, to world supremacy and to the direction of the future of mankind. Their deadly animosity indicates their profound incompatibility of nature, and the magnitude of the struggle measures the importance of the issues which are at stake. Every incident of the war, the means employed by both sides, the spirit and temper evoked by the contest, the attitude of neutrals and their adhesion one by one to the cause of the Allies, is an authentic lineament of the ideal combat in the background.

This it is which shines through the visible acts we see or read about, illuminating them with intellectual significance. To see the war thus is not only to understand it rightly, but it is also to realise its importance—not for us only and for the present generation, but for the future and for the whole world.

## CHAPTER II

### LIBERTY

Liberty synonymous with growth and progress, and equal to the principle of life in things—It works through and by means of that perpetual inward effort of the mind which the practice of self-government involves—This is the chief means of education of the people.

GERMANY has one considerable advantage in this war in that the cause for which she fights admits of instant definition and can state itself in three words. *Deutschland über Alles* is a proposition which every unit of a crowd can equally appreciate. It is a shout in which all can join, and it therefore tends to produce and maintain that unity of will which is of such incalculable value as a support for a nation's armies in the field.

We are less fortunate. It is indeed true that the principle of liberty for which the Allies are fighting is so rapidly gaining ground in Europe that already it is in a fair way to being accepted as a common ideal. And indeed, if we imagine the Prussian menace removed, it is evident that, among all the other European nations, liberty already forms a bond of mutual sympathy and understanding which seems to promise a Europe at peace and in agreement with itself for many a year to come.

But still the fact remains that the principle of liberty, though thus irresistibly winning its way, does not convey a distinct picture to the mind in the sense in which the German ideal conveys to every German mind the picture of Germany with her heel on the world's neck. The

word liberty has to be pondered over before the full meaning of it can be disengaged. Moreover, what makes us shy of using the word too freely or dwelling on it overmuch, is that it has become imbued with political associations and carries our memories back to those party contests and party cries which we are all doing our best to forget and lay on one side, but which have such a disconcerting habit, nevertheless, of reasserting themselves on all possible occasions.

This is a pity. We cannot do without this word liberty. Unless the war is about liberty, it is about nothing intelligible. Unless England stands for liberty, she stands for nothing. Unless the British Empire, in its growth and unity, testifies to the vitalising influence of liberty as an ideal of life, it has no meaning whatever. The very first step in an inquiry like the present brings us face to face with this principle, for to grasp the significance of the ideals at present in conflict is, in the first place of all, to grasp the significance of the word liberty. This is the pith of what we are fighting for, and, consequently, if we in this country are to secure the unity of thought and will which we need to secure and at which we are all aiming, it is out of this word that we must wring it.

And it is to be done. If the reader will look steadily at the word liberty he will see the dust of party politics settle and clear away from around it, until it appears as the central inspiration of our national action. What will be his first discovery? Liberty, he will perceive, is the instinct of a man to be himself and to develop and grow in accordance with the laws of his own being. And this is not merely a human, but a universal instinct, for it is one which man shares with all nature. The master impulse and principle of life which inhabits every bird or beast or insect, every plant or tree or flower, is precisely the impulse towards self-realisation, the impulse to exist and develop in obedience to the law which constitutes its own identity, and the assertion of which by



every natural organism maintains what we call the struggle for existence. Man's desire for liberty, for the liberty of self-expression, self-realisation, self-development, is a natural instinct.

This is our first discovery ; but, then, continuing our examination, we make another. Man is a herding or gregarious animal. And here, too, we are dealing with something fundamental. Nay, here too the animal precedent comes in again, for it may be said that at least all animals of a benign and progressive tendency are herding or social animals, while those which we especially stigmatise as wild beasts are solitary and anti-social. So it is with man. It is evident that all co-operation, all possible progress of whatever kind, material, intellectual, or spiritual, depend upon and are the outcome of the gregarious instinct.

Man, then, would be free, but man would herd. These are his primitive necessities. But immediately he finds himself in this difficulty—that the two chief instincts of his nature clash. He cannot at once herd and be free. The social cement consists of the measure of free will which each individual surrenders to society. Out of these contributions governments and laws are composed, which are society's instruments, and which must, if society is not to disintegrate into separate atoms, be permitted within limits to coerce and control the individual will.

Here, then, are two points of view, both natural to man and instinctive in him—the point of view of the individual and the point of view of society. And according as men's temperaments incline them, they take opposite sides in the unending argument which goes on between these two ; some insisting with all their might on the right of the individual to free self-development, and others insisting with all their might on the sanctity of law and order and the superior rights of society as a whole. On this basis is built our party system, and, as each side is conscious of the other only as an obstructive

influence, their mutual antagonism is fanned into a perpetual controversy.

But now we take our last and most earnest look at the meaning of this word liberty, and what do we see? We see that, in effect, the fierce opposition just noted is itself a delusion—it is superficial. Under that apparent opposition there is real unity. Neither of the two ideals involved, neither liberty nor society, can exist save in a degraded and stunted form, otherwise than through the help of the other. Liberty in itself, liberty uncurbed, unordered, unsocialised, a liberty that should indulge to the full the instinct for emancipation, is no more than the instinct of the tiger in the jungle. To grow to anything, to be susceptible of advance, it must submit to such restraints as will adapt it to the social state; so that the party which is the guardian of liberty, though constantly at loggerheads with its rival the guardian of social order, yet in reality has vital need of this party's assistance.

And the converse also holds true. For what the party of order wants is not social order as a cast-iron system—the social order of ancient Egypt, for example, which existed in such utter immobility as effectually to negative every motion of intellectual and spiritual development. No, the party of order, as much as any, desires vitality, progress, thought. It is the guardian of society; but it is a living, not a dead society it would maintain, and this condition of progress, of life, of development, can only be inspired by the presence and constant operation of the spirit of liberty.

Therefore it appears that both the great English political parties need each other and lean upon each other. They have always indeed, though they know it not, co-operated. Both have been equally concerned in the task, which together they have accomplished, of building up a social structure which contains within itself the principle of liberty while preserving at every step the principle of order. This it is, this ideal of an ordered

liberty, which our Empire itself is an attempt outwardly to realise; and, more than that, this it is which is in process of becoming (with certain grim and terrible exceptions) the political ideal of the European nations. It is indeed wonderful, and most significant, how, State by State, all along the south and east of Europe, where the night of tyranny has brooded longest, the whisper that the cause of liberty is being fought for is firing the young nations to its defence. Has the reader considered what it must be to every patriot, to every lover of liberty, to watch the power of that spirit which is drawing from East and West the British Colonial contingents to the defence of such an Empire as ours? Has he thought what so signal a proof of the might and power of ordered freedom must mean to those States which are struggling out of Austrian or Turkish servitude towards the realisation of the same ideal?

This task, then—the application on an imperial scale of the idea of ordered freedom—has been Britain's task in the world. All true Britons have co-operated in it. This it is that we are fighting to defend, and out of our knowledge of our common share in this it is that we must wring the assured and absolute unity of will and sentiment which there is a disposition to attain, a longing to attain in all quarters, yet which somehow we have not quite succeeded in attaining.

It has been said that, to secure such unity, we must set aside party considerations in the present crisis. I confess I do not like "set aside." We are fighting now to preserve what, through all our history, the two political parties have been fighting to build up. To set aside party purposes is to set aside the very cause and justification of the war. No, we must not set them aside, but, looking at them in the fierce light that now plays upon them, we must look *through* them. We must realise them in their joint action, in their mutual need of each other, in their common result. In that result—in the British Empire as it stands to-day—is the justification

and fruition of all that is really constructive and sound in the theories of Conservative and Liberal. Let neither give up a jot of his own thought, but let each complete it by adding to it the thought of the other. We should have done then with those newspaper and House-of-Commons wrangles which are such a constant source of weakness and discord amongst us. Then we should achieve the unity we are in search of. The German kind of unity, the fierce, outward, *Deutschland über Alles* unity, which is an offence and a threat to others, and which excites the more horror the better it is known, is not for us. But for us is another kind of unity, which spreads and grows, drawing to itself ally after ally, as the meaning of liberty and its significance for the future of mankind spreads, like light, through the mind of the world.

For indeed all forward movement and development have been identified with the action of this principle of liberty. No word is oftener on the lips of our generation than the word progress. The meaning we attach to it may be indefinite, but, at least, vaguely we imply by it a society not stationary, but moving onward, making its to-day's goal its to-morrow's starting-point : in short, growing. Our faith in this process is instinctive. We all more or less hold with profound assurance the belief that man is slowly but surely leaving behind him the ages of darkness, ignorance, and superstition, and emerging into higher realms of prosperity, knowledge, and light. So deep does this conviction go into modern life that it is difficult for us to imagine life without it. For us who conceive of national existence as a perpetual climbing upward it would seem that life on the flat, as it were, a life uninspired by any desire to better itself, but moving in a perpetual groove, would scarcely be worth calling life at all. It seems, in short, that this hope, this aspiration, must be natural to man, and must always have affected his thoughts and mental outlook.

But a moment's reflection shows that this is not so.

For obviously a belief in progress never could have arisen out of a stationary order of things, nor have been united to such an order. The condition and circumstances of our lives are an image of our minds. Where there is stagnancy of thought there is immobility and routine of life. Where there is daring initiation and onward movement of thought there is eager change, and what we call progress in life. We ourselves are believers in progress, and progress, from the Dark Ages to the present, has, in our experience as a nation, actually occurred. The idea is apparent in our minds which has passed into our history. That history, with all its strenuous virile energy, all its eager groping after improvement, is the reflex, as it were, of a national mind animated and quickened by an inward vital principle of growth and expansion. Deep in the mind of man the leaven works and seethes, the effects of which are thus outwardly visible in life. But what about the great slavery Empires of the world, what about Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria? Is progress visible among them? And if it never existed in fact could it ever have existed as an idea? There are to be seen on the banks of the Nile, the same to-day as for many a thousand years, pumps driven by oxen, which move in a ring, round and round, treading and retreading the same perpetual circle, while the large wheel revolves and the water gushes into the trough. Since the days of the first Pharaoh, Egyptian life has been like that, has known no more progress than that, has been a constant repetition of a formula, each generation in turn doing, thinking, and believing exactly what a thousand previous generations had done and thought and believed. This is life on the flat. Could the idea of progress, as proper to man and inherent in his nature, have coexisted with such a life as this? Obviously not, or it would have changed the life. That thought, the progressive ideal which means so much to us, was lacking.

And if we were to continue our survey we should find that, among the great empires of the world generally,

stagnation had been the rule, progress the exception. There have been more empires on the Egyptian model than on the British ; indeed it is not until we approach and enter upon the history of the European nations, as we know them to-day, that this idea of progress, which already seems so essential to life, is clearly discernible at all.

This we should discover ; but we should discover something else also. Looking for progress, and for the circumstances under which it arises, we should quickly be aware that it never enters history alone. It comes always accompanied by another presence, which like a shadow moves by its side and refuses to be separated from it. Among the communities in which progress is a law of life, liberty also is a law of life. The two are inseparable.

There have been purely despotic empires in which neither liberty nor progress ever showed their face. There have been oligarchies in which progress has been confined to a governing class, while immobility has settled on the masses from whom liberty was excluded. Again, there have been nations—and here we embark on the current of Western civilisation—which have made of liberty a still cherished, though often thwarted, ideal of life ; and among these last it is that progress has become indigenous and has made her home, impregnating the consciousness of the community to such an extent that it tends to be accepted as almost the law of life itself.

Why, then, is this ? Why do liberty and progress thus walk hand in hand ? The answer is because liberty is an educative process. It operates upon men's spiritual and intellectual faculties, stimulating them by constant exertion to constant development. And this it does by means open to examination and which submit themselves to analysis.

The other day I came upon these words in an article in the *Times* Literary Supplement : " If we search our own hearts, in forgetfulness of the Caucus and the in-

trigues of modern life, we cannot evade the truth that it is an impossible thing that the State which is governed by its best citizens should be ill-governed." The writer of the article, after citing the authority of Aristotle, adds the following: "If only we could ensure the obedience of citizens to good laws the problem of government would be solved for ever."

If the reader desires to enter into the thoughts which are at the root of the present war, he cannot do better than consider the meaning of those sentences. The point of view of the writer is very intelligible. It is the pagan and Renaissance point of view. He claims that the value of a government consists in the quality of the laws it turns out; it has no other use. Its own virtue and very right to exist are revealed in the fruit it bears—just as the virtue of a plum-tree is revealed in its plums. By its laws ye shall judge it. The best government is that which yields the best laws, and if citizens would simply obey those laws they would get all the good out of government possible to get.

I can only say that if this were so there would be no war to-day, for there would be nothing to fight about. We are not fighting about the quality of laws when made, but for the right to make them. Belgium and Servia are not sacrificing themselves because they believe that German laws and Austrian laws are worse than Belgian and Servian laws, but because they object to Germans and Austrians making laws for Belgians and Servians. It is the making of the laws which counts in their eyes much more than the quality of the laws when made.

But let us see what is implied in this. The *Times* writer would, perhaps, maintain that this anxiety over the making of laws is due to our recognition of the fact that foreign-made or tyrant-made laws are usually bad as laws. But the explanation is inadequate, for every Englishman is aware that on no account, not if he were to be governed by an angel from heaven, would he surrender that most sacred of all his rights, the right

of making his own laws. Bad laws or good laws, he might not know, he might not care; but he would take care of one thing—that, bad or good, he would make them. He would not be an Englishman, he would not be able to look English fields and trees in the face, if he had parted with that right.

There is, then, in the popular instinct and imagination, something in the mere making of the laws, apart from their intrinsic value, which is of primary concern. And in this popular instinct shows its usual good sense. For what does the making of laws under a Constitutional Government involve? Let the reader consider the general tenor of the great series of Acts dealing with emancipation, education, and reform, in which progress largely consists. Before these laws are passed they have to be voted for, and before they are voted for they have to be laid before the country and explained to the country. They are attacked and defended by newspapers, analysed by orators, and discussed at length and in detail throughout every constituency in the land. The law which, as a result of all this arguing and discussion, comes into being is the expression, as near as may be, of the will of the people on that subject. It embodies what seems to them justice. But is the law itself the only result? Would its effects have been precisely the same had it been passed by a group of our "best citizens," or by a beneficent despot? Is the prolonged threshing out of such a question as Catholic Emancipation all over the country, the slow and intricate process of the thinking of the people, the gleams of light shed in dark places, the recognition of trustworthy leaders and of those who speak with authority, the minds of a majority gradually convinced and made up, and the final determination that a group of fellow-citizens, however alien and suspect in religion, shall suffer spiritual injustice no longer—is this all of no account?

Laws in themselves have never counted for much. There have been enlightened tyrants and wise lawgivers



in all ages, who have increased the prosperity and probably the contentment and happiness of their subjects, but yet their government has not stimulated the moral and intellectual capacity latent in citizenship, or fortified its character or enlarged its understanding. The influence of those circumstances in which we passively acquiesce is not of this kind. It is by our own efforts, by the exercise of our own spiritual and intellectual faculties, that such results are achieved. Not God Himself can help us save through our will to help ourselves. Khammuri the Great was the wisest of the rulers of Assyria. Nothing could have been more far-seeing and sagacious than the laws he passed and the enterprises for the good of the country in which he engaged. But, wise as it was, his administration no more conduced to the spiritual and intellectual progress of the people than an extra supply of fodder ensures the spiritual and intellectual progress of an ox. The Assyrian nation remained sunk in the old groove of superstition and ignorance. Its good laws produced no interior effects. Why? Because they were imposed from without and did not involve any moral and mental effort (and therefore any moral and mental growth) on the part of the people themselves.

It is the same with all the old empires. Among the long line of Egyptian kings there is one who stands out, not only as a beneficent ruler, but as a great reformer, whose main object it was to liberate Egyptian life from its immemorial routine of superstition and intellectual apathy. Yet when this great reformer died nothing was found to be altered. The priests and professors resumed their sway, and the old night of ignorance and animal worship settled down upon the nation. Why? we ask again. And again comes the answer, because the professed reforms were from without only, because they involved no effort on the people's part and, therefore, no inward growth and development. There is more hope for the future of mankind in the least and faintest impulse towards self-help, self-realisation, self-redemption

than in all the laws that Aristotle ever dreamt of. Here lies the gulf between two political types or temperaments. The Tory temperament looks at what is, at results achieved, at facts as they exist. To him things are absolute, and he judges them as if they would never change. The Liberal temperament, on the contrary, regards not outward facts nor finished products, but the inward impulse and principle of growth which impels mankind to a perpetual development. In the estimation of a Liberal the world consists, not of any fixed circumstances or classes, each possessing an established character and to be estimated in accordance with that character, but of currents of creative ideas whose mission it is ultimately to ennoble beyond present conception the lot of humanity. Hence he extols or condemns, not because of inherent qualities, not because this is refined and gracious and that ugly and vulgar, but according as this or that aids or hinders the process of development. This, in his view, is the one thing that counts. The most cultured, the most beautiful and finely-bred product, if it be obstructive of that development, is intolerable. The coarsest product, if it lends itself to the inward motion, is acceptable. The thing as I see it here and now is all in all to one type of mind. The inward principle of growth, which is the life-current changing and transforming all things, is all in all to the other.

We see things not as *they* are but as *we* are, each one of us selecting from the circumstances of the case those attributes, base or lofty, which accord with his own character. The act of self-government by the people is particularly one which lends itself to these various interpretations. The moments especially when this power is exerted—the times of general elections, that is to say—have always been seized upon by those with an eye for democratic humour. They are so richly grotesque, so plentifully decorated with folly and humbug, with mock sentiment and mock heroic, with im-

puident imposture and simple ignorance and vacant enthusiasm, that they have provided, for comic writers above all, a quite inexhaustible storehouse of buffooneries. The democratic order of humour is among other kinds what garlic is among flavours ; and all who fancy that variety, as Dickens, for example, and the caricaturists generally, have never failed to find all they needed in election scenes. That such occasions are largely built up of chicanery and make-believe no one will deny. The people are very open to vulgar deception and misrepresentation, and there are not wanting orators to take advantage of their simplicity. I do not wonder that to many, perhaps to a majority of cultivated people, such scenes are a mere exhibition of vulgar futility. In truth, the whole process, the pretence that the ignorant and uneducated can govern better than the cultured, and all the means and measures adopted by both sides to hoodwink that ignorance and play upon its gross prejudices and susceptibilities, is to the aristocratic instinct no more than a stupid booth-at-a-fair farce, to the orange-peel and sawdust sentiment of which it submits with loathing. How much better if the educated and cultured and highly-placed could take their place as governors of the country without these preliminary exhibitions of plebeian vulgarity !

But then, in opposition to this, I remember Lord Morley's description of how Gladstone produced those tremendous effects of his upon the British electorate. I remember the orator's reliance on " public law and civil right, and the conscience of a free and high-minded people," and how " he knew men well enough, at least, to have found out that none gains such ascendancy over them as he who appeals to what is the noble part in human nature." Above all, one remembers the great Midlothian triumph, following the Berlin Conference in which England, in taking part against Russia and Balkan liberty, had so betrayed her own dearest traditions. One remembers that lofty conception, driven home and

insisted upon, of a foreign policy guided and controlled by principles of right and justice. This it was, says Lord Morley, "that made the atmosphere in which both speaker and hearer drew their inspiration." One must go back to a Europe educated in the cold diplomacy of Metternich and Bismarck to appreciate the new departure. It was his trust in the nobility of democratic aims, and his audiences' recognition of this trust, which enabled Gladstone so often, as on this Midlothian occasion, to exhibit, with the gesture almost of a prophet, the possibilities in grandeur of thought and conduct which are latent in the principle of liberty.

Often has the writer heard the official spokesmen of a party discussing the tastes of their audiences and recounting to each other the devices and cheap deceptions by which they could be roused, accompanied by more or less contemptuous allusions to the intelligence of an English crowd. At such times the thought has occurred to him of the great Liberal statesman humbly writing down in his diary a prayer that he might be made worthy of the high task and heavy responsibility of addressing the British people.

We see things, as I said, not as they are but as we are. To the mean and commonplace the sight of a people educating itself in the art of government is an exhibition of all that is mean and commonplace in human nature; while to those who have inherited the aristocratic ideal introduced by the Renaissance, of authority not born of public utility and duty, but existing independently and of its own right, the same scenes are ridiculous as being a mere inversion of the natural order of government.

But there remains Gladstone's point of view, the point of view of one who sympathised with and comprehended the principle of liberty. What was it that Gladstone saw in those stormy meetings that the others had not seen? He saw or felt the intelligence of whole masses of people working upon his words. He saw the attentive earnestness, which he could call forth as readily as fools

could call forth the coarse gibe and vacant laugh, spreading from face to face. He felt, as all orators feel whose oratory is worth anything, the minds of his hearers exerting themselves in unison with his mind, illumined by his vision, sharing his convictions, fired by his aspirations.

His diaries and letters, but most of all his speeches themselves, prove that what he was most intensely conscious of at such moments was the inward native ardour, the capacity for rising to high altitudes of thought and insight, which are inherent in the national mind and character. It was because he was so profoundly aware of these potential powers that he accepted the duty of public speaking with so deep a solemnity. And, it may be added, it is because the people with infallible instinct knew of his belief in their capacity—knew of his conviction that the national mind, by exercise and training, could expand to the full comprehension of all the needs of government—that his name still sounds like magic in the ears of all who believe in liberty.

Perhaps, in an hour like this when the very existence of liberty is challenged, we should all make an effort to understand Gladstone's point of view ; to understand, as I was just now saying, that the question of government is not in the least a question of laws merely, and the quality of laws, but of a potent educative force brought to bear, and working upon, the national mind. I have spoken of general elections, but these are merely the great public examinations in a process of education always operating. Among a free people there is always a large percentage whose efficiency is obvious, who follow the progress of affairs with interest and intelligence from day to day. But beneath this there is a further substratum almost entirely destitute of knowledge, save for the floating rumours of the street corners and the public-houses, and incapable of thought unless the dumb instincts and impulses which feebly illumine their minds may pass under that name. What part do

they play? They are ignorant and indifferent, easily led, easily duped. Their attempts at "self-government" are often quite pathetic in their incoherence. Yet the reader cannot but have observed the passionate clinging, even of the most ignorant section of the electors, to such semblance of political power as the vote confers. In their eyes the vote, notwithstanding that they can make little or nothing of it, nor use it to much purpose, is sacred. The slightest allusion to the Plural Voting Bill or to manhood suffrage will wring cheers from the most lethargic audience. Whoever has canvassed a country village knows the attitude of the people in regard to voting: on the one hand, their simplicity, incompetence, and credulity; on the other, the gravity and solemnity with which they perform a function evidently in their eyes as sacred as a religious rite.

And again I ask, Why this sense of almost mystical importance attached to the process of voting? And the answer is that in this right the peasant recognises his hold upon the future and one possible hope of development. It is true the thought is unconscious in him. He could no more explain why he values the vote than a beech tree can tell you why it loves chalk. But none the less surely for that does his instinct guide him where his hope lies. In the process of voting, in the actively exerted function of self-government, resides his chance of real progress and development, of a progress and development proceeding from within; growing out of his own mind, seconded and stimulated by his own exertions, his own thoughts and the gropings of his own intelligence.

After all, this is a matter of the commonest experience. The reader's knowledge of his own motives, or of the upbringing of his children, will be sufficient to assure him that the first condition of all intellectual and spiritual increase is the active participation of the faculties of the learner. Instruction is nothing. At best it is but like water thrown into a pump to make it suck. The real

initiative is from within. It is in liberty of choice, liberty of thought, liberty of endeavour and effort that the germ of all progress consists.

We may separate the alternatives by all the difference that lies between passive and active. To submit, to receive at the hands of others, to become a creature of habit, need not be inconsistent with a certain peace, a certain basking and drowsy enjoyment of life. Only it is the Oriental rather than the European ideal. To aspire, to press on, to pant after a fuller life, truer thought, clearer spiritual vision, this is the attitude of the active West. Whole races and the fate of nations do but illustrate the action of faculties which exist in every one of us. We all know the active mood of inquiry, effort, thought, aspiration. We all know the passive mood of submission and sleepy acceptance of the routine of life. Out of one of these moods Egypt was made, with its unvarying round from century to century of the same parrot-like tasks and occupations, its intellectual apathy, its rank, animal superstitions, and its long procession of sculptured or incised figures, which, in their frozen stiffness that changes and relaxes never, seem the perfect representation of the life out of which they sprang. Out of the other was made the communes or boroughs of mediaeval days, centres of liberty and free initiative and eager inquiry and ever-enlarging hope, and with this an art, flexible, vigorous, democratic, reflecting the vitality of the life it grew out of, and no more failing in loftiness of spiritual aspiration than in its vivid and homely treatment of the little things of life.

These great choices that the world has made are choices we all make daily. We are the towers and spires of Winchester and Salisbury when the courage to dare new thoughts and new acts leaps up in us. We are the dull and ponderous monotony of Thebes when acquiescence settles upon our brains.

Thinking in these terms, can we not the better understand the importance which an English peasant, inspired

by the racial instinct which is the silent admonishment of past generations, attaches to the mystery of the vote? For all lies there. The vote is in fact an express acknowledgment that the voter is entitled to fashion life after his own desires and aspirations. He may not be able to use the opportunity with any effect; his own ignorance may disable him, or the circumstances of his environment may cow and daunt him. But the vote, nevertheless, is the official certificate of his status. He is not a slave but a freeman. He is not, as has so often happened before, to be left behind in the forward movement. The vote will save him; save him in the only way in which he can be saved, by ensuring him the right to save himself.

Those who can sympathise with this profound popular instinct in favour of liberty will know why it is that the present war is on our side so essentially a democratic war. Liberty signifies, above all, intellectual and spiritual effort and exercise, and therefore intellectual and spiritual growth and development. It is the people's hold on life itself. And the people know it. Wherever in the world there exists to-day a freedom-loving people, that people is on the side of the Entente. It may not in every instance be able to assert itself against the powers of tyranny wielding official and executive authority, but none the less does it contrive to utter its sympathy with a cause which it recognises as its own. Was there ever such a war seen? It used to be said that kings and despots made war, but the people never. Yet here we are in the midst of the greatest war of all time, launched into it and pledged to it by what power? By the deliberate and deadly determination of the democracies of Europe rousing themselves in defence of that principle in which all their hopes through the dim future, of spiritual and intellectual attainment, are rooted.

Considerations such as these, far from being vague and general, are intimately and most indissolubly bound up with the existing European situation. Whoever would understand this war must understand, however



dimly and conjecturally, those profound instinctive impulses, so much deeper than mere reason or any conscious motive, which inspire the action of whole races and populations. All the great movements and crises of history have been guided by inarticulate instincts. Men act in the gross as insects and animals and birds do in their evolutions and migrations, and their united action is none the less infallible that not one of them could give a conscious account of it. Such impulses are operating at present. Among the nations of Europe the popular instinct is overwhelmingly on the side of the Allies. If endorsed by official and Court circles and Governments, that instinct finds immediate expression in action; if opposed, it slowly deepens like water behind a dam, and bides its time. But its presence is one of the main portents in this war. It constitutes, indeed, the basis of our strength. If the enemy build their hopes on elaborate preparations and mechanical efficiency, we in turn build on that profound sentiment which sways all free peoples towards us with a universal motion like the motion of the tide. Such forces may be difficult to define, but they will outlast anything that can be brought against them. No one has placed his finger on this war's pulse who has not divined the depth and volume of the popular support which is backing up the Allies.

Free and constitutional forms of government are the *only* means by which growth, progress, and enlightenment can be secured to the masses of the population. We talk of education, but for the mass of the workers this is the only means of education that exists. It is, however, a potent means. In the art of law-making the best qualities in life, unselfishness, spiritual tolerance, neighbourly sympathy, and an ever-enlarging appreciation of the claims of all classes, are trained and developed. By this instrument life itself teaches those who live. Not schools and colleges, not books and lectures and professors act so immediately and powerfully on the character of a people as does their

participation in the opportunities and responsibilities of governing. From the moment a nation sets about making its own laws its foot is on the ladder. Life at every turn will be its teacher, will admonish it of its failures and point out their rectification. Enlightenment will dawn, not through much thinking, nor be confined to a few philosophers, but, as it were, unconsciously and to all people by the application of ideas to life and their test in everyday experience.

In a sense England is more advanced in this philosophy than any other country, for she has built up an Empire of which the very life-principle is the consciousness of the value of liberty as a source of growth and spiritual development. This is our contribution to the world's knowledge. It is new. The world has seen nothing like it before. But to-day the same spirit is abroad among the nations of Europe. Serbs, Greeks, Italians, and many others, little nations and great, some that have lately attained national identity and some that have but just thrown off a hostile tyranny, whether Turkish or Austrian, are all being drawn by a consciousness of the same hope. Hence it is that the present war has in it nothing of diplomatic or official, but is in the full sense of the word popular—instinctive, springing out of the hearts of the people. The will to freedom of the people against the will to power of the Prussians, that is the struggle. And none who believe that the will to freedom opens the way to the best mental and spiritual progress of mankind can help believing in its ultimate triumph. Whoever, in these stern hours, doubts or wavers, let him reflect on the depths of that instinct which, by all the hopes and aspirations of the human heart, unites our Allies in what Mr. Asquith has called a family of free nations.

The triumphant revival of the spirit of liberty has been the chief motive in European history during the past century. It has been France's aspiration for a hundred years ; it is identical in spirit with the national

movement in Italy ; it is cherished in the soul of Russia ; it has renewed the life of Greece ; it sanctifies the martyrdom of Belgium ; and it secretly sways those Balkan States whose sufferings from tyranny have been so acute and recent. We ourselves, in virtue of our unique achievement as the creators of a free Empire, are, more than any, the visible embodiment of this European hope.

Against us stand the forces of reaction, Prussia, Austria, Turkey, whose present alliance has been formed by insensible degrees, and slowly cemented by the instinctive opposition of each to the growth of liberty. Prussia, Austria, Turkey, or in terms of men, Bismarck, Metternich, Abdul-Hamid—these have been for many a year marked down as the destined enemy against which the progressive movement would one day have to fight. Slowly during the past half-century, slowly and unconsciously, the combatants have been moving to their places in the ranks. Each check or each advantage on either side—the continuous collapse of Turkey, the steady progressive development in the south and east of Europe, the threatened disintegration of Austria-Hungary—has brought the quarrel nearer to a head. Every advance, every expansion of the forces of freedom, has been felt as a threat by Germany and, with the decline of the power of her Allies, has thrown upon her an ever-increasing share in their common endeavour, and the corresponding necessity of an ever-increasing preparation for the inevitable struggle.

We talk of the rivalry of nations, but it was the rivalry of no nation which drove Germany on to arm, and arm, and arm ; which made the subject of war an obsession with her, and the goal alike of all her action and all her thought. No, it was her consciousness of a more impalpable yet more terrible danger which was springing up on all sides, which was impregnating the very air of Europe ; it was the profound hostility which existed between her and the arising spirit of liberty which necessitated her warlike preparations. Between that spirit,

which was spreading and catching throughout Europe, as light flushes the hill-tops, between this and the Prussian spirit of domination and rule by force the quarrel was mortal. The thought of Prussia, if it is to prevail, must kill Europe's thought; Europe's thought, if it is to live, must kill Prussia's. I say Prussia's, for this thought itself is Prussia's, not Germany's. No episode in history is more sad and tragic than the passing of the German spirit under the iron control of Prussia. The reader remembers the story, he remembers how all the German States thrilled in the middle of last century to the idea of a united Germany founded on liberty; how the apparently successful revolution of 1848 seemed to confirm their hopes; how the forces of reaction set in and the flame of popular enthusiasm died down; and how the Prussian might and the iron will of Bismarck proceeded to yoke the new German Empire to the reactionary principles represented by Prussia.

It is against the forces of reaction thus strengthened and solidified that the forces of progress are pitted to-day. The consolidation of those forces has drawn England inevitably into the struggle. To emphasise the fact of our insular position, and to base on that position an insular diplomacy, used to be the perhaps not unnatural inclination of some of our politicians. Such a policy might last while the questions at issue on the Continent were superficial. It could no longer justify itself when the question was the existence or non-existence of the principle on which our own Empire was based. Impatient of ideas as we often are in this country, we are apt to ignore the deeper motives of our conduct and substitute for them some practical plea or outward circumstance lying upon the surface. Thus do we allege Germany's breach of faith and violation of Belgium's neutrality. But the real motive lay deeper far. It is not Belgium, it is not France even, that we are fighting for; it is for our own ideal, for that which we as Englishmen stand for in the world. Our whole history, all that

we have ever been, our ancient struggles for independence, and all the events of a thousand years which have purified in us the love of liberty, are at stake. If this fight goes against us we might as well never have lived, for in that case nothing we have done will have borne fruit, nor will the idea for which England stands take effect upon the world and live after us. We shall have missed our destiny. The eggs we were given to hatch we shall have addled. In the moment of its dawning triumph our thought of liberty as an Imperial bond will be stamped out of existence. It is because we are fighting to-day for everything of value contained in the word Liberty that our recruits flock in from the whole Empire. One may feel to the utmost with Belgium and France, yet feel, too, that a cause, like ours, so solemn, so rooted in history, so almost religious, is associated with thoughts more permanent than any alliances.

The more clearly we grasp the magnitude of the stake the sterner, as it seems to me, and more implacable will our resolution and temper become. We are upholding, let us remember it, that inward animating hope in the destiny of mankind which is based on liberty and results in progress ; while opposed to us, united by their common hate and distrust of all we trust in, are banded those dark forces which have withstood the advance of mankind in all ages.

## CHAPTER III

### LIBERTY AND CHRISTIANITY

The Prussian view of Christianity—Christianity as the religion of liberty—The union of the two in the mediaeval epoch—Their severance and mutual decline during the Renaissance—The weakness of all modern attempts to realise liberty is that they do not include the spiritual motive.

BUT we shall not plumb the difference between Prussian thought and ours, or gauge the profound inward hostility which underlies the present war, merely by dealing with the social and political effects of liberty. The sources of the difference between us lie as much in the soul as in the mind of Prussia. It is above all Prussia's recognition of the natural alliance which exists between liberty and Christianity, and the fierceness with which she has struck at liberty's root in Christianity, which reveal the character of her own philosophy and its intense antagonism to our own point of view. Prussia is ahead of Europe in this. Her own systematic and organised attempts to perfect an autocratic philosophy of life have brought her up sharply against the chief obstacle to that end, and she, the enemy of liberty, has realised how closely liberty and Christianity were bound up in each other long before the rest of Europe had made the same discovery.

We ourselves have scarcely yet begun to think upon the subject. Lord Acton, cosmopolitan and largely German it is worth noting, has been the prophet of the new idea, but it is not to be wondered at, considering

the backwardness of English thought on the subject, that his great history of liberty should have remained an unrealised project, or that his essays and lectures should so often exhibit the remoteness and sometimes obscurity of one who has had to do his thinking alone. "I agree with nobody and nobody agrees with me," he said at the outset of his career; and looking back on it he adds the comment, pathetic yet touched with the thinker's pride, "I never had any contemporaries." The editors of his recently published essays on liberty, Professor Figgis and Mr. Laurence, suggest that Acton's "view of the true relations of States and Churches may become one day more dominant," and even that religion may "become the guardian of freedom even in the political sphere." It may be so, but it is doubtful if much way has yet been made. Skirting the fringe of this great subject we are still on unfamiliar ground. What is there in Christianity that is inimical to all forms of tyranny, that registers a perpetual protest against them, that secretly renovates the oppressed and braces them for resistance? We scarcely, as I say, know what it is. But we are getting to know it. We feel sure of its existence when we say, as we so often do, that this is a war for Christianity. And as for Prussia, she knows much more clearly than we do. She has felt that secret opposition to her own theory of State supremacy. Her hatred of Christianity is Rome's hatred. It is a political hatred; the hatred of a spiritual doctrine for its political consequences.

It is always to be remembered that, in character and conduct and the sum total of what he is, man's desire is to reconcile differences and discordances so as to make of his personality a harmonious whole intelligible to itself. This is to be happy, and man's effort is towards this. He cannot remain permanently free spiritually and enslaved politically. Thought and faith and action will sooner or later work themselves into harmony. Either a servile state will introduce its own servility into

religion or a free religion will develop liberty in the state.

The issue is a simple one and may be placed before the reader in simple terms. Philosophy and faith are of different origins. Philosophy is a fruit of the human understanding. Faith is acceptance of a spiritual witness. Left to its own resources mankind is driven to rely on the best products of its own intelligence. It proceeds to think out a spiritual philosophy. But this is a process difficult and complex in which only a few can participate, and the results are difficult and complex and only intelligible to a limited educated section of society. To the masses they are without meaning. From these initial causes certain effects follow as inevitably as night follows day. By degrees there form a superior dominant class endowed with spiritual knowledge and an inferior and subject class plunged in spiritual ignorance. But these results are not of the spiritual order only. People who accept a condition of spiritual inferiority, degradation, and dependence will presently go on to accept conditions of social and political inferiority, degradation, and dependence. This is what must happen and always has happened when man has been left to cater for his own spiritual needs. The greater his apparent success, the more subtle and profound his thoughts, the more hopelessly will the masses of the people be left behind and the more certainly and permanently will the spirit of liberty be extinguished among them.

I am not arguing in the abstract, but speaking of what has happened. The Eastern mind is highly speculative. Its instinct is in spiritual matters to generate profound and complicated issues, and it is precisely because of this tendency towards philosophies above the heads of the people that in the East the word liberty is a meaningless term. Every old tyrannic empire of the East has sprung out of this root. Its iron servitude has been established by a servitude of the soul. If the



testimony of art is worth anything, there was a time when the population of ancient Egypt was strongly possessed of the spirit of initiation and independence. But this in the course of centuries evaporated. The free vigorous figures, sculptured or incised by Egyptian art, stiffen into immobility and cold convention, while the whole of Egyptian life in all its aspects, its knowledge and thought and daily usage, stiffens in precisely the same way into a dull routine without movement or growth. Whence such a change? Let the reader peer into the Egyptian soul for an answer. The religious system of Egypt is involved, but its very mixture of incompatible ideas is instructive. It exhibits, on the one hand, traces of a lofty philosophy, sustained by a continuous tradition and subtle arguments, centred in the hands of a priestly caste highly trained and containing in its ranks the ablest intellects in the country. Further, this priestly caste is intimately associated with the Government. Many of the chief ministers of state are priests; the king is the head of the priesthood. There is, in short, the closest unity of aim between religion and the State, and together they form a complete instrument of tyranny. On the other hand, in sharp contrast to this religion of a class or caste is the popular religion, composed in an overwhelming degree of prostrate and helpless superstitions, of charms, magic, witchcraft, animal worship, and the grossest and filthiest celebrations of the functions and processes of nature. As time progresses both aspects of religion accentuate their differences. The priestly religion grows more and more difficult and complicated, and is more and more hidden away from the people in the secret shrines of the temple, while the popular religion develops and spawns all over the country into those uncounted and merely bestial superstitions which are the measure of the prevailing spiritual servitude.

Man's constant effort, as I just now said, is to establish harmony between all that he thinks and believes. In

the long run he is bound to reconcile his spiritual and temporal ideas. In Egypt the reconciliation was effected. A spiritual philosophy was cultivated which depended on learned investigation and the thoughts of exceptional men. Naturally the speculations evolved were for the few. The masses in such a quest were bound to be left behind. Of what use was it for them to exert their dull wits in such difficult and delicate inquiries? They were put off with matter suited to their ignorance and tending to confirm it. Thus was formed a caste religion sanctioning the supremacy of the few and the servitude of the many. The peasant of the Nile valley looked up to his superiors with spiritual awe. A more perfect spiritual knowledge, a more intimate union with God, were part and parcel of that other intellectual, social, and political superiority which this class enjoyed in the world. It grew into a habit of the popular mind to accept in spiritual things a position of helpless dependence. But this dependence in spiritual matters once established, the instinctive tendency to harmonise spiritual and temporal ideas came into operation, and made the habit of submission in all matters and all relations of life easy and inevitable. The introduction into men's souls of the principle of submission attuned their minds and characters, and by and by their lives, to a similar servitude.

Egypt is but one instance out of many. All the great tyrannic empires of the East have been similarly cemented. In India the original independence of the Aryan settlers was transformed by the evolution of an occult spiritual philosophy into a caste system which imposed on the common people conditions of hopeless servility. Abstract and difficult speculations above occasioned an endless diversity of materialistic superstitions below, and the subjection of the soul so acted upon the other faculties that by and by all traces of liberty were obliterated from the lives of the people. In Chaldaea, Babylonia, Assyria, Phoenicia, wherever

great autocratic forms of government have existed, the same connection is to be traced. Difficult religions, religions of experts and adepts and priestly castes, are in their essence autocratic, since by establishing autocratic dominion in the spiritual sphere they ultimately establish it in the civil sphere. What is put into the soul breaks through into everyday life and thought. Such has been the history of all Eastern tyrannies. The fact they all proclaim is that civil tyranny, to endure, must be rooted in religious tyranny. Find the signs of the latter, the animal worship and blind idolatry which are the marks of spiritual servitude, and you will find attending them, punctual as their shadow, proofs of the social and political servitude in which those people lived.

This happens, as I say, when man is left to his own resources, and has to rely upon his own intelligence. But what happens if he is not left to these? What happens if a superior intelligence intervenes to instruct him? Such an intervention obviously disposes of the whole philosophical system. For long and difficult processes of thought it substitutes authority. Instead of having to puzzle over abstract theories, the Christian appeals to the word of the Founder of Christianity. The thing is true, not because you can reason it out, but because He said it. But the difference here for the rank and file of the people is radical, for it was precisely in the reasoning-it-out process that they got left behind. It was this that baffled them, and established their inferiority to, and dependence upon, others. Faith, however, is one thing, and brains another. The simplest of men, however incapable of subtle analysis, is equal to the wisest in the matter of faith. The learning of an Acton, the subtlety of a Newman, made their faith no more perfect than the faith of an Irish peasant. There is no superiority or inferiority on these lines. The clever and highly educated have no advantage over the poor and illiterate. There is nothing for the tyrannic instinct in man to build on, nothing it can utilise. The sub-

stitution of the authority of Christ for the learning of the schools has cut the ground from under its feet. Spiritual oppression can touch no man, for in common submission to an authority equally superior to all, all men are spiritually equal.

In an age marked by the universal triumph of physical force, and relying upon nothing so much as material power and splendour and show, the new religion not only appealed to an opposite order of ideas, but was constructed out of an opposite order of circumstances. The obscurity of its origin, its renunciation of all the aids of state power and influence, and the countenance of learned and powerful people, its embodiment in the person of a common artisan, its choice of human instruments among fishermen and the poor, in short, its whole bearing and aspect and spectacular effect upon the world's stage, distinguish it, even to a random glance, as a great democratic event. This is its most obvious outward characteristic. A disinterested student, turning the pages of history, would pick it out from among all other philosophical, political, and social movements by its broadly unmistakable democratic attributes. Christ speaks to the people. Now and then He is brought into contact with one of the upper classes, or with some learned theologian or professor. But this is accident. His real concern is with the masses. And His methods of instruction are adapted to His audience. Speaking to common and ignorant folk, He speaks in the plainest, simplest language possible. There is no subtlety, no ambiguity, in His words, none of the philosophical profundity which so baffles the uncultured mind. A child can understand what He says. His curt "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" are as clean-cut as the strokes of a chisel.

And yet all this in itself is inadequate, for it does not touch the question of the authority of the teacher. On that all depends. What if this teaching was delivered to the people, by one who sprang from the people, in

language intelligible to the people? What a man has said men can dispute, or analyse, or qualify in accordance with the needs of their own times. And what they say by way of contradiction or elaboration, is of the same kind of authority as what he said. Let, then, the original instructions be never so simple, they must eventually pass into the hands of others to be subject to the emendations and elaborations which these propose. One thing alone can save them, the authority of their speaker. If a man said this, we will all make what we can of it, and divide it up, the wisest taking the best bits and the crowd the leavings. But what if God said it? Then obviously the case is different. It is less easy in that case to divide it up, to cut and trim it to our own immediate necessities, to weave it into our philosophical systems. *It* remains unassailable because the authority of its promulgator is unassailable. Thus every inquirer who realises what is at stake, who appreciates the need of authority, if religion is to be saved from the philosopher and prevented from being turned into an instrument of tyranny, will find his eyes turning to the Incarnation. We are not here concerned with the truth or untruth of Christianity, but merely with its effect if accepted on the principle of liberty. Accept the Incarnation and you place liberty on a sure foundation. Accept the fact of Christ's divinity, and the simple salient landmarks of the faith set up by Christ remain intact. No man can meddle with them or filch them away, for the authority of no man is equal to such an undertaking. Thus the entire series of operations by which religion is made difficult for the people and the spiritual sense humbled and made subservient to human superiority is, by the assertion of Christ's divinity, blocked at the outset. Instead of spiritual servitude, with its inevitable corresponding effects on life and character so terribly demonstrated in the histories of the old empires, the Incarnation postulates spiritual liberty together with, in the long run, the effects on life which flow from that source.

But, many people will say, what if we dispense with the spiritual faculty altogether? What if we give to liberty a purely intellectual basis and find for it a sufficient support in reason? Would not this be neutralising the causes of spiritual servitude in the old empires? No doubt it would. But if to extinguish the spiritual sense would prevent its enlistment on the side of slavery, it would also prevent its enlistment on the side of liberty. Here, indeed, lies the difference between the classic and Christian epochs. The classic epoch depended on intellect. Its conception of liberty was intellectual, not spiritual. As early as the sixth century B.C. the political philosophy of Solon had stipulated that citizens should themselves have a voice in the selection of their governors, that government should proceed not by compulsion but by consent, that all who held authority should hold it subject to the control of those for whom they acted; and had moreover defined the greatest glory of a ruler as the creation of popular government, and the essence of Democracy as obedience to no master but the law. "There is hardly a truth in politics or in the system of the rights of man that was not grasped by the wisest of the Gentiles and the Jews, or that they did not declare with a refinement of thought and a nobleness of expression that later writings could never surpass." . . . And yet all this thought and intellectual discrimination were inadequate, for "although the maxims of the great classic teachers, of Sophocles, and Plato, and Seneca, and the glorious examples of public virtue were in the mouths of all men, there was no power in them to avert the doom of that civilisation for which the blood of so many patriots and the genius of so many incomparable writers had been wasted in vain. The liberties of the ancient nations were crushed beneath a hopeless and inevitable despotism."<sup>1</sup>

But why did so high and clear an intellectual appreciation of the possibilities contained in liberty result in so feeble a national hold upon that principle, and

<sup>1</sup> Lord Acton, *Freedom in Antiquity*.

finally in the entire loss and sacrifice of it altogether? Because, precisely as in the case of Oriental despotisms, the appeal was to a minority. Intellectual culture is always bound to be the possession of a few. The arguments used by Sophocles and Plato and Seneca might affect certain groups of students and disciples and indicate the principles and ideas in process of adoption by Athenian philosophy. But they could not appeal widely and generally to the masses of the people or be popularly accepted as a rule of life. They could not, because intellectual culture is a slow, difficult, and laborious business, involving leisure for thought and opportunities for study, besides an unusual share of intelligence to begin with. Hence it is not strange that a philosophy of freedom, or intellectual appreciation of it, should exist and be very beautifully expressed and developed and yet that it should have no real hold upon people's thoughts and the life of the nation.

To give liberty such a hold the essential is that it should receive spiritual sanction. Spiritual ideas differ in this from intellectual ones,—that being emotional in their essence—that is to say, intuitive or instinctive—they are verifiable by all people, not in proportion as their minds are cultivated, but in proportion as their natures are simple. Spiritual ideas, in short, appeal to instincts which are natural to man, whereas intellectual ideas appeal to faculties which depend on cultivation. What follows? Let liberty ally itself with the intellectual faculty and it may, like an exotic in a hot-house, be cultivated by a group of scholars in the midst of a land of slaves. But let it ally itself with the spiritual faculty and it will make its way everywhere, and, even without the help of scholars and thinkers, will penetrate the region of politics and be introduced into the practical affairs of life.

In consequence of the fact that, during the classical era, the spiritual faculty in man was as undeveloped and inactive as the intellectual faculty was active and alert,

the idea of liberty received no help at all from the former, but a great deal of help from the latter. Its fortunes and its fate were commensurate with this help. All that intellect could do for it was done, and wherever intellect was revered (that is to say, among an insignificant minority of abnormally clever people) it flourished, and, as an abstract theory, was highly spoken of by the greatest philosophers. At the same time, failing to ally itself with that sense which is man's common means of enlightenment, it failed to touch the popular imagination and enter into the national character. Hence, when the opportunity of despotism arrived, there existed no public sentiment to make a stand against it. The arguments of philosophers were answered or disregarded, and, this done, the only force making for freedom was conquered and the only obstacle in the path of despotism removed.

The development of liberty in the Christian era is the pagan method exactly reversed. To get the benefit of that contrast we should move on to a time when classic ideas and the example of the Empire had ceased to operate on society, and when the new nationalities were definitely starting business on lines of their own. We should descend, that is to say, to that period when, first in Italy and next in England, France and Germany, the communes and boroughs, proclaiming their independence and the rights of citizenship, had defined liberty as the political inspiration of the European nations.

Between this and the ancient birth and growth of liberty, what a difference! Liberty in the old days had been the offspring of thought and meditation, its cradle had been rocked by sages and it had been suckled on the logic and arguments of philosophers. There were no philosophers in the mediaeval age, for intellect had not yet reawakened, and the cause of liberty was attended to by blacksmiths and carpenters and fishmongers and clothiers and other such practical craftsmen and artisans. Yet these possessed an ally infinitely more potent than the brains of the greatest classic thinkers in that they



professed a religion which drew out and accentuated the sense of human dignity and worth in the most abject. Preaching liberty they preached what was already in conformity with their own spiritual experience; or rather there was no preaching required, for the same idea was dawning and spreading, swiftly and spontaneously, among the populations of all nations. In that process no reasoning or conscious thinking was involved. The new idea spread as a sentiment, an emotion, and therefore irresistibly. And this it did, if I may so express it, because it overflowed from the soul into the mind; because, guaranteed and vouched for by the religious sense of the people, it was received with an instinctive and universal consent which it could not possibly have derived from any amount of intellectual support.

There resulted a liberty which indeed was weak, or altogether defective, where classic liberty had been strong, that is to say as a matter of theory and philosophy, but which was no less strong where classic liberty had been weak. The new liberty was a popular order of liberty, a liberty, not of the Academy or the Porch, but of the street and the market-place—a liberty, in short, not of intellectual but of spiritual growth.

Thus if the rise of every borough and township in England is a small independent history of the development of freedom, so is it also a testimony to the vitality of the spiritual faith in conjunction with which that development proceeded. The fusion of practical and spiritual aims is, at this period of our history, so complete that it is impossible to tell where the business of this world ends and that of the next begins. Into the affairs of the house and the shop and every transaction of daily life the spiritual motive penetrates. Every trade arrangement, every compact between master and apprentice, employer and employed, lord and vassal, every statute and enactment for the regulation of the affairs of the borough seeks the sanction of religion. The terms of the Guild corporations, which may be called the charters of labour, are in this

respect particularly significant. They reveal the spirit in which those bodies of craftsmen acted and coalesced whose especial function it was to turn every British borough into a fortress of liberty. It is enough to remark here that these regulations of the working brotherhoods consist in about equal portions of exact instructions, on the one hand, in methods of work and trade discipline, and vigilant guardianship on the part of the Guild of all its manifold commercial, political, and social rights and privileges, and on the other hand, of constant appeals and references under all circumstances to the guidance of faith and to those loftier motives and incentives which were directed not to material but spiritual objects.<sup>1</sup>

To bring to the reader's mind a full consciousness of the extent to which liberty and religion at this period interpenetrated each other, and the consequent vigour and vitality which both enjoyed, would be a task that might well engage a volume to itself. There exists, however, a shorter cut to the same end. The intermixture I speak of is with especial vividness portrayed in mediaeval art, the unique feature of which is that, intimate as it is with everyday life, it is just as intimate with the aspirations of the soul. No style of art is, in the old sense of the word, so vulgar, so common, so fond of the details of the lives of ordinary people, so democratic, so obviously inspired by the sentiments and emotions of the masses. Yet no style approaches its fervour of emotional ecstasy or the depth and purity of spiritual consciousness expressed in the floods of incomparable colour which flow around and lap against columns and piers like shadowy depths of water against sea cliffs.

I suppose that all who are capable of being appealed to through art—that is to say, all who are able to recognise thoughts and emotions in their artistic semblance of form and colour—must be aware of the fervour of spiritual sentiment incarnated in those sheaves of lines which, darting upward from the pavement, and curving as

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

arrows curve in their flight, seek their ultimate union in the apexes of the vaults overhead.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, if the reader will turn over the pages of Messrs. Prior and Gardiner's fine work on mediaeval sculpture, he will be struck, not only by the exuberant prodigality with which religious situations and characters and stories are imagined and handled, but also he will notice that spiritual emotion is in this art the chief source of inspiration for the artist. Mediaeval sculpture itself is in some ways rude. It has not mastered its own technique. It is unmistakably primitive. Its figures are stiff, its knowledge inadequate, its poses, drapery, and drawing often naïve and impossible. In these respects it has been surpassed, but it never has been surpassed, or even equalled, in the truth and intensity of its spiritual feeling. Through, and in spite of, its awkwardness and ignorance, its purity and spiritual grace are revealed with poignant freshness and force. Quite evidently this prevailing emotion is a source of knowledge and efficiency. It enables the artist to achieve in that field results which he could equal in no other, and the like of which have never been attained before or since.

<sup>1</sup> It is indeed a remarkable fact that although in modern times architecture in general has been degraded more and more into an imitation, or travesty rather, of classic forms—forms foreign to our character and temperament, and mainly so because the spiritual element finds in them no expression whatsoever—yet in spite of this cult of the classic and the resulting decline of all public interest in the subject, still the perception remains widespread and instinctive that classic forms cannot embody spiritual sentiment in the way that mediaeval structural forms embodied it. And so strong is this feeling that though, as I say, interest in the subject is so dead that an art which was once the expression of the national life has dwindled into a property of a few professional dealers, yet on this point instinct still prevails. Public opinion insists that what purports still to be the spiritual part of our architecture—our churches and cathedrals—shall be couched in mediaeval, not in classic terms of form. Atrophied from disuse as the sense for art is among us, the pretence that the emotions of the soul can be conveyed in the flat horizontal proportions of Greek and Roman design is more than we can swallow. Blindly the spiritual instinct, ranging the past, pauses over those daring structures which embodied the pure zeal of its youth. Gone is the fervour that poured itself forth in these stone songs, but at least it is faithful to their memory; at least it still recognises in art's many experiments the style which incarnated its own emotions.

No one, it may be said, familiar with this subject, if the question were put to him, when and in what epoch of art had spiritual consciousness received its most adequate expression? would hesitate for his answer. Classic art would be rejected in its entirety, and all the richness and variety of Renaissance art would be set aside, while his thought reverted to the great west fronts of the French cathedrals and to many a niche and tympanum and corbel and capital in English church or abbey, where, now and again, out of the midst of rudeness and roughness, a face or profile, the outline of a bent head, a forehead with hair parted above lowered eyelids, the poise of a slender figure, whose delicacy has yet withstood the storms of six hundred years, shine like those unexpected tufts of flowers which sprout upon Alpine precipices, and in right of their uncontaminated spiritual quality claim pre-eminency in the expression of that kind of emotion.

It would be easy of course to multiply instances of art's testimony on this point. Leaving cathedrals and churches and the direct service of religion, it would be easy to show how, in civil architecture, in decorative designs, and in the sculptured ornament applied to ordinary objects of household use, the artist and craftsman interwove religion as it were with the run of commonplace motives and daily practical needs.<sup>1</sup> All this is but the record, expected and inevitable in art, of that fusion of religion in all the concerns of life to which every other kind of record also bears witness. In that hour when freedom was first acknowledged as the nation's ideal it had Christianity for its associate and ally. Look into the Egyptian soul, we said, for the secret of Egyptian slavery. Look into the mediaeval soul, we say now, for the secret of mediaeval liberty. Throughout Europe during the mediaeval age liberty and religion strongly co-operated in effecting a common triumph. The coalition between them was intimate. The Church declared itself as the avowed champion of the popular rights, and the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix B.

same cities and boroughs were the sanctuaries of liberty and faith.

This noted, I would pass on to a later age to observe the effect of the intellectual awakening on this broad democratic view of life. It was immediate. The rapid development of intellectual efficiency during the Renaissance period was accompanied by the corresponding collapse on all sides of the spiritual faculty. As intellect, with its clear finite views and strictly mundane sphere of operations, assumed a more and more unchallenged dictatorship over men's minds, so was the spiritual mode of apprehending truth distrusted and discredited. That only was called knowledge which could give account of itself to reason. Faith, the spiritual instinct, the contemplative mood, the monastic profession, the authority of the Guilds, the influence of religion in the daily affairs of life, declined together. And with these declined also liberty. Liberty, possessing no longer now as its ally the deep spiritual instinct which so easily penetrates all human hearts, was forced to rely on the support of intellect. What was the consequence? Intellect serves but a few; it is the instrument of autocracies. Society had reverted to something approaching the standpoint of the classic age, and liberty assumed much the same position as it had occupied in classic society. That is to say, it dwindled to an intellectual theory, and from being a matter of general and popular concern was narrowed to fit the instincts of a privileged order. Throughout all Europe the degradation of the spiritual faculty paved the way for despotisms and oligarchies.

In truth the entire transformation was but an outward effect of a change which had taken place in the mind of man. In all ages it has been the instinct of privileged minorities to use their fellow-creatures as instruments of their own advance. Whenever this occurs, whenever a particular class is enabled or permitted to use the humbler order of citizens for its own ends, there occurs a breach in

society ; the climbers, rising to higher things on stepping-stones of their weaker neighbours, trample down those beneath them into servitude and dependence. The use of man by man is the origin of slavery. It rests on Nietzsche's theory that the advance of the race need not and cannot be general, but that classes exist which are best employed in aiding the advance of others while they themselves remain abject and forlorn. Christianity and liberty, which are spiritual and political aspects of the same thing, represent in this controversy the cause of solidarity. No part of society, if they can have their way, shall be abandoned, down-trodden, or cut off from the main body. All alike contain a power of infinite development which needs but to be made conscious of itself to become the vehicle of its own realisation. The despotic theory is intellectual, for intellect which puts light into the minds of a minority puts power into the hands of a minority. The democratic theory is spiritual, for it is based on the recognition of that inward principle of growth which is latent in man and which in its essence is a spiritual possession. Thus the change from the mediaeval era to the Renaissance was a change from democratic to autocratic, because it was a change in mental culture from a reliance on the spiritual to a reliance on the intellectual faculty.

“ The history of the Middle Ages,” Acton has said, “ is the history of the gradual emancipation of men from every species of servitude, in proportion as the influence of religion became more penetrating and more universal.” While, on the contrary, “ the history of the last three centuries,” that is, of the period which has elapsed since the introduction of Renaissance ideas, “ exhibits the gradual revival of declining slavery, which appears under new forms of oppression as the authority of religion has decreased.”

But, as we know, the modern age contains something more than a decline of religion and a corresponding decline in liberty. It contains also a succession of fierce

revolutionary movements, in which all the nations of Europe have more or less participated, for the recovery of that very liberty which the Renaissance had undermined. Naturally we should expect, judging from its own past record, that religion would have participated in these efforts. This, however, it has not done. The revolutionary propaganda in Europe, from the French Revolution onward, have been carried on in opposition to religion and in defiance of the Church. This it is, this apparent opposition between liberty and religion—which men's instincts assure them should be in unison—this it is which has perplexed and baffled so many minds, and so greatly thwarted the development of modern liberalism.

Yet this should seem a not unexpected consequence of what went before. We may place the period of ascendancy of Renaissance ideas (varying though they did in date and duration in each country) roughly between the dates fifteen hundred and eighteen hundred. During those three hundred years Europe came to look at life from the Renaissance standpoint. During those three hundred years it learnt to accept purely intellectual estimates of all life's duties and activities, and among others it learnt to accept a purely intellectual estimate of the duties of government.

According to this estimate the art of government consisted in the production of such laws as, considered by the utilitarian standard, might be considered adequate. Government was not an educative process, but a law-producing machine. The Renaissance point of view in this matter was precisely the point of view of the *Times* writer already quoted in an earlier chapter. It is the characteristic intellectual point of view which has justified slavery from the beginning of the world. The fatal defect of it is that it ignores the value of the inner struggle of man's nascent spirit. It fails to perceive that though the laws of Democracies may seem poor things compared to the laws of philosophers, yet the effort and the exercise

which go to produce those laws may exercise a more salutary influence than any law.

This is the fatal flaw which runs all through classic and Renaissance theories of government, and indeed still lingers on in many an impenetrable Tory stronghold. Active participation in the process of law-making is an exercise of freedom. Passive acceptance of laws made by others is an exercise in slavery. The whole Classic-Renaissance conception of government, with its assumption that the law and not the making of the law is what matters, is destructive of liberty and the chief support and buttress of tyranny.

Nevertheless this Classic-Renaissance conception of government was invariably accepted and the principle of tyranny was received into the very composition of all governing bodies. Governed and governing came to be a distinction implied in the act of government. Naturally Christianity, so far as it can be identified with an administrative system, shared in the change of ideas. The Church combines two functions. On the one hand it is the guardian of Christian doctrine, on the other it is the head of an immense organisation, the administrator of law and discipline on a world-wide scale, and the director of vast political and social interests. This second function is, of course, a purely mundane one and liable to be influenced by all causes affecting governments in general. Accordingly throughout the Renaissance period in Italy the Church underwent precisely the same change from democratic to tyrannic in the character of its government as the civil states around it. An especial body of men was even evolved and equipped for the very purpose of effecting the transformation, and the Jesuits do, in fact, owe their extended reputation to the success with which, working in conjunction with Renaissance ideas, they have been able to autocratise the influence of the Church.

The reader must remember that, at the time of the French Revolution, Italy had been for three centuries



the prey of tyrants. For three centuries she had not heard the word liberty spoken. Worst of all, she suffered from *foreign* tyrants, under whose rule the very idea of government became, not despotic only, but alien. Spain and Austria were the past masters in the only political system known in the peninsula. The Italian intellect, accepting the lead of Machiavelli, followed in the wake of the national experience. One only kind of government was recognised which all governing bodies, the Church among them, accepted. There was no question of an alternative. Three hundred years is a considerable time. The idea of liberty was extinct. When its first rumblings were heard men trembled at them, not because they threatened to substitute government of the people for government of kings or aristocracies, but because they threatened to annihilate government altogether. To men trained in the tradition of the Renaissance the voice of Democracy was the voice of anarchy.

Thus, as a government, the Church had adopted the view of all governments, and especially it had come to share the view that popular liberty is a menace to the State. It conceived that authority must be exerted by the high, and submitted to by the humble. Order, discipline, social security and stability had become identified with the authoritative dictates of an autocratic power. In these ideas the Church shared and was bound to share. Consequently when once more in the modern age liberty reasserted itself and a series of revolutions were embarked upon, which had for their object the subversion of autocracy and the vindication of the old democratic theory of popular government, the Church, like all other forms of vested authority, vigorously opposed the new spirit.<sup>1</sup> Ancient tradition, the intimate

<sup>1</sup> At the same time the effect of the Reformation in weakening the spirit of liberty in the Church was of course considerable. Intellect and law were the contributions of the Latin South ; spirit and liberty the contributions of the Gothic North. The secession of the strongest branches of the Gothic race left the Church over-Latinised, the consequence being that it has become to a certain extent law-ridden, or, as it is sometimes expressed, priest-ridden.

alliance of earlier ages, the essential unity in idea between liberty and the Christian religion, were veiled by the Renaissance doctrine that all government, whether of Church or State, is a matter of authority. In every kingdom which made a struggle for liberty during the nineteenth century, that is to say, in every country in Europe, the party of freedom found itself not aided but opposed by religion. An opposition so unnatural, and even wearing so strong an air of treachery, inevitably engendered an extreme bitterness of feeling, and all forms of Church authority have to this day no fiercer enemies than the leaders of the democratic parties. It is indeed remarkable that forces so strongly allied in ancient times, and which owed their growth and greatness so entirely to that alliance, should to-day be at daggers drawn. Yet no one who allows due weight to the teaching of the Renaissance in regard to the art of government will be surprised at such a result.

It only remains to add, what is sufficiently evident, that both Christianity and liberty have suffered equally from their severance. Liberty is one of the great practical forces in life, and the failure of Christianity to avail itself of this vehicle has resulted in its repudiation by just those virile citizens who are responsible for the world's work and representative of progressive ideas. If Christianity nowadays is too much in the hands of the weak, the effeminate, and the sentimental, it is because she has broken with the spirit of liberty. In the days of the alliance, when all that was vital and fruitful and of good augury in society sprang from the joint action of liberty and Christianity, an unbeliever was conceived of as a social pariah, or outlaw, or idiot. And not unnaturally, for his unbelief cut him off from the realities of life and dissociated him from the forward march of humanity. But since liberty and Christianity separated the reverse view has come into fashion, and to abandon Christianity is often conceived as a step towards the attainment of practical aims and progressive ideas.

And in the same way liberty, too, has lost all that was best in its ancient meaning. The old spiritual contents of the word have quite gone out of it. If the reader would judge to what it has sunk, let him study the pages of the liberal press in England during a time of acute political controversy. He will soon discover that the notion of liberty as a spiritual ideal is extinct, and that, in the eyes of its modern disciples, it is only valuable in so far as it can be used to obtain certain tangible and material advantages for its possessors. The unnatural divorce which has turned religion into a shadow has turned liberty into the jostling of pigs at a trough. This is the great tragedy of modern life. All in it that is most crooked and perplexed is rooted in the hostility which exists between life's two governing factors. Yet it is not in the nature of things that this hostility should endure, for where there is sympathy in the essential nature of things they must in the long run wear through apparent differences to that unity which is the expression of what they are.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PRUSSIAN IDEAL

The tyrannic ideal—Its greatness in Prussian hands—It was founded in and developed out of Prussian life—Its later intellectual and spiritual aspects were merely a full interpretation of the feudal life of Prussia—The building up of this imperial idea, complete in its physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects, has been the astonishing feat of the Prussian genius—It was for this that Christianity had to make way.

IF now we have obtained an idea of the inseparability of liberty and Christianity we shall be able the better to understand Prussian action in regard to both these principles. For Prussia, too, has recognised their inseparability. The merit of Prussian thought, applied as it is strictly to the realities of life, is that it is always thorough and always honest. A less thorough, a less honest school of thought than the Prussian, would have been sure to have attempted a compromise in this matter ; it would have aimed at attaining autocratic control in the political sphere while preserving and adopting to its own service the accepted form of religion. This it could have done. It could have assumed, through the State, a more exact control of ecclesiastical affairs, and employed the national Church and the national clergy to support with all their influence its own political action. Bacon, a long time ago, realised the possibilities thus opened up when he advised James that the first condition of a really strong national government is a national Church in subordination to it.

That Prussian thought despised such an alliance is

to its honour. The truth is it aimed not at mere security, not at mere reaction, not at shutting out ideas and stifling thought, and passing its existence in some drowsy backwater cut off from the main current of life. It had a positive end in view. It dared to think. It saw its great idea of State supremacy and State might—that doctrine almost as terrible to its subjects as to its enemies, which, ere it could threaten those without, must absorb and mould into instruments of its will those within its borders—this great idea it saw, not dissipated in ineffectual Conservatism, or overawing the imagination of a country parish, but developing into the potent instrument of a great nation's power and policy. Prussian thought looked to the future, not to the past. Prussia foresaw a time when, out of the tyrannic ideal, she would fashion an instrument that would carve for her a way to glory and greatness. And not only that, but she looked forward to evolving a philosophy justifying her action, so that her scheme of national greatness would repose upon reasons and arguments, and be intellectually vindicated. The difference between Prussian Toryism and English, between the Toryism that disposes of the might of an Empire and the Toryism that is content to act more or less surreptitiously as a drag on the wheel of progressive politics, is that one is constructive, the other not.

But to attain ends so vast and far-reaching it was necessary that the political, intellectual, and spiritual aspect of the Prussian ideal should be developed harmoniously. Every line of action, every policy, has its intellectual and spiritual self, and must, ere it can prevail in the world, find its intellectual and spiritual self. Now Christianity is not the spiritual self of tyranny; it is the spiritual self of liberty. It is conceivable that a more or less diluted and falsified form of tyranny and a more or less diluted and falsified form of Christianity may uneasily co-exist; but the two can only be got to support each other on conditions which rob both of their powers. This

Prussia has divined. With extraordinary consistency and strength of purpose Prussia has stamped out the whole body of ethical ideas which conflicted with its great political doctrine, and has introduced and propagated a body of ethical ideas in sympathy with that doctrine. In so doing it has placed itself in an antagonism absolutely mortal to the free nations of the world, an antagonism not political only but intellectual and spiritual as well. Yet only a mean adversary, or one incapable of thought, will deny to the Prussian theory its boldness of conception and that kind of grandeur which belongs to a powerful constructive design.

What I would ask the reader to do is to glance back into the past in order to discover the origin of so strange a force. Prussianism is based on the idea of tyranny. Its philosophy of state supremacy, its religion of valour, are merely the application of the idea of tyranny to the intellectual and spiritual spheres of thought. But something must have preceded that application. A tyrannic philosophy certainly did not suggest itself in the first place as an abstract proposition. It had something in life to build on and grow out of, an actual experience of the race. What was that actual experience ?

It would almost seem that the land of Prussia had been created for the cultivation of the stern spirit which came to reside there. A desolate and savage country, its endless grazing grounds and heathy plains broken by forests of fir and pine and quivering marsh and morass, it offered palpable opportunities for the establishment, undisturbed by commerce and trade and the counter effects of city life, of those feudal relationships which, ever since its settlement, have characterised the country. No part of Europe was more secluded, more cut off from the world, more remote from all those channels and natural lines of communication along which ideas circulate. Further, the invading Germanic element was from the first placed in a position of dominion over subject races. The landed proprietors were not only the feudal lords

but the military conquerors of the people. Conceive that society! Unenlightened, unpenetrated by any softening springs of ideas, utterly isolated and self-centred, with its own standard of dignity and excellence—the dignity and excellence of the great landed proprietor—encouraged, almost perhaps compelled, to the utmost exercise of that kind of authority with which circumstances had endowed them. What a picture, what a scene, what an image of bleak and unrelieved tyranny—

Heavy as frost and deep almost as life,

does that prospect convey! Such circumstances, we know, circumstances which surrender to a privileged few that complete control of the lives of others which the ownership of land alone affords, are always favourable to the autocratic principle. But elsewhere, in other nations, they are varied and intermixed with other conditions, so that their effect is neutralised. In Prussia they absorbed life, and not that only but they moulded character. If the reader wonders at the potency of that tyrannic spirit which in recent years has flowed out of Prussia, and become as it were the creative impulse of a great reactionary empire, let him dwell in imagination on those scenes of solitude where that bigotry was nursed; scenes which formed the environment of a class, not necessarily cruel, but among whom the habit of rule and the total absence of any law of conduct save their own had made of tyranny a duty and hardened prejudice to the consistency of adamant.

With whom are we to compare this junker class of Prussia? I can think of none unless it be the great slave-owning proprietors of the American southern States before the war. The circumstances of subjection and personal rule were similar in both, but the Prussian absolutism, wrought amid fiercer forces, was of an incomparably more virile order. Had the Norman barons of the time of the Conquest succeeded in their purpose, had their castles instead of mouldering away under the

pressure of wider, more national influences, established, like the Prussian, a permanent dominion over the country, we might still possess here in England an insular class equal in autocratic bigotry to the Prussian aristocracy.

In any case it is certain that Prussian conditions produced a race distinguished by qualities which, though they might not be virtues, were certainly of a kind to make their possessors formidable among men. The class which has emerged from this prolonged training in the fiercer traits of Toryism is in many respects worthily representative of the autocratic ideal. The foundation of its character is courage : not quite the refined and tempered courage of a high order of society, but the tough, practical, everyday courage which is exercised by normally harsh surroundings, and is essential, amid those surroundings, to the preservation of society. No race, it may be, has been more plentifully endowed with determination, toughness, and will-power than this race of hereditary rulers, whose lives for many a century, more or less isolated amid hostile clans of Danes, Slavs, and Wends, were like the lives of jutting rocks that stand the perpetual siege of an angry sea. Strength and courage under such conditions, preservative as they are of life itself, become a kind of second nature. The reader must have remarked how uniform and of one piece Prussian character has ever been. Whoever reads the first chapters of Carlyle's *Frederick*, or indeed any records or ballads dealing with the bleak Prussian history, will be struck by this sameness—as though all the men had been turned out of the same mould, or had been intended to realise the same ideal. Even down to our own days the type prevails. The heroes of the war of liberation, Stein, Gneisenau, Scharnhorst ; the leaders of '66 and '70, Blucher, Bismarck, William I., down to the Hindenburgs and Mackensens of the present war, are all moulded out of the same clay. The nation itself seems to realise this, for finally, as we know, this central type has received definite recognition as the beau-ideal of enterprising



youth in every school, college, and mess-room in the Empire.

Not, however, till of late years has this force so active in life sought articulate expression. Might was the law, and valour the inspiration of life for centuries, ere the thought of these in combination suggested itself as an Imperial ideal. Indeed, both Prussia and England had long practised their principles in daily conduct, and deep ingrained them in the national character before attempting an intellectual summary of them. Just as the British Empire has been built on no conscious appreciation of the principle of liberty, but by the instinctive practice of it, so the Prussian autocratic instinct was a habit for centuries ere it became a theory. Not until it had been fused and interwoven for generations into the thoughts and sports and daily duties of every household in the land, not until it had passed into the tissues of a nation's character and imprinted itself on the actual physiognomy of a race, did it at last declare itself as an abstract ideal and the inspiration of an Imperial system.

To endeavour here to define the State philosophy of Prussia, as it eventually came to be defined, would carry us far beyond our limits ; but if we approach the subject from the point of view just suggested, of the practice and usage of the Prussian nation, we may be able to disengage its chief characteristics with comparative ease. For if, from the evolution of that strong-featured, rugged type of Prussian aristocrat, the reader will revert to the reasoned theory of government which Prussia has imposed upon the German Empire, he cannot help perceiving that the reasons of the latter are but the expression in intellectual terms of the usages of the former. It was Prussian life which supplied the raw material of Prussian philosophy. Consider Treitschke's definition of the State—that the State is Power, that all other considerations, moral and ethical, count for nothing in comparison with the supreme duty of the State to maintain and extend itself by the exertion of physical might. Had Treitschke canvassed

every household in Prussia he could not have turned more accurately into words what each considered the first law of life. Really the staple arguments of Prussian thought, which are repeated by all the architects of the Prussian Imperial philosophy, are but a kind of grandiose proclamation by herald and trumpet of the family experiences of Prussian society. That Prussia has come to the front as she has done, that she has placed herself, an unquestioned leader, at the head of the tyrannic forces of the modern world, is due to no ingenious school of thought, or reading of history, or efforts of an ambitious Emperor or minister, but to those conditions and that national training which have been paramount in Prussian life and bitten correspondingly deep into Prussian character.

But we should obtain an inadequate idea of the depth and genuineness of Prussia's conviction if we supposed that it stopped short at an intellectual definition of the theory of State supremacy. Cramb, whom I like to quote because of his high appreciation of whatever is striking in Prussian ideas, has some fine pages on the Spartan discipline and stern self-sacrifice which the gospel of might imposes on its adherents. But he rises to a still loftier eloquence when he goes on to describe the spiritual faith which was to be the counterpart of that theory. "It is reserved for us," he makes Germany say, "to resume in thought that creative rôle in religion which the whole Teutonic race abandoned fourteen centuries ago. Judaea and Galilee cast their dreary spell over Greece and Rome when Greece and Rome were already sinking into decrepitude and the creative power in them was exhausted, when weariness and bitterness wakened with their greatest spirits at day and sank to sleep again with them at night. But Judaea and Galilee struck Germany in the splendour and heroism of her prime. Germany and the whole Teutonic people in the fifth century made the great error. They conquered Rome, but, dazzled by Rome's authority, they adopted the religion and the culture of the vanquished.

Germany's own deep religious instinct, her native genius for religion, was arrested, stunted, thwarted. But, having once adopted the new faith, she strove to live that faith, and for more than thirty generations she has struggled and wrestled to see with eyes that were not her eyes, to worship a God that was not her God, to live with a world-vision that was not her vision, and to strive for a heaven that was not her heaven."

And what is to be the outcome? The rejection of Christianity? And if Christianity is to be rejected what is to take its place? Professor Cramb tells us, and his answer once more reveals the ineradicable instinct paramount in the old feudal life of Prussian society. "The prevalent bent of mind at the universities, in the army amongst the more cultured, is towards what may be described as the religion of Valour."

Thus does Germany stand. This philosophy in its entirety, with its practical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects harmonised and adjusted, is Prussia's formidable contribution to the world's ideas. Let us make no mistake about it. In whatever sense we use the word it is a *great* contribution—one of the greatest, as well as one of the most dreadful that ever has been formulated. Every line of it has power, for every line of it is related to the same principle. It is much the most systematic, much the most *perfect* philosophy that exists in the world. Tyranny is an ancient force, an intimate element in all our natures, as well as one of the chief formative agents of history. It has done many great things, but never has it done anything to compare with the magnificent Prussian design for welding together all its resources and potentialities into one symmetrical fabric. We need not concern ourselves with the attempts sometimes made to evoke the religion of valour out of German antiquity. What signifies and what is unquestionable is that the inspiration of this propaganda was directly Prussian, was indeed diametrically opposed to the whole trend of German thought and of the German temperament up to the time

of Prussia's interference, and was only received by Germany as part and parcel of the Prussian ascendancy.

The great inspirations are those which run right through the mind, embracing all its faculties and activities. An idea of State government must, if it is to count for anything in the world, express itself in intellectual terms which can be carried from mind to mind. But besides intellectual being, man has spiritual being, and, the aim being to engage the whole man, this also must be included. Therefore the next and final step is to evolve a religion consonant with the edifice, physical and intellectual, already built up. This is what the religion of valour attempts to do.<sup>1</sup> This is the need it fulfils. It is the spiritual keystone needful to the security of the Prussian arch. Professor Cramb invokes the dim past for its origin, and it is natural enough that many a German philosopher, accepting Prussian ideas, should fondly rake in German history for evidence of Germany's share in their conception. But the real origin of those ideas, however backed up and buttressed and tacked on to old legends, is plain enough. Does a nation like the visionary and placid Germany of pre-Prussian days change in a night? Could she have changed without outside aid? Did she evince the slightest intention of doing so prior to Prussian intervention? The reader knows the answer to these questions. There was one cause which was decisive, one intervention which carried in its train every consequence we have noted. Prussia forged the German Empire. Prussia dictated the law of might which is that Empire's intellectual expression. Prussia evolved or inspired the religion of valour which carries the idea conceived of intellect on into the soul.

And this strength and unity, be it observed, have

<sup>1</sup> The reader may object perhaps, and justly, that the Prussian religion is only the religion of a very small minority and is far from forming a real national inspiration. What I understand Professor Cramb to mean is that it is the inspiration of the inspirers, the inspiration of the body of Prussian leaders who form the spear-point of Prussianism, to the tempering of which the piercing capacity of the weapon is due.

ensued naturally and inevitably out of Prussian usage and Prussian traditions. The religion and plan of government, valour and might, of the new Empire are the traits of the original Prussian settlers which have remained practically intact down to the present day and have gradually asserted themselves as the most potent human impulses available. Phase by phase the old fierce life, undiluted, unimpeded, has driven its own interpretation of life through the mind and soul of men. Never perhaps has the idea of tyranny been wrought out with so remorseless a logic.

Finally, let us see if from this vantage-point we can plumb the abyss which separates Prussia from her enemies. Those enemies for the most part have themselves, as has been said, exhibited of late not a little impatience with the Christian religion, and might seem to be almost ready to join that "wrestle of the German intellect against Christianity" of which Professor Cramb speaks. But between Germany's quarrel with Christianity and France's or Italy's or England's quarrel there is all the difference in the world. France, Italy, England, or at least the freedom-loving elements in those countries, have quarrelled with Christianity because it will not help them to realise their ideal, because it will not march with them hand in hand as it did in the old days, and as, it is felt, its own nature and its professions to humanity oblige it in honour to do. Theirs is a quarrel between allies unnaturally divided. But if the free nations have quarrelled with Christianity because they mistake it for an enemy of liberty, with a deeper insight Prussia has quarrelled with it because she knows well that it is the friend and champion of liberty. More clearly than any one, because of his single-mindedness, did the Prussian perceive that the entire effect upon Christianity of the material bias of the modern mind was bound to be transient. The real and essential relations between liberty and Christianity, as he truly divined, are those disclosed during the Mediaeval epoch, not those disclosed by the

revolutions of the nineteenth century. Prussia has been swayed, in short, by the fact which dominates history, the fact that liberty has only flourished, only penetrated the life of a nation, when it has been supported and guaranteed by the Christian religion.

After all, Prussia in this matter was making a very old discovery. Paganism was the most tolerant of all faiths, and Rome never appeared more amiable than when welcoming some new divinity from the confines of her Empire. Christianity was certainly not proscribed by Rome as a religion, indeed nothing would have seemed to a Roman more absurd than such a proceeding. Rome's aim was to secure not religious but political unity and conformity, and it was not until time had disclosed the danger of Christianity as a political influence, it was not until it was discovered that the new religion was the champion and ally of the dangerous spirit of liberty, that the fury of the State was loosed against it.

The truth is that every State or Empire based on the autocratic principle is bound sooner or later to discover in Christianity its most inveterate enemy. And this enmity will be disclosed, not in the religious sphere, for to this the State will probably be indifferent, but in the political sphere itself, into which those suggestions of spiritual independence, of spiritual dignity and individual worth, which are essential in Christian dogma, must gradually but inevitably overflow. Christianity stood towards the Prussian theory of state supremacy just as she stood towards the similar Roman theory. She was its ordained solvent. And this Prussia discovered, as Rome had discovered it before her. Rome's attack on Christianity was from without, Prussia's from within. One relied upon the arena and the stake, the other on the crumbling process of intellectual penetration. But the objects of both were similar. Both recognised in the force they were combating a power inimical to the scheme of life and government to which they were pledged, and both were resolved that it should be swept away.

As for the results of the Prussian propaganda, more than fifty years ago Döllinger proclaimed the destructive effects upon religion of German criticism in the Baltic Provinces. "Christianity is abominated," Acton could say of northern Germany about the same time, "both in life and in literature." I speak on this subject with no authority whatsoever, but the method and earnestness of the German attack are matters of familiar knowledge. What has been the spirit in which the German<sup>1</sup> campaign of criticism has been conducted? Whoever considers the concentration of purpose, the patient study, the scholarship and research, and above all the unity of aim devoted to it for so many years, will perceive that the end in view was of more importance than usually attaches to the disputes of scholars, that it was a matter, in fact, of immediate national concern.

It is only of late that there has dawned upon us the recognition of the real meaning and intention of that work of disintegration. Acton speaks of the destruction, "stone by stone," of German Christianity. Has the reader ever watched, while an old building is in process of demolition, the walls of the new one which is to take its place rising out of the ruins? Even so, while Christianity was being destroyed, while its masonry was in the act of crumbling, the blocks were being fitted and laid in place of the temple of the new Prussian religion, the religion which fitted Prussian life and justified Prussian aspirations, the religion of Valour. Which were most numerous, most learned, best disciplined and equipped for their allotted task, the body of professors who were clearing away the Christian edifice, or that other body which was inculcating the doctrine of State supremacy and the recognition of physical might as the ultimate justification of its own existence? Whatever be the answer it is certain that the coalition between the two

<sup>1</sup> I speak, of course, of the North German, or fundamentally Prussian, campaign, not of southern Catholic Germany, which has forcibly countered the northern arguments.

has been as necessary as it has been stringent. Neither could have done without the other. The work of destruction would have been aimless unless the cleared ground were to form the site for a national structure, while similarly the work of construction could not be carried out until the ground had been effectively cleared. Ere stone by stone the Prussian structure went up, stone by stone the Christian structure had to come down. The two parties have worked with true Prussian discipline hand in hand. They summarise and monopolise between them the great negative and positive work of the German intellect during the last half-century.

It may be added that the power and influence of ideas was never more signally illustrated than by the events which followed Prussia's declaration of her philosophy. So long as the Prussian autocratic instinct was merely the inarticulate outcome of Prussian life it had no concern for other people and no application beyond the immediate circumstances which gave it birth. The time came, however, when these circumstances developed, when Prussia drew beneath her sway states whose conditions were not her conditions. When that time came the need immediately arose for her to express the crude system of her life as an idea; to define it, that is to say, rationally, in such a way that it might appeal to outsiders not reared in the Prussian life; to make, in a word, an Imperial doctrine of it. Prussia's philosophy of tyranny was the answer to this demand. I have pointed out how thoroughly the work was done, how vigorously the entire German intellect applied itself to the task in hand, how the prime obstacle of Christianity was methodically undermined and blown up to make room for a religion consonant to the character of the new theory. The result of all this was that Prussianism stood forth at last, not merely as a habit of life affected by a certain people, but as a complete embodiment of the tyrannical instinct in human nature. Instantly that this happened it was given a voice, and was able to make its influence felt in



the world as the recognised personification of a great principle.

Thus among the tyrannies we are fighting, Germany is *par excellence* the thinking tyrant. Turkey and Austria, by blind instinct or by a governing tradition which has become second nature, are equally pledged to the autocratic principle, but it has never occurred to either of them to justify that principle formally, as a philosophy of life, to think out, as it were, the ethics of tyranny. Turkish tyranny is simply the tyranny of barbarism. Turkey has got stuck in that stage of development, thanks to her adoption of the Moslem faith,—for it may be remarked as a curious fact that no people who have once passed under the spell of the greatest autocratic religion of the world have ever issued from the barbaric phase, or ever attained the intellectual and spiritual ideas of a genuine civilisation. Austrian tyranny, on the other hand, is no more than the tyranny of expediency, the resort to which a Government is driven which, placed in the difficult position of having to reconcile many conflicting racial claims and possessing no constructive ideal to put in practice, relapses into the habit of using the stronger elements of the community to police the weaker, and thus out of internal oppression and discord evolves some appearance of outward order and a superficial unity.

Neither of these examples of autocracy in being possesses the slightest intellectual interest. Neither of them is in any sense a gospel, a theory, a philosophy. Neither of them reasons or thinks. From neither of them can any answer, good or bad, to the question how to govern be derived. Germany stands on a different footing. She is destined to dominate and absorb, and is indeed at the present moment visibly absorbing, her more ignorant and vacillating Allies, simply because she can supply them with a reasoned theory of action. All nations need such a theory, failing which their policy and conduct become a mere inconsequent and incoherent

babbling without a purpose or an end, but neither Turkey nor Austria could supply such a theory for themselves. It was Germany who met the demand.

The steps and degrees by which German thinkers, German philosophers and professors set themselves to construct an intellectual system vindicating and, indeed, glorifying the instinct of *domination*, and the claim of might to be its own justification, constitute perhaps the oddest page in the world's literature. Much has been written about it. The reader is aware of the part played by German thought in the hands of men like Delbrück the professor, Treitschke the historian, Liliencron the poet, Nietzsche the philosopher, Von Bernhardi the soldier. He is aware, too, of the sudden change in the current of that thought and of the curious unanimity with which a united Germany, once it had received the impress of the Prussian ascendancy, set itself to idealise the very forces it had hitherto repudiated. From Hegel, Herder, Lessing, Kant, Goethe to the names we have just mentioned, what a step! The Prussian influence in the material sphere is natural and explicable, but more striking still has its effect been in the intellectual sphere. Nevertheless by these means the Prussian gospel of might was elaborated, was wrought into a reasoned philosophy. And it is as the result of this operation that her unthinking Allies hang upon her for support. We see and are most struck by the physical side of her influence, the ascendancy of a stronger power over weaker ones. But let us not forget that Germany herself owes her strength to her confidence in her own philosophy. Germany's belief that she has thought the whole thing out, her trust in her own Kultur, her own theory of rule and statecraft, is not only the secret of her Allies' belief in her, but is the secret also of her belief in herself.

Through all changes and revolutions in Europe Prussia has stood firm for despotism. Constitutional ideas, elsewhere progressive, broke on her frontiers in vain. All other thrones might totter, but the Hohenzollern

dynasty stood like a rock. And now, in our time, Prussia preaches what she has so long practised. She, the tyrant State of Europe, out of her long experience and exercise in that kind of government, produces for the world's consideration a tyrant philosophy. I do not believe we at all understand as yet the significance of that event. To do so we should have to realise the depths to which the cause of reaction in Europe had sunk, precisely owing to the fact that it possessed no intellectual backbone or framework of reason to support it. Since France, after many vacillations, declared for freedom and a constitutional government, the idea of absolutism in any shape or form became intellectually untenable. Tyranny was thought of as synonymous with stupidity. So much was this the case, so fully was liberty felt to imply the dawn of a new light and tyranny the sinking back into the old darkness, that the words progressive and reactionary became the common terms to divide the two parties. A more fatal state of things from the point of view of tyranny could not be imagined. Almost any form of cleverness can be made something of, but no one has any use for a fool. Once Italy and France had joined England on the Constitutional side, to declare oneself on the side of tyranny has been equivalent in the eyes of Europe to a declaration of mental bigotry and ineptitude.

The consequence of this for the tyrant nations was appalling. Tyranny in its cruder form, Turkish tyranny, was everywhere attacked with a new and terrible energy, not only as oppressive, but as the chief obstacle to progress and light, while the entire absence of any definite or constructive purpose in Austrian policy, a defect boasted of by Metternich, drew down upon her the contempt of all who were in touch with the trend of modern political ideas. But in both cases at the root equally of the savage Turkish brutality and the weak Austrian vacillation lay the fatal absence of ideas, the threadbare intellectualism, the entire lack of any guidance from reason and thought, which, since the Franco-Italian decision,

had settled like a blight on the autocratic cause. Tyranny during those years seemed dying of its own stupidity.

To grasp this is to hold the secret of the immense influence which Prussia has come to exercise. The Prussian theory, the Prussian State philosophy, has gone far to re-establish the intellectual credit of tyranny in Europe. Every tyrant now can make himself feel that he, too, has his ideas ; that he, too, is marching towards the light ; that a definite constructive purpose underlies his conception of government. The result has been an extraordinary revival of obsolete ideals. Every despotic influence on the earth's surface dilates, pricks up its ears, and assumes a haughtier accent and more authoritative gait.

Modern German thought speaks to tyrants all the world over. Let us not, because in our ears its accents are odious, ignore its effect on kindred minds. The inconceivable arrogance of the theory and the degradation of the spiritual sense implied in its glorification of a material issue are negligible defects compared to the fact that it does offer that most essential attribute in all human endeavour, wanting which, indeed, no coherent effort is possible at all—I mean a definite constructive purpose and an intellectual plan of action. Prussia, to face the philosophy of freedom, has brought forth the philosophy of tyranny. This it is which constitutes her claim to leadership. Out of the long rivalry between herself and Austria for this proud position she has emerged victorious. In the old Europe of pre-Revolution days Austria represented the inert bulk or carcase of tyranny, Prussia the slow-growing idea of tyranny. The victory of Prussia over Austria, which placed the former at the head of the tyrannic Powers, was a victory of mind over matter. The essential justice of the decision has been recognised by Austria herself, and already it is abundantly clear that should the Central Powers triumph in the present war, the growth of Prussia by the absorption of other tyrannic States will continue. All tyrannies

will be drawn under her influence, for she alone has thought out the meaning of tyranny.

And for the same reason free nations have been estranged. If we knew all in regard to this war, if we were able to look beneath the surface and measure the currents of ideas operating, we should see that there is a sense in which Prussia's complaint that she has been beleaguered and pent in, that it is she who is on the defensive, is true. For Prussia is herself that thought we were just now trying to explain, the thought of a tyrannic rule of life with all its attendant consequences worked out and applied. That is Prussia. But that is, or was, being threatened, and threatened in exactly the way that Prussia complained of, by an encompassing Europe gradually accepting the opposite ideal of liberty. It has been the spread of this new spirit in Europe that has challenged Prussia. I have not the least doubt that Prussia felt in her bones all she has described; felt her loneliness, felt that her place in the sun was being denied her, felt that her only hope of self-preservation lay in the strength of her arm and the quality of her weapons. True, it was her thought only that was threatened. The physical stage was not yet reached; yet it was inevitable, and the knowledge that it was coming drove Prussia on to prepare for and precipitate the contest. Prussia has nothing, is nothing, counts for nothing, apart from her gospel of might. Threaten that and you hold a knife to her throat. What difference would it have made to her had she fought or not? Would her eclipse, the eclipse of all that is really Prussian, have been less sure had she not fought? It was this she was conscious of, this that was being hemmed in with enemies. It belonged to her training, for she was always brave, not to wait for gradual eclipse, but to try the issue sword in hand.

Let us admit it, the virile ideal is not without a stern grandeur of its own. Much of the heroic action of the world has sprung from it. But never has it stood forth so perfectly equipped, so sure of its purpose, so set and

resolved to fight to the end, as now when it has met at last the destined enemy with whom its quarrel is mortal. Ages hence, when much bitterness and many wrongs are forgotten, the way the Dark Spirit met its fate shall be told with the respect which the brave pay to the brave.

But not by the sober historian will these events ever be adequately narrated. There will arrive, it may be, a poet of the Miltonic order, who will see these things as they are, and describe them in fit language. What theme could be more suitable for a great poem than this tremendous spiritual drama? How Milton's imagination would have dilated in contemplating those visionary irresistible powers under whose sway we act, and which sweep us on as the wind sweeps thistledown! What are physical conflicts compared to that sublime battle of ideals, ideals charged with mutual antipathy, like those warring clouds the poets saw—

With heaven's artillery fraught come rattling on  
Over the Caspian?

To deal in these great spiritual realities—made real in their effects as never before,—to trace the marshalling of the opposed forces—the dark powers of tyranny, vigilant and wary, arming, arranging, disciplining, and with intellectual thoroughness riveting the last link in their scheme of preparation, and on the other side the squadrons of liberty, made aware of each other by the common menace, uniting and signalling to each other, and swiftly wheeling into battle-line as the darkness of the storm engulfs them,—to describe these things, and what they mean and stand for, will be the opportunity of a poetic genius sent into the world on this mission. There is too much of the impersonal and the ideal in such a war, it is too drenched in spiritual abstract forces, for it ever to go satisfactorily into prose. It is itself a poem, the greatest ever published to the world. Indeed, even now, the main incidents and scale and character

of the drama intimately recall the one sublime epic in our tongue. Nothing short of the language, and the scope and magnitude of plan, of *Paradise Lost* fit the subject. One may fancy, even, that some of the chief actors have, in that great gallery of abstractions, been sketched in advance; at least I know of no figure in myth or history which so answers to the name of Prussia as Milton's Satan. Line after line of the grand familiar passages float through my mind to verify the resemblance. Satan's iron discipline, and patient preparation, the drilling and arming of his "perfect phalanx," the invention, a curiously exact touch, of a huge artillery and dreadful explosives, are authentic Prussian traits. How like Prussia he seems when, all preparation made,

he through the armèd files  
Darts his experienced eye.

And how like her again when, at that view,

his heart  
Distends with pride, and hardening in his strength  
Glories; for never since created man  
Met such embodied force as, named with these,  
Could merit more than that small infantry  
Warr'd on by cranes.

Or shall I quote the great description of Satan, broken by war, yet even in the gloom of the abyss retaining over his weaker satellites his dread ascendancy; of Satan like the darkened orb of the sun when he

Looks through the horizontal misty air  
Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon,  
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the nations, and with fear of change  
Perplexes monarchs.

The world may learn, when the war is treated from the Miltonic point of view, something of its meaning. Meantime, whoever disciplines his mind so to think of it, confirms his own strength and patience. The obloquy we are

so apt to substitute for thought weakens and enervates. If we would make sure of victory let us hate our enemy gravely. Let the sword in our hand be the expression of a spiritual and intellectual conviction—as serene, but also as implacable, as the verdict which fifty years hence will be pronounced by history.



## CHAPTER V

### THE BRITISH EMPIRE

How the Colonies are misunderstood in England—The Colonies not fighting for England, but for the English ideal, for liberty—Our own failure to recognise the distinction—For an Empire a national ideal is insufficient, you need an abstract ideal—Not England but liberty is the inspiration.

PRUSSIA'S greatness, we saw in the last chapter—her power and influence in the world—dated decisively from the time when she was able to propound her state system as an idea, and thus prepare it for intellectual acceptance. This is, in fact, a universal law. No system of things lives other than a temporary and accidental life until it has realised its intellectual being. Walt Whitman used to lament the fact that America had produced no first-rate poet, because, as he used to say very truly, no nation was sure of its own future or had really realised its own unity and identity until it had achieved this kind of self-expression. It was not sufficient to be powerful, and wealthy, and progressive, and enterprising; to be great in *fact* was not enough. It was necessary also to be great in *idea*, to be partakers of that national unity which arises out of a common aspiration.

This is most true, and as I say the sudden dilation of Prussia, her pronounced and rapid ascendancy since she spoke out her thought, is a present proof of the effect of this kind of development. Prussia at least knows what she is fighting for. She has learnt to invest with its own appropriate eloquence the hard and bitter, yet

virile, doctrine of which she is the vicegerent on earth. To the great question asked of all things sooner or later—what is your meaning, what do you stand for in the world?—she can answer straight out, clear and abrupt.

It is our very great misfortune that we are not able to do the same. We are in that position deplored by Walt Whitman of not being able to give an intelligible account of ourselves. Were the question—what are we fighting for?—put to the nation, the answers would cover the whole range of human motives. We are fighting for Belgium, or to vindicate the sanctity of treaties, or for justice, or against militarism, and for many other reasons too numerous to mention. Briefly we stand for a vague jumble of everything that is good against an equally vague jumble of everything that is bad. Few, as it seems to me, have any clear mental conception of Prussia as the great representative of the tyrannic principle, nor do they reflect by what degrees and hard training she has fitted herself for her destined task, nor probe into the nature of tyranny itself—that stern ideal which has held the world in awe since the dawn of history, which out of man's grasp on man has wrought so potent an obstacle to his progress, and which now, challenged at last by a mightier than itself, turns, fierce and wary, to fight the battle of its life. Fewer still have endeavoured to formulate our own position, or concentrate into an intelligible and definite form the motive which inspires us. If we fight for liberty it is almost without knowing it; nor can I discover that any one since the war began, in speech or writing, has ever thought it worth while to explain the meaning of the word, or discover to us why liberty is precious, what it does, how, like a secret leaven, it works within the mind and soul of man prompting an inward growth and persistent development, and how especially, since it is the property of mankind as a whole, it appeals to the mass of the people everywhere for that unshakable devotion which they are in fact according it. Nothing of all this is made clear to us. The issue does

not stand out sharp and distinct. We know we are all fighting for England. But how many of us know what England herself is fighting for?

To one who is more or less familiar with Colonial life and thought it is surprising to find how much that life and thought are misunderstood in England. English people apparently figure the Colonial as a kind of exiled Englishman. They picture him dreaming beside his camp-fire of the "old country," and the Cathedral close, and the rooks in the immemorial elms. Evidently there must be numbers of people in England who, themselves very susceptible to emotional impressions, habitually transfer to the oversea citizens of the Empire the same sentiments of home-sickness which would tear their own hearts were they to discover themselves to-morrow in the bush or the backwoods, on the prairie or the veldt? To one of our race, as they think, there can be but one real home—England; and this they are fully persuaded that every Colonial secretly acknowledges. However pre-occupied with the superficial Colonial life, every Colonial must surely confess in his moments of recollection the profounder claims of the "mother country."

Naturally, therefore, these emotional onlookers see in Colonial co-operation in the present war simply an exhibition of filial devotion to England. They would define it as the inexplicable awakening of some essential racial instinct in the rough but true Colonial heart, an instinct implanted in the old days when the forefathers of the present generation played on English meadows and birds-nested in English woods. It was this instinct rousing itself, it was England, the mother, calling to the England in each Colonial heart, that brought the great armies of Canada and Australia flocking to the standard. Needless to say the newspapers, with their weakness for the sentimental, exploited this view to the utmost. I can well remember, as the reader probably can, the drift of many of those earlier articles which appeared when the first contingents of Colonials landed

in our midst, articles written with an extreme sentimentality, describing the depth and tenacity of the affection of which we were the object. Does the reader recollect the tale, told with such inimitable irony, in *The Virginians*, of poor Lady Maria and her youthful Colonial lover? Does he remember Lady Maria's romantic thrills and palpitations at finding herself in the evening of her life adored by simple and unsophisticated youth? The newspaper articles which greeted our Colonial allies in England and coyly discussed their motives and feelings were much in this vein. Some of those in the *Spectator* especially might almost have been written by Maria herself.

The view, however, though gratifying, was a quite misleading one. Colonials are, indeed, attached to England, but they are attached to her, not because she is the repository of ancestral memories, but because she is the source and chief guardian of the principle of civil and constitutional liberty on which Colonial life is based. Colonials, least of all people, are subject to attacks of sentimentality. The lives they live, the demands made by the opening up of a new country, and the consolidation of a new order of society keep them steadily practical. They are neither introspective nor retrospective. Such is the urgency of their circumstances that they are bound to be engrossed in their own immediate affairs and in the realities of life around them. There where their homes and hopes are their hearts also have taken root. They think of England, on an average, perhaps once in six months.

If the reader would distinguish, as it is most important at the present juncture that he should distinguish, between the motives that count for much and for little in Colonial estimation, let him glance back at our first attempt at Colonial expansion. In the year 1620 the *Mayflower* landed her cargo of Plymouth Fathers in Massachusetts. They came seeking relief from persecution, seeking liberty. One hundred and fifty years later, in 1776, the Declaration of Independence, by which the rule of

England was rejected as "incompatible with the aspirations of a free people," was adopted by Congress. Our first experiment in Empire-building had ended in disastrous failure.

Why? The Yankees had just the same memories to fondle as the Canadians and Australians of the present. All influences that evoke tender associations—ancestral homes, a common history, memories and subconscious instincts woven out of English life—were theirs. With astonishment and indignant vexation the England of that day saw such claims repudiated. They were, indeed, rejected with an energy which sufficiently proved that *they*, at any rate, were not ties to trust to. The ardour with which the raw Colonial levies tackled the British Army was not in the slightest degree affected by the memories they held in common.

What, then, was the motive which, in the estimation of the Colonists, *did* count? The reader knows the answer. He remembers the, as it already seems, incredible spirit of despotism in which we set to work to govern the new country. A "Colony," according to our definition, was to be not a free but a subject State. The American Colonists were offered an alternative: Would they cleave to England and forfeit liberty, or would they cleave to liberty and forfeit England? Their stern and determined answer defines once for all the deepest instinct in the British character and the only one on which it is safe to count. The broad fact which our Imperial history has to teach us is that liberty is so truly the cement of the Empire that whenever it has been violated the Empire has shown signs of splitting asunder, and whenever it has been vindicated the Empire has closed solidly up. This is the leading and most salient fact which emerges out of our Imperial record, the significance of which it would seem impossible to miss. And yet we are apt to miss it. We miss it because we have not built our Empire with any thought of the inward idea it was embodying, but simply as a practical affair

with demands of its own which it is expedient to gratify but not necessary to analyse.

We are all proud of the Empire, and not only that, but we are proud of the way in which it seems to have grown of its own accord, rather like one of our great mediaeval cathedrals, not planned and prearranged, but increasing as practical needs and necessities arose. But still this kind of Empire-building has the drawback that, never having thought of the Empire as the incarnation of any coherent thought at all, we find ourselves, in a crisis like the present, somewhat at a loss in regard to the spirit that animates it. Thus we still incline, in quite the old way, to emphasise the English or national aspect of the matter, and that to such an extent that we even credit our Colonists with the same kind of devotion to England that we feel ourselves. When shall we learn that patriotism is not Imperialism? Patriotism is devotion to a concrete object. Imperialism is devotion to an abstract idea. New Zealand and Canada are not fighting for the love of England, but for the love of a principle which all Britons, whether they live under the North Star or the Southern Cross, hold in common. Really if we forget this, if we allow ourselves to figure England herself as the Imperial inspiration, we are, so far as thinking is concerned, back in the old American revolt days again, and making the old mistake as to what the bond of Empire resides in. The American revolt should have taught us, if anything could teach us, in what that bond did and did not consist. And what was true then is true now. Liberty is the motive, tyranny the enemy, now as then. It cannot be too forcibly stated that the Canadians and Australians, who fought with such heroism at Neuve Chapelle and Gallipoli, were fighting in precisely the same cause and for the same reason as the American recruits who charged the British infantry at Bunker's Hill.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some of the above paragraphs appeared in *Land and Water*; and I cannot help inserting here a letter from an unknown Colonial which

To-day the position is this. A Power has arisen in Europe profoundly hostile to liberty, and of such formidable strength and resources as to menace its very existence. This new Power is inspired by a very clear-cut and intelligible order of ideas. It knows its own nature, can give a clear account of itself, and is perfectly aware of what it wants, and how it means to get it. It encounters a body of nations, inwardly indeed united, but imperfectly cognisant of the nature of their union. In England, especially, it meets something that knows not whether it is an Empire or a nation. Others know. The world knows; Germany especially knows best of all. It is not for an island in the North Sea that Germany reserves the purer essence of her hate, but for an Empire which is the realisation of all that is most antipathetic to her own Empire as she imagines it and will try to make it. But we somehow are in doubt. We talk of the Empire; yet,

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afterwards reached me, not, if the reader will credit me, because it flatters my writing, but because it expresses with energy and conviction the mistake which English people in this matter are apt to make.

“DEAR SIR—May a New Zealander express to you his warmest thanks for the splendid article under the heading, ‘The Ideals of the War’? You have succeeded in stating a particular phase of the Imperial question to perfection. In fact, after four years in Canada and several visits to Ireland, one quite clearly sees that ‘English,’ as distinct from ‘British’ Imperialism, will have to be carefully eliminated if the peoples outside England are not to be disappointed. From my personal experience I know you are right in your analysis of the causes leading to the Dominions’ efforts. Hundreds of young Canadians and New Zealanders have given up posts bringing in upwards of five hundred a year, and it is pure folly to imagine that many, like myself, of Irish descent, are fighting solely for England. There are some generous big-minded Englishmen trying to bring these view-points home in their investigation into the essence of British citizenship, and it will make them heartily glad to read your clear-cut article in *Land and Water*.”

Further, as a corrective to those English newspapers and orators who speak of the Colonials as fighting “for England” and joining in “our war,” let me quote the following sentences from a speech which Mr. Andrew Fisher, High Commissioner for Australia, delivered last February in London. “Australians,” he said, “are, like yourselves, free, and love freedom more than their own lives, and that is why they are fighting for you. It is not your battle any more than ours. It is a common battle, a world’s battle, and that is the reason why we are with you.” Strange, how much more clearly the Colonials see this than we do.

owing to our persistent habit of reverting to the national point of view, we fail to realise the Empire. It is doubtful if any country interested in the war is so uncertain as to England's Imperial mission as England herself is.

Nor is this a mere theoretical deficiency of little practical moment. It is more true now than ever that the spiritual factor decides the event of war. The wars of kings and ministers may be determined by skill or luck. Wars of peoples are determined by the depth and intensity of national conviction. We English people possess a true general impression of the menace of what we call Prussianism and of the danger of universal tyranny with which it threatens Europe. That is so much to the good. It represents the negative object of the war, what we are fighting to overcome. But it gives us no inkling of what we are fighting to establish. It breathes into our soldiers and citizens none of the exhilaration and splendid audacity which belong to the attainment of a positive end. We, in short, have not developed the ideal resources of our cause, while the Germans have developed their ideal resources to the last ounce. It is not enough that we have the better cause : we must realise in what its value consists. Right is might only to the extent to which those who fight for right are inspired by a consciousness of its nature. In the present case the danger is that a first-class ideal, not rightly understood or appreciated, and therefore with only half its capacity developed, may prove unable to overcome a second-rate ideal thoroughly appreciated and fighting up to its full capacity.

In moments, like the present, of great national crisis a twofold duty is laid upon us. We are called upon to *act* up to the level of the crisis in the first place ; and in the second place we are called upon to *think* up to the level of the crisis. The habit of Englishmen is to be strong in action but weak in thought, and the response made to the twofold demand upon us has been in keeping with the national character. Something like six million men, Mr. Balfour tells us, have voluntarily enlisted since



the war began, but it is doubtful if many of us have extracted from that huge fact its full significance. Had the reader been told, before the war broke out, that it would arise out of a dispute with a remote Balkan State, that it would be waged on foreign soil, and that, whether we joined or stood aside, no immediate fear of invasion, in view of the strength of our fleet, was to be apprehended, what would have been his estimate of voluntary recruits? To a few desperate adventures are attractive for their own sakes. These would join. But we are a sober people and dare-devils are the exception among us. They would be soon exhausted, and what then? It is difficult to break the ties of life; it is difficult to part with children and wife and friends; it is difficult to face death. This war was no punitive expedition or frontier fight. Every volunteer who stepped forward knew full well that the step meant facing death. Yet they stepped forward; not a few but in their millions; not the dare-devils only, but average citizens, workmen of all trades and grades. It was above all this response of the average man that was significant. The gallant young aristocrat girding his sword on is a stirring incident enough, but though it might inspire a picture or a poem, it is of no intrinsic importance. A select class is moved by select impulses which do not necessarily affect any beyond itself. It is the lower and middle classes, swayed by immense and common motives, that matter. The judicious enemy can afford a smile at the gallantry of the young knight-errant, but a very different expression of gravity and apprehension will overspread his face when the sight of a Camberwell shop-assistant, sauntering with hands in pockets to the recruiting office round the corner, warns him that what he has to face is a national antagonism.

This is what is really imposing, as imposing as the sudden appearance among the conventionalities of life of primaeval forces. A storm in mid-ocean, the desert's limitless expanse, the solitude of mountains, the spirit that haunts the shadowy Indian jungles—all these, in

contrast to Nature's usually carefully trimmed and pruned aspects, strike the same note of elementary grandeur. The writer stood one night on the edge of the crater of Vesuvius and watched the fiery lava shoot up with regular respirations and deep pants into the air, while the reflection of perpetual flames played deep down in the throat of the volcano. It was a moment which strikingly exhibited those tremendous natural energies on the surface of which we live and move. And in the same way the prevalence and sweep of the great recruiting movement seemed suddenly to reveal a motive not fugitive and individual, like the usual motives of everyday life, but constant, pertaining to the race. Those men, as it seemed, were visibly inspired by a spirit greater than their own. Their grubby and very ordinary-looking bodies had become the vehicles of a heroic purpose. What could the purpose be for which practically the whole of the prime of the race is ready to die? Let the reader send his thoughts back on a voyage through our past history and he will easily answer the question. There has only been one motive all through that history which could assure so fervent and unanimous a response. In truth these khaki-clad figures, camping, marching, drilling, with us for a little while then passing over to the scene of conflict, are but the last levies of that great host whose first recruits a thousand years ago unfurled the flag of British freedom.

These are they whose duty it is to act, to fight. But fighting, though paramount, is not the only thing that counts; or to put it more truly, for the sake of the fighters themselves, other things have to be considered. The fighting capacity of the nation is itself largely supported by the patience and determination of the national will. Let the will behind the sword be relaxed, and the sword itself will presently flag. And what is it then that steadies the will of a nation and keeps it unshakably determined to the end? Reason it is, the action of reason and thought, which has this effect. Passion and

sentiment vary and pass. But reasons do not change. They are as valid to-morrow as they are to-day. They supply the firm basis and foundation of all action. Our staunchness in this struggle, our capacity to back up our fighting forces with inexhaustible reserves of fortitude, must largely depend on our realising the real nature and real magnitude of the crisis at stake.

In short, greatness of action needs, for its own maintenance, a certain greatness of thought. If our fighters are lifted out of themselves by the national spirit which has passed into them, so also should our thinkers and writers and speakers be. Our cause should find a voice equal to its action. It is incomplete, insecure until it does so, for until it does so it is unable to act in support of the army.

We might learn something on this head from the enemy. It is commonly said the Germans do not understand human nature. It is true they do not understand spiritual emotions and, in spheres where that influence acts, their proceedings are always curiously blind and uncertain. But their view, on the other hand, of human nature in its average and commonplace aspects is remarkably clear and exact. The German governing mind has carefully thought out the value of a unified national will as an inspiration and background for action, and, clearly perceiving how such a backing gives to action its weight, and above all its persistence, it has addressed itself to the manipulation of the national will in much the same way as if this intangible essence were so many battalions of infantry or batteries of guns. Collective opinion in Germany has been systematically developed in accordance with the result desired. Germany's orators and professors, her men of letters and journalists and poets have been and are all at work, in agreement and conjunction, supplying eligible reasons for Germany's action, and thus building up a solid basis of conviction, a unanimity of will in support of the German armies. It is not possible to read the accounts and descriptions of life in Germany from time to time sent home by neutrals

without perceiving that, whatever the means employed, they have achieved the desired result. Collective opinion in Germany is in no common degree determined and convinced. Whether or not Germany is the innocent victim of jealous neighbours, whether or not the Prussian spirit is so gentle and peace-loving that it can be moved to war by nothing but self-defence, matters nothing. The point is not that Germany lied like a trooper, but that she lied for a purpose. She has taken all this trouble deliberately to manufacture a state of public opinion because she was aware of its military value ; because she knew well that a fighting line sustained by the reasoned conviction of civilian opinion is proof against dissolution.

How differently have we acted ! Lofty as our ideals are, we have failed to make any intellectual use of them. The spirit of freedom which has grown up in Europe, our own share in its propagation, the Empire we have built under its inspiration, the swift, instinctive response of every portion of that Empire as soon as its life-principle was threatened, the boundless hope opened up by this ideal in realms intellectual and spiritual, drawing on the eye far down the vistas of the future—and now the peril it stands in, the challenge of the destined enemy and the deadly conflict upon the issue of which everything we have been, are, and hope to be is staked—these are themes which not only appeal to the best capacity for thought at our disposal, but which, spoken to Englishmen, would evoke an immediate and profound response. They are material out of which a solid rampart of public opinion could be built up, zealous, united, and, because resting on reason and thought, durable ; a public opinion which would act as an unseen yet ever active, ever present support and stimulus to our fighting men, confirming their patience and renewing their spirit.

The other day there appeared in a morning paper a letter written from the front. It began : “ There seem to be many signs that as a nation (not as an army) we have the *wish* to conquer, but not the *will*,” and ended :

“It seems to us out here as if our people did not realise what being *in earnest* means.” From another published letter I take the following: “I was home on leave not long ago. The moment I set foot in Victoria Station I felt a change of atmosphere. I saw a crowd of people in the station gazing from behind the barriers at the soldiers from the front. They had a mild air of curiosity; they were wondering, perhaps, what sort of people these were who had just come from the trenches. And this seems to be the spirit of the nation.” The reader will remember the Bishop of Pretoria’s letter, in which he declared that the high spirit of the army is the more remarkable “when you realise, as you do when you are up at the front, that the spirit is there in spite of the fact that the men who show it feel in their bones that somehow the nation is not backing them as the nation could and should.”

What do passages like these mean? They mean that our thought is not equal to our action. It is nothing to the purpose to say that these critics are wrong, that the nation is at heart determined. Our men of action, our fighters, have the right to be backed by a tide of conviction equal to their own heroism. Instinctively they demand it; and when it is not forthcoming, when they come home on leave and are met by indifference or “mild curiosity,” then they know and feel that “the nation is not backing them as the nation could and should.” There never was a war in which civilian and military ideas were so intermingled as in the present one. Recruits keep pouring into the army, trailing with them the mental associations of English town and village. A constant flux of men on leave and of convalescent wounded and sick keep up the exchange of ideas between home and the front. Is this intercommunication of the right kind and quality? Does it offer to the soldier the support which unconsciously he seeks, the support of an intellectual conviction on a par with his own deeds? No, it does not. What these letters say is true, the

reasoned support which the country should afford the army is not forthcoming.<sup>1</sup> And it is not forthcoming because the effort to think out the meaning of our own action is too much for us. Prussia by thinking out the meaning of tyranny has put herself at the head of all the tyrants of the world, and we by thinking out the meaning of liberty might still more exalt and temper the courage of all who fight in that name. But there is no sign that we intend to give ourselves that trouble. It is to be lamented, for, whatever the result of the present war may be, we shall not conquer Prussia finally until we put into the world an idea superior to Prussia's idea. In the long run action corresponds to thought, and reflects the degree of conviction and certitude with which the thought is held. To rise intellectually to the level of our own cause, this is what is needful—this is what is lacking.

Let whoever doubts it glance at the newspapers. Let him remember that the meaning of the events happening round us will be written and spoken of a thousand years hence. And, remembering this, let him search the newspapers for any trace of a corresponding mental effort and an equal loftiness of thought. What will he find? In the first place he will be struck, in all this mass of literary matter representing the daily circulation of English ideas on the war, by the success with which a perfectly dead level of commonplaceness in style and thought is maintained. For instance, the other day I came, in the *Nation*, upon the following sentence: "And just because war is in itself a stupid and a brutish activity" . . . and I endeavoured to imagine any representa-

<sup>1</sup> Since these words were written the national spirit has grown in fervour and unanimity. But still what is here said remains in essentials true. Our conviction, though more earnest than it was, is still not a reasoned conviction. Our thought is still as far as ever behind our action. By and by, when we have finished making war and come to the making of peace, we shall feel this disability perhaps more keenly than ever. If we are then to lay the foundations of European unity we *must* understand and appreciate the principle on which that unity is to be based.

tive newspaper of any other country uttering a sentence so hopelessly provincial. But I could not. Its dullness is of the British kind. Its solemn appreciation of externals combined with its blank insensibility to the suggestions of original thought mark it as ours. Only an Englishman could have written it. But what does it mean when these things are written in England? Does it not mean that no adequate interpretation of the war is in circulation? If instead of saying that war in itself was stupid and brutish the *Nation* had said that the way the newspapers treat the war makes it appear stupid and brutish, it would have been near the mark.

This is the first point the reader will notice as to the newspapers and the war—their barrenness of ideas and inability to infuse any intellectual significance into the subject. And in the second place he will be struck by the reason for this, namely, that while the newspapers appreciate pretty clearly what is bad in the enemy's ideal, they entirely fail to realise what is great in our own. All the vigour is in denunciation. The defects of the "Huns" fill columns, but what of the opposite, the constructive thought? What of the future we would secure to Europe, the inward principle of growth and progress we would place in command of life, the lofty hopes that even in the present hour might fill our minds with calmness and serenity and light? Plenty of evidence is forthcoming that we are fighting what is evil, too little or none to show that we are struggling to establish forever the noblest ideal ever entertained by man upon earth.

The present crisis lays upon us the need of defining our position. It is time England emerged out of the old insular order of ideas into one of greater intellectual grandeur and more universal concern to mankind. The world, I sometimes think, is waiting for her to take this step. Let her take it, and there will pass over the land a wave of consciousness, a realisation of our Imperial mission, which will not only fuse the British race into

a solid unit in this quarrel, but will inspire and hearten every hesitating State groping after the same ideal, and enlist on our side the passionate sympathy of all neutral nations in which the principle of liberty is cherished.

We have had examples in our history of this unifying power of abstract ideas. The reader remembers Lord Morley's account of the mourning nations round Gladstone's deathbed. France, America, Russia, Italy, Greece, Roumania, Macedonia, Norway, Denmark, are the names given of those which expressed their sympathy and grief on that solemn occasion. "In Italy the sensation was said to be as great as when Victor Emmanuel or Garibaldi died." "All who are devoted to liberty," the Italian message ran, shared England's grief. From the Near East and the Balkan States, from Greece, Roumania, Macedonia, came similar messages. The Prince of Montenegro telegraphed his passionate sympathy with the great statesman who, in the cause of small nations, had so effectually roused the conscience of England against the Turk.

"No other statesman on our famous roll," says Lord Morley, "has touched the imagination of so wide a world." And if we ask why this was so the very names of those nations whose imaginations were so touched give the answer. They were the nations which had struggled or were still struggling for freedom which thus drew together round Gladstone's grave. And they drew round his grave because they recognised in him, not merely a representative of English "liberalism," but a champion of the principle of universal liberty. "I am a lover of liberty," he once said simply,<sup>1</sup> and speaking in that name he had the world for an audience. He loved liberty not as a political policy but for itself, and therefore he became the representative of that idea for all who were striving to realise it. In these pages we have attempted now and then to look at our subject from the same stand-

<sup>1</sup> At Norwich in 1890.



point : to disengage the governing ideas of the nations taking sides. It seems almost as if in this last scene of Gladstone's death the governing ideas of Europe had taken shape of their own accord.

For it may, I think, be said that it was then for the first time that the feeling woke in Europe of liberty as an international bond. The scene was a prophecy. Nothing Teuton marred it ; indeed one wonders if the Germanic Powers, holding grimly aloof, did not divine in it the menace of the Great Alliance which was to become an accomplished fact sixteen years later. For, broadly speaking, all the States that gathered round the grave of the great lover of liberty are to-day our allies or well-wishers in defence of that principle ; while those that stood aloof—Prussia and Germany, Austria and Turkey—are in arms against us and it.

I have often thought that Gladstone's extraordinary optimism, and even to some extent his exuberant vigour and energy, arose from his consciousness that he was backed and supported by the Spirit of the Age, and was an instrument in its great designs. For if it is true that he is weakened and brought low who is resolved to cling to what time has resolved to abandon, it is no less true that his strength is doubled who commits himself to the idea that time itself is propagating. But however this may be, it is certain that in internationalising, so to speak, the idea of liberty, Gladstone was defining the thought that was to determine the future of Europe. He loved liberty as Europe is learning now to love it. Its weight and authority as an abstract principle is what we are fighting to establish. All that he had to say on the sacred and inviolable right of small nations to appeal to that principle sounds like a lofty vindication of the claims of Belgium and Servia at the present hour.

So, when we read of the last act and solemn pomp in the Abbey, it seems as if we, judging by what has since been revealed, were able to add to that scene a meaning which the actors in it could not divine. For

them the death of Gladstone was a grave national event. But already to us it is something more. It is not towards the great Englishmen who carried the pall and stood round the grave that our eyes are turned, but to the impalpable forms of the free nations which also, in a true and real sense, were there assembled. Ideas govern all. It was an idea they had met to honour, and for which but a few years later they were to draw the sword. "All wars," Gladstone had said at Midlothian in 1880, "are detestable." But then he added the prophetic touch, "except one, the war for liberty." Were he living now, perhaps he would give us what we so much need, a voice equal to the expression of the ideal for which we are fighting.

And not less truly than Gladstone was Campbell-Bannerman also a representative of liberty in this high and abstract sense. Immeasurably inferior in the splendour and eloquence of his genius, he was the equal of his great leader in this original inspiration. His influence is embodied, characteristically enough, in no great series of speeches, but in a single great act. The gift of a free constitution to the Boer Republics will pass into history as perhaps the greatest example of confidence and trust in the principle of liberty which ever was demonstrated. Such an act is itself a source of ideas, an argument and a plea whose eloquence and persuasive power will be felt through the ages. It is durable. In the long run it will place the name of Campbell-Bannerman with the names of Gladstone and Fox.

Those who would think up to the level of the present war must learn to think of liberty as these great statesmen thought of it.

## CHAPTER VI

### EMPIRES PAST AND PRESENT

The two kinds, Empires by force and Empires by consent—The latter, the British kind, involves recognition of a principle shared by all and in which all can co-operate—Compare this with the Prussian idea of a national or racial superiority to be imposed on all.

HAVING attempted to examine the English and German Imperial ideas from within, let us next survey them from without. There is a *history* of Empires. Some have been successful, some unsuccessful; some long lived, some short. Is there a corresponding *law* of Empires, conditions which, in the light of past experience, we can say are essential in Empire-building; or any absolute distinction which, however roughly, it is possible to draw between durable and ephemeral Empires?

Empires are of two kinds: those which are based on force, and those which are based on co-operation. The former are unwilling organisations, which are instituted and maintained by armed strength, and which dissolve of their own accord so soon as that strength is withdrawn. The latter are willing organisations, which are not held together by any artificial necessity, but by the bond of a common idea in which all participate. Of the former kind, which is the barbaric or brute kind, were the Empires of Genghis Khan, of Timur, or of Attila; and in our own time we are witnessing the fate of another example in the decay of the Turkish Empire. In these cases the casting off of the Imperial yoke, or dissolution of the Empire, is the necessary means whereby its parts attain

a vitality of their own. On the other hand, the most famous example of the latter, or co-operative, kind is the Roman Empire, which, though founded on force, was extended and perpetuated by means of the principle of law and order which it embodied. It was the universally felt value of this principle, authoritatively proclaimed to a chaotic world, which drew together and kept together the several portions of the Empire, rather than any constant exertion of military strength. Rome's Empire was, on the whole, a willing Empire, a co-operative Empire, and it was so because the ideal it stood for, the ideal of law and order, is of absolute value and universal application. That ideal, in short, was accepted by humanity because it pointed out the path of humanity's rise and progress. Men are held by what is of use towards their own development. I say that by this test all Empires may be judged. Either they have an idea of value to propound, in which case people spontaneously unite in the realisation of that idea; or they rely on physical might for their ascendancy, in which case they are endured as scourges and rejected at the first opportunity. It is interesting to apply the test to the present European conflict.

It seems to me quite obvious that the love of liberty and the wish to evolve some system of government in which liberty should be realised have been the dominant motives in English history ever since England began to be a nation. The time will perhaps come when this motive will be accepted as the clue to our past, when the reigns of kings, and the rise and fall of ministries, and wars, and plots, and party politics, and all other outward events and circumstances, will be threaded, as it were, on the inward, hidden, ever-developing national endeavour to achieve an expression of the ideal of liberty. In every age, at every crisis of our history, this is the explanation of the action which takes place. In what, from the inception of our nationhood down to the Renaissance, does the purpose of national life consist? It does

not consist in feudalism, for this, though conspicuous and picturesque, will drop out of the national life without affecting it ; nor does it consist in monasticism, for this too, though so prevalent and profound an influence, will die and its place be forgotten. Neither does it consist in the authority of kings, nor in the might of armaments, nor in the permanence of any system of law or custom or tradition, such as sometimes prescribe a social routine enduring for centuries ; for all these factors have been in our country inoperative and variable. No, the enduring motive which links the past to the present is to be sought in the struggle of our people for freedom. It is to be identified with the history of mediaeval towns and cities, assemblages of tenements, which in their union were but an incarnation of the close-knit associations or guilds into which the commons were gathering for self-protection. It is easy to trace its onward course, for even where it is not visibly in action its hidden presence determines the character of events. Again and again thwarted by established authorities, it again and again emerges with renewed strength and energy. It suffers something from the tyranny of kings, and in the long-drawn-out Stuart drama it settles the question of kingship. It suffers something from the tyranny of the nobles, and from that contest also it has emerged victorious. There has been little of a reasoning character in this British love of freedom. We have had our philosophers, like the rest of the world, who have offered us various subtle and conflicting definitions of freedom, or proved that in reality no such thing exists. But what is much more important than subtle reasoning in a matter of this kind is national character. Freedom might be difficult to define, but the English people did not want to define it ; they wanted to possess it. They proceeded by practical degrees, taking the obvious steps as necessity arose, and leaving theoretical objections to be dealt with as and when their effect was felt upon life. The problem was to be solved by practice. Its solution was not to be propounded by philosophical analysis, but

was to be built up in the institutions and processes of a nation's life. This attempt, I say, to realise freedom, to construct a national life with freedom for its cement, is the motive that runs all through English history, unifying and connecting its parts into a common relationship. It is the English quality in it. Moreover, it is the only real quality. All other attributes, however splendid and powerful and conspicuous, have passed or may pass away, or be modified out of recognition. Their going does not affect the national life. They are excrescences only. So long as the love of freedom and its realisation remain the national ideals, the national existence and identity remain unimpaired.

This much I think is obvious, but we must allow also for the extension of the principle briefly referred to in the last chapter. In quite recent years it has been found necessary to apply on an Imperial scale what had hitherto been only a national motive. For centuries we had maintained that the citizens of England should govern themselves; yet so far were we from regarding this privilege as in the nature of an abstract right that, until comparatively recently, an English citizen had but to leave England to forfeit his claim to freedom altogether. Evidently such a conception of freedom had in it nothing Imperial. The idea of freedom could not in this way be turned into an Imperial bond, for it was the peculiarity of our treatment in the early stages of our colonising that it never was applied on the Imperial scale. A colonist in the act of quitting his country stepped outside the range of what was still only a local ideal. He left his liberty behind him.

That method of conducting operations was, however, we presently found, absolutely fatal. No Empire, it soon became evident, was to be built on those lines. The foundations of a greater Empire than we shall ever now realise withered under the fatal limitations imposed as though a plague had struck it. America left us. A library of criticism on our early methods of colonising

would be meaningless compared to that gigantic fact. Never was a start in Empire-building more utterly disastrous. Yet it may, perhaps, be urged that the very magnitude of the catastrophe was its own corrective ; for realising what the penalty of withholding freedom was to be, we from that time, grudgingly, it is true, and reluctantly, permitted its extension. We were saved by our instinctive caution and practical common sense. We had not much appreciation of the ideal aspect of the case. Pitt's lofty and magnificent vindication of liberty as a human right fell on dull ears. But we had found out what would pay and what would not pay, what would work and what would not work. Appeals to justice did not impress us. We discarded our despotic ways, not so much because we disliked them as because from a practical point of view they did not answer ; and we proceeded to adopt the methods of freedom, not so much because we approved of its application to other lands than England,—for as a matter of fact a strong feeling existed among us that England possessed a monopoly of this commodity and that it was an act of sacrilege, or at least unpatriotic, to endeavour to transplant so essentially British a product to the uncongenial and outlandish scenery of Canada or Australia—but simply because we could keep our colonies on no other terms.

Yet still, whatever our motive might be, the practical change was effected, and by degrees, but gradually more fully and generously, we recognised the right of our colonies to complete freedom and complete self-government. By so doing we turned liberty into a genuinely Imperial principle, a principle which offers something of value in which all can participate, and tends therefore to draw all members of the Empire together by the action of their own wishes and desires. So long as our conception of liberty was a national affair, it was quite ineffective as an Imperial cement, while no sooner was it applied impartially and universally than it was turned into an Imperial cement of absolute reliability.

Similar testimony might be drawn from our rule of India and of Egypt. We govern these countries, but it is understood that we govern them only until they are able to govern themselves. There is no question nowadays of despotic government, of a government which seeks to exploit a subject territory or which peremptorily imposes its own faith and its own ideals on subject races. It is indeed universally felt that the most cutting criticism which can be brought to bear upon a ruling power is that it ignores native wishes, or offends native prejudices, or in any way impedes the free development of native arts and industries. The unpardonable sin, in our estimation of government, is that it should thwart the natural desire of human nature to live its own life freely. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the craving for liberty as a matter of politics rises out of the craving for liberty as a matter of life. We desire to make our own laws, because we desire to obey the laws of our own being. Self-government is valuable only as it tends to realise the longing to live freely ; and even races which have not yet attained the capacity for self-government, and whose experiments in that direction, their gifts perhaps being of another kind, are apt to end in anarchy, still possess this right to live freely. It is the end of all government to ensure this right ; and although it is true that self-government ensures it best, yet any government which aspires to be a genuine and legitimate government will make its endeavour to secure that end in so far as it can. Whatever may be the shortcomings of our rule in India and Egypt, it remains our object, while securing for the populace such practical securities as may add to their material welfare and prosperity, to respect at the same time to the utmost their ways of thought, customs, and faiths ; that is to say, it remains the object of our government to secure for the governed the right to live freely. Moreover, if or when they develop a capacity for self-government, self-government will be granted them. One of our political parties is fond of



insisting that the time is already ripe, and hails every revolutionary act or agitation, however superficial, as an omen of the dawn of full political freedom. The other of our parties is as determined to proceed with deliberation, and will rather keep freedom waiting for a generation than risk precipitate action. But neither party would dream of denying the right of Indians and Egyptians to participate in the government of their own countries so soon as they are able to take over that duty. In our view, the time has utterly gone by when conquered territories might be exploited by the conquerors, and Collectors of Boggley Wallah could return with cargoes of rupees to their homes in England. We are to-day the trustees of the native races. The business of our government is to secure to those races the utmost possible freedom. When the people of India and Egypt are able to receive that more perfect freedom which only self-government can ensure, our business will be to make room for that government, and henceforth to depend, as a bond of union, upon ideals held in common.

It will be seen that the same transition has been made here as in the case of the Colonies—that is to say, our change of attitude is a change from the national to the Imperial standpoint. A hundred years ago England treated India as a national perquisite, a milch cow, and the result was the Mutiny. To-day she treats India as a participator in the common right of all people to be free, and the result is the spontaneous determination of all India to fight by our side. The first theory of government is non-Imperial, because it offers nothing in which other people can share or which is to their advantage, and is therefore no bond of union. The second theory is Imperial, because it offers powerful assistance in the struggle for self-realisation, which is the profoundest instinct in man, and is therefore a very potent bond of union.

I resist the temptation to linger over the case of South Africa, although our enfranchisement of the Boers

is perhaps the most obvious and startling example of our modern view of freedom, not as a national endowment but as a human right, which could possibly be adduced. The instance, however, is too recent and has been too much discussed to need comment. It will speak for itself. I will content myself with emphasising the definition of Imperialism which our country has attained to, not through any subtlety of thought or intellectual discrimination, but through the practical operation of national character. Of the two kinds of Imperialism, Imperialism based on power and Imperialism based on willing co-operation, we have chosen the latter kind. The essence or germ of this kind of Imperialism is an ideal in which all may equally share. Such an ideal was evolved by us at the moment when we came to conceive of freedom as a human right. Three-quarters of a century ago the Imperial sentiment was unborn and the beginnings of Imperial construction had given signs already of speedy disintegration. America and India had declared the way that our colonies and dependencies would go as soon as they were strong enough. All the signs pointed to the imminent collapse of our experiments in Empire-building. Then came the change in our policy, and forthwith the structure, of which our best efforts had only hastened the dissolution, began to grow of its own accord. Instead of repudiating our government and endeavouring to shake off our control, our colonies and dependencies suddenly developed an immense pride in the Empire of which they formed part. The transformation was almost magical, yet it resulted simply from our recognition of the fact that freedom is in itself not a private and personal but a common and universal possession. This was all, but this was enough. He who goes among men saying, "I will rule you," must make his words good with difficulty and by force; while he who goes asking, "Who will join with me in realising a common aspiration?" will gather to himself a band of willing colleagues. We need not over-estimate our

own enlightenment. Our love of liberty is little more than a physical, almost an animal instinct. Of the higher phases of liberty, the intellectual and spiritual phases, we have so slight a recognition that we willingly submit in those domains to the tyranny of local and insular conceptions. But this, in the connection we are now dealing with, does not signify, since we do not advance our intellectual and spiritual theories as the proposed bond of union. What we do advance is our theory of physical or political freedom, and in advancing this we are on perfectly sound ground, because this affords the necessary foundation on which the loftier forms of liberty will be raised. Of liberty of mind and liberty of soul we in England know very little, yet these can only securely be built on liberty of life; and in this Englishmen are past masters.

This, then, is our Imperial claim: that we offer something which, as the foundation of all future progress and knowledge, is of considerable value to the world at large. Thus do we fulfil the condition laid down that the bond of Empire must be a common advantage. Let us now go on to ask how our opponent in the present struggle fulfils that condition. Among the books dealing with the German question which the present crisis has brought into notice, one of the most remarkable has been the small volume of lectures by Professor Cramb. These lectures are valuable because, without exactly sympathising with Germany, they do sympathise with the German point of view and with the kind of ambitions and ideals by which Germany is inspired. The "great national ideal" for which Germans "are bound to labour and, if need be, to contend" is described in these pages with full understanding and full appreciation. I shall here consider but one or two salient characteristics of that ideal. First, it is conceived on Imperial lines. It is put forward very explicitly and definitely as an Imperial motive. What is the "highest being," the "highest ideal," at which Germany aims?

Professor Cramb asks the question, and he answers: "It is world dominion: it is world empire; it is the hegemony of a planet. It assigns to Germany in the future a rôle like that which Rome or Hellas or Judæa or Islâm have played in the past. That is Germany's world ideal. It is at least greatly conceived." But, Germany will tell you, though she aims at Empire, and Empire achieved by force, yet she proposes certain lofty intellectual and spiritual ends to be attained through that means. "Just as the greatness of Germany"—it is thus that Treitschke's definition is summarised—"is to be found in the governance of Germany by Prussia, so the greatness and good of the world is to be found in the predominance there of German culture, of the German mind; in a word, of the German character. This is the ideal of Germany, and this is Germany's rôle as Treitschke saw it in the future."

Therefore, Professor Cramb proceeds to argue, the "world dominion" of which Germany dreams is not simply a material dominion. Germany is not blind to the lessons inculcated by the Napoleonic tyranny. Force alone, violence or brute strength, by its mere silent presence or by its loud manifestations in war, may be necessary to establish this dominion; but its ends are spiritual. The triumph of the Empire will be the triumph of German culture, "of the German world-vision in all the phases and departments of human life and energy, in religion, poetry, science, art, politics, and social endeavour." So that, adopting this grandiose conception, we may say of the German theory of Empire that it proposes to propagate German opinions and German spiritual ideas; but it proposes to propagate them by the help of the German sword. This, I may remind the reader, is no isolated judgment, but is the conclusion at which modern German thought has definitely arrived. When Bernhardi observes that "the dominion of German thought can only be extended under the aegis of political power," and goes on to point out that "unless we act

in conformity with this idea we shall be untrue to our great duties towards the human race," he is but repeating in his character of soldier a doctrine which German philosophy has firmly established. It is because of its wide acceptance, because names like Treitschke and Delbrück are identified with its propagation, that so extraordinary a theory deserves consideration. How does it come about that the intellect of a great nation should have taken up such a position? If there is one point in reason we should have thought by this time established, it is that spiritual and intellectual ideas are only to be extended by an appeal to the spiritual and intellectual faculties. Physical dominion is accomplished by physical persuasion; intellectual dominion is accomplished by intellectual persuasion; spiritual dominion is accomplished by spiritual persuasion. To attempt to introduce physical persuasion into the intellectual and spiritual spheres is exactly as if a man should attempt to argue with his biceps instead of with his brain.

The experience of the race bears this out. The greatest purely intellectual influence so far brought to bear upon the world is the influence of Greece, and this acted entirely in the region of ideas. The Greeks never ran an empire, their physical dominion was never very extensive, and it had altogether disappeared before their intellectual dominion came into existence. They have, as a nation, gone down the stream of time, their exploits are ancient history, but in the realms of thought their empire is as extensive and as enduring as ever. And so in spiritual matters. The greatest purely spiritual influence which the world has known is the influence of Christianity, and that influence was propagated by One in all material endowments a bankrupt. What was physical in that movement was dealt with on Calvary, but in the spiritual realm the empire of Christ has deepened and extended its sway century by century.

It would be easy to show that this rule is universal, and not only that, but that attempts to back up spiritual

and intellectual ideas with physical arguments invariably result in the degradation of their spiritual and intellectual quality. These distinctions are, however, rudimentary, and need not detain us. The interesting question to ask is : How did it happen that so crude a theory as the propagation of culture by force of arms should have been endorsed by the thinkers of a nation ? The date of origin of the theory itself suggests the answer. German thought of the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century was disinterested thought. Kant and Hegel, Herder and Lessing and Goethe, were men of quite remarkable intellectual and spiritual detachment. It has been often suggested that this tendency was even exaggerated, and that in the War of Liberation the German intellect, owing to its inveterate habit of abstract thinking, stood aside from the issue and failed to identify itself with the national aspiration. Certainly, if ever there was a school of thought which loved intellectual things for their own sakes, which made it its object to see things "as they really are," and whose reasoning and point of view are unobscured by any personal and local considerations whatever, it is the German school of thought of the first half of the nineteenth century. The transition from this Germany to the Bismarckian Germany, the Germany, as we just now said, of Treitschke the historian, Liliencron the poet, Delbrück the professor, von Bernhardt the soldier, is a transition from free thought to thought controlled and directed by a national policy. The note of German literature of the latter epoch is the unanimity with which it preaches the doctrine of the "will to power," and the passionate eloquence with which it emphasises the primary moral duty of a nation to be strong. With one accord these latter-day philosophers and thinkers and poets and historians agree that intellectual and spiritual culture are to be expressed in terms of physical ascendancy. The explanation of so extraordinary a change is obvious. The moment, that is towards the end of the third quarter of the last century,

when physical might achieved control of the German mind, was the moment when physical might, in the form of the Prussian domination, achieved control of German life. It is impossible to dissociate phenomena of such palpable similarity. We all know how national conditions affect thought, and how inevitably ideas take their colour by their material environment. Further, we must remember with what *éclat* the Prussian gospel of physical might has been displayed. We must remember the, from the mundane point of view, pompously feeble and entirely ineffectual condition of the divided German States. By the imposition, as a national bond of union, of that "will to power" in which Prussia had been cradled and nurtured, the German principalities achieved at last the sense of national identity and national pride which had been lacking to them. Under that leadership they cast off ancient tyrannies, recovered and realised a racial aspiration, and advanced by incredibly swift strides to an extraordinary material affluence and to a position of marked supremacy among the nations of Europe. Certainly no one who has learned to estimate the influences which govern the minds of men will question but that this remarkable demonstration of the effects of physical might in the material sphere will be bound to have corresponding effects in the intellectual and spiritual spheres, and it seems sufficiently evident that, in the transformation in literature we were just now glancing at, these inevitable effects are duly forthcoming.

In present-day German thought, then, as well as in present-day German politics, the Prussian theory of might may be said to be the determining influence. It not only controls Germany's military attitude, but it determines the character and quality of German culture. It is not our present object to consider what the effects upon that culture of such an influence have been, but rather to consider its bearing upon Germany's Imperial position and prospects. Modern Germany, that is to say, Prussianised Germany, comes before the world as a power de-

liberately aspiring to empire, and when we ask her on what she is going to found her Empire, she answers that, in the first place, she is going to found it on physical force, and that, in the second place, she is going on to make the dominant position she will thus have attained an instrument for the propagation of her ideas. Such a theory of empire may not seem preposterous to a people whose minds and souls have accepted the Prussian brand, but to the dispassionate observer it is evident that what is here offered is a tyranny in three degrees: a physical tyranny, an intellectual tyranny, and a spiritual tyranny. How is such an offer as this likely to strike the world, or what chances of Imperial cohesion does it hold out? I pointed out, to begin with, that all vital empires, empires which contain within themselves the principle which unites, are empires which proclaim some mutual benefit or ideal, which all such peoples as care to join the empire may co-operate in realising. What is the benefit, the ideal, which Germany holds out as an inducement to all and sundry to join her Empire? Submission to her physical might is the first inducement; submission to her scheme of intellectual and spiritual culture is the second. A state of servitude so thorough, so complete in all its parts, has perhaps never yet threatened the world; in truth, it is in itself but the reflection and image of that servitude to the physical state into which the mind and soul of Germany have of late years entered.

My own instinct is profoundly to distrust all *ex parte* estimates. A comparison between English and German things, carried out by an Englishman, especially at such a time as this, is almost sure to show an English bias; and that not so much from prejudice as because an English temperament can better understand and appreciate the merit of English ideas than the merit of German ideas. In the present case, however, two considerations tend to correct such a bias. In the first place we are able to appeal to an impersonal test. We can cite the example of all the empires in history to show that



empires founded on force are non-vital, that they contain no life-giving principle of their own, but that they are artificial systems forcibly imposed, which tend to fall to pieces directly the force which sustains them is withdrawn or can be successfully challenged ; while from the same testimony it appears that those empires are enduring and vital, and may be said to be a kind of natural growth, which propose, for general participation, a principle of universal benefit. If this law is rightly stated, and it is backed by common sense as well as historical evidence, we can scarcely go wrong in its application. The idea of freedom as understood, or rather as practised, by modern England is of so impersonal a character as to be almost entirely non-national. The British Empire is not intrinsically either British or an empire. It is not an empire, at least in the old sense of the word, because the Imperial idea of authority, of dominance, is almost totally absent from it. And it is not specifically British, because the principle on which it depends—that man is a free animal—is a purely abstract proposition. I have pointed out already that it is only as the abstract nature of this proposition has come to be realised by our country that our Imperial potentiality has developed. It is destined, probably, to expand yet more on similar lines, for it is quite likely that after the present war the principle of liberty will take its place as the recognised European ideal, and that France and England more especially, in their joint recognition of that ideal, may find themselves knit together by the very same bonds which have hitherto only been applied to our own Empire. We shall understand, then, that what we have been aiming at all along is not so much a British Empire as a community of free nations.

But if it is this impersonal character of a principle which makes it valuable to others and applicable to the case of others, equally certain is it that the German case contains in these latter days not a trace or flavour of the impersonal element. Germany's case is Germany. The

burden of her claim is her own place in the sun, her own right in virtue of superior strength to impose her will upon others, and not that only, but to impose also her own intellectual and spiritual culture upon the minds and souls of others. In this German philosophers, poets, soldiers, historians, are all at one. It is not a question of what other people want, but of what Germany, in virtue of her physical and intellectual might, is empowered to inflict. Of such an Imperial ideal as this we may say with certainty that it is entirely non-vital, in that it offers for acceptance no principle in which other people can participate. The very idea of willing co-operation and a free motion of adherence is repudiated by the Prussian philosophy. "What have we to do," they ask, "with co-operation and freedom and the ideals and aspirations of other people? We are here to institute a Prussian order of things, and we rely for argument on Prussian steel. Does that logic convince you?"

Not only to that question can there be but one answer, but in the ensuing struggle there can be no compromise. For this, if we have reasoned rightly, is no question of nation against nation, but of a conflict of ideals which in their own nature are irreconcilable. The Prussian Imperial ideal and the English Imperial ideal are so essentially opposed that they cannot live together in this world. Either can only advance at the expense of the other. If the Prussian ideal is to live, it must kill the British. If the British ideal is to live, it must kill the Prussian. For this reason we enter into this conflict with a determination, rooted in the very structure of our national character, not only to overcome the enemy, but to erase and blot out an ideal which is hostile to liberty, and withstands its advance in the world. Lit up by the light of war there appear, so clearly that we can all distinguish them above the ranks of each army, the principle and idea for which it fights. And those armies themselves are typical of the issue involved, for while the German doctrine of force, repudiated by the

people of Europe, is driven to rely purely on the co-operation of tyrants, the rival doctrine of liberty calls together its democratic brigades of all races from the uttermost ends of the earth. It does its own recruiting. Wherever it is known its volunteers gather to defend it. Without a word of prompting, all India is in arms. Unbidden and unasked, our Colonies spring to our side. What is the reason of it all? It is that the ideal we have hit upon is in itself Imperial, that is to say, it is in itself of universal scope and application. These people—the permanence of our Empire depends on our realising it—have come together to fight under our flag, not because it is our flag, but because it is the flag of freedom.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE INFLUENCE OF FRANCE

She is the source in Europe of liberal ideas—She fights for the universal and the abstract—The Crusades, Joan of Arc, the Revolution—Spread of liberal ideas in Europe since that event—The creation of Italy as a nation—The simultaneous rise of Italy and Prussia compared and contrasted.

BESIDES the imaginative faculty which reconstructs individual characters belonging to bygone ages (after the manner of historical novelists), there is the imaginative faculty which reconstructs national character and traces its development and coherent purpose through successive centuries. Historical imagination regards nations themselves as entities. Instead of saying French, English, Germans, Italians, etc., it says France, England, Germany, Italy, etc. Could we thus see nations, like huge personalities, of which such events as the Crusades or the Renaissance, covering whole centuries, are the moods, ripening in order and proceeding each inevitably out of what went before, we should then see this war as history will see it, and as it really is.

Read history then, read the tales of the lives of nations, should be the daily occupation of all seekers after truth. And especially read the history of the last hundred years ; for it is during those years that the ply was taken by each European nation in turn which has ranged them in their present antagonism. Were the reader to trace carefully the currents of ideas by which Europe has been during the last century governed, he would perceive that

they sprang from two sources, that two nations have been the active agents which have propagated those ideas, while from those two the other nations have accepted them. Prussia has propagated the idea of tyranny. France has propagated the idea of liberty. Of Prussia we have spoken. We have attempted to show how, out of its own character and its own experience, Prussia evolved a philosophy of tyranny, and how, following upon that accomplishment and having for the first time something to teach, it proceeded to spread its doctrines and gather under its leadership all who were predisposed to accept them. We have now to do with France. Before, however, turning to the very similar part played by her on behalf of liberty, I would ask leave to dwell for a moment on the motives of that one of our allies in whose decision France has had no share.

We have, perhaps, we Western Europeans, small comprehension of the nature of that liberty to which Russia aspires. The Russian thought of the Czar as an incarnate Russia—a thought deep-seated in the Russian soul and not to be expunged by the failure of centuries to realise the longed-for unity between people and ruler—is quite foreign to the principle of Western “liberalism.” We never have, save dimly in remote ages, and then imperfectly, conceived of a ruler as an embodiment of the national spirit and as a breathing symbol of our unity. It is an idea more spiritual than practical, and applicable therefore more to a spiritually than practically minded race. Whatever, however, we may think of it, this is Russia’s desire; nor could there be a more superficial impulse than that which would identify Czardom with our experience of the tyranny of kings. The quarrel of the Russian people has never been with the Czar, but rather with those agents and influences which have stood between it and the Czar. It is the hope of breaking down these obstacles which to-day inspires it. This, as we so often say, is a popular war in Russia, a national war. The fighting of Germany is an act into which the

Russian population is pouring spontaneously its whole energy and enthusiasm. All political parties have been united by the present war. It has obliterated strikes and riots, has rallied to the colours exiles and democrats, and has called forth throughout the length and breadth of the land demonstrations of devotion and self-sacrifice which eloquently and pathetically demonstrate the trend of public sympathy. If ever there was a war in which the hearts of the Russian people were engaged it is the present one. This it is, indeed, which makes Russia so redoubtable a foe. She is not, or was not, highly equipped. Modern armaments and their application to war are a fruit of intellectual culture, and Russia being in this respect backward, her armies incur the penalty. But in the depth and intensity of her popular convictions and in the numbers of the masses by whom those convictions are shared, Russia possesses compensating weapons of her own which make her a puissant ally and a patient and formidable enemy.

If, then, we would appreciate the forces operating in the present crisis, here is one which very directly challenges our attention. This earnestness of the Russian people is marked already as a determining factor. It is exactly the quality necessary for the display of Russia's natural forces. To suffer, but to go on, until her slow-gathering armies and vast spaces exhaust the enemy's initiative, is evidently Russia's ordained policy, and to the success of it the one thing necessary is the power of the nation to endure. To this, therefore, we return. What does this popular determination of Russia to fight Germany to a finish mean? Ninety per cent of the Russian population are peasants, and it is not often that a peasantry (especially a backward and illiterate peasantry like the Russian) troubles its head about foreign nations and foreign politics. All the more strange is it that a hundred million Russian peasants should, in this quarrel with Germany, be moved by almost such a rapture of earnestness as inspired the hosts of

the Crusades in their great spiritual campaigns of eight hundred years ago.

How, then, shall we account for, how explain, this implacable instinct of hostility? The answer to the question will be discovered in the past relations between Russia and Prussia, not only in their political but in their intellectual relations. Russia and Prussia have stood to each other for the last two centuries as pupil and teacher. The semi-barbarism of the Dark Ages, which lingered on in Russia long after the Renaissance had awakened the intellect of Europe, was by degrees penetrated by a European culture received mainly from the hands of Prussia. It was to Prussia, owing to her geographical position, that the task naturally fell of transmitting Western ideas Eastward. It was her mission to hand on to the barbaric East the ideas and intellectual culture which, emanating in the first instance from Italy, had overspread the European nations. In a word, Prussia was called upon to introduce the Renaissance to the Slav race.

It was an enormous opportunity. We all know the immense prestige which the position of teacher of a higher culture gives to the more advanced nation. We know how Athens in this way conquered Rome, and how Italy at one period in our history almost as completely dominated the thought and taste of England. Germany, conveying to Russia her own version of Renaissance culture, was greeted with a humility and respect natural to the simplicity of the Slav people, and proportioned to the depth of the intellectual twilight in which they were immersed.

There followed the Prussianising of Russia, a process which has been to an extraordinary degree systematic and persevering and has extended over a couple of centuries. Its operations have had two objects, namely, the control or direction of the Russian Government and the prosecution of a system of peaceful penetration of Russian territory. The latter scheme has been enforced with particular

energy during the last few years. Great tracts of Western Russia have passed into the hands of German colonists. Between two and three millions have acquired land in Russian Poland alone, where, acting in concert with a Germanised Government, they have received, in connection with the acquisition of property, the endowment of schools, and other matters, extraordinary privileges. Moreover, it has lately been shown beyond question that this extensive colonising scheme has been under the supervision of the German Government and has been carried on with a kind of military discipline and even, it would seem, with the co-operation of the military authorities and intelligence department, under whose guidance the colonists were distributed to points of vantage, there to carry on the work of military pioneers by sending in intimate reports and plans to headquarters, as well as by accumulating stores, constructing gun emplacements, and effecting such preparations generally as could be undertaken without arousing suspicion. Occasional hunting parties offered opportunities for German officers to visit these colonies to receive information and issue instructions. We have it from both Russian and French sources that these expedients have proved of great advantage to the progress of the German armies.

But what, far more than this, has determined the estimation in which Germany is held by the Russian people has been the fact that she has used her great influence steadily and strenuously to strengthen the bureaucratic, or official, system of government, and to stifle the national aspirations of the Russian people. If the tragedy of the Russian situation consists, as assuredly it does consist, in the oppression of the emotional and spiritual instincts and aspirations of the Slav race under a solid crust of official administration, we must remember that it is to Prussian teaching and example that this has been mainly due. For generations the bitterness that has been breaking the heart of Russia



has been the success with which Prussia has instilled her own autocratic tradition into the Russian Government.

Remembering, as we must, that Russia's own blind submission to Prussian tuition has been responsible for her exploitation and has again and again enabled Prussian diplomacy to use the Russian influence and Russian arms for its own ends—remembering this, we must admit that Russia in her European dealings has suffered from terrible ill-luck. It was ill-luck, considering the character and temperament of her people, that she should be moored cheek by jowl alongside the German, and particularly the Prussian, people. It was ill-luck that, looking as she naturally would to the horizon where intellectual light was dawning, she should find that light dispensed to her by Prussia, and her own confiding ignorance delivered into the hands of the most energetic, indeed, but also the most materialistic and most ruthless of modern nations.

This is the point I would leave to the reader's consideration. He must figure Russia, semi-barbaric, un-instructed, living into and through the centuries of the Renaissance scarcely aware of the intellectual ferment that was taking place; but at last, dimly conscious, stretching out her hands for guidance, and eagerly craving instruction in the new knowledge which so evidently contained the elements of a superior civilisation. The spectacle, indeed, of Russia at this moment is not without its pathos, and it is with genuine concern that we discover, as the spider springs upon the fly, Prussia hurrying to take the occasion by the hand. Prussia as the interpreter of ideas! Prussia as the evangelist of the Renaissance! Prussia as the child of light! The humour of the situation receives a yet more satiric edge from the concentration of purpose with which Prussia herself set to work to wring the last ounce of profit out of so unique an opportunity. Reflecting on the consequences which ensued, one is in doubt whether to

wonder most at the insatiable appetite of the aggressor or the inexhaustible docility of the victim.

A community like the Russian, vast and unwieldy and little given to conscious thought, absorbs a new idea slowly and is enlightened by degrees. It has taken Russia a great many years to discover the profound incongruity of character between herself and the nation in which she had imposed so implicit a trust. She is, however, now at last making that discovery, and she is making it with a completeness and thoroughness proportioned to its slowness. She is awakening, as a nation and a people, to the nature of the opposition she has had to struggle against and to the origin of the impediments which have been placed in her path. Duped, exploited, overreached, her confidence betrayed, her national hopes outraged, Russia has reached the conviction that the ejecting of the Teutonic element is the condition of her own health. Moreover, she has reached and holds that conviction, not as a matter of superficial argument or knowledge, but as a slowly acquired, subconscious instinct. The body, when a foreign and discordant element is introduced into it, makes its own interior efforts, unprompted by reason or the mind, to cast forth the poison, and it is in a somewhat analogous fashion that the energies of all Russia are concentrated to-day in the supreme task of ridding itself of the poison of Prussianism. The convulsions and huge rumblings which startle the world are no more than the internal accompaniments of such an effort. At the same time, it needs only to observe the nature and origin of the malady, to be sure those efforts will continue until they have achieved their object.

This being said, let us next turn to that nation which has been the source and active generator of Liberal ideas in Western Europe. The reader must have noticed how, even in these practical days, the bias of the French nature towards the ideal stimulates the influence of France and determines the character of her military bearing. French

courage retains still some associations with the days of knights and troubadours, when savagery and sentiment were so mingled, and carnage so lit up with gleams of chivalry, as to be natural themes for song to celebrate. Such emotional valour has its weakness as well as its strength, and at the beginning of the present war we used to wonder if the French, distinguished as we knew them to be by that terrible *élan* of theirs, were equally to be relied upon for tenacity and stubbornness of defence. We have given over doubting on that point now, but we retain still our impression of French gallantry as endowed with a certain exaltation and a tinge, as it were, of romantic ardour.

And indeed this strain of idealism which we note in the present is precisely what throughout the course of history has most distinguished French warfare. France is the most warlike of nations, yet France has never willingly fought for sordid motives or material ends. She has fought for glory, for the Cross of Christ, for liberty, for revenge, for a whim, but seldom, and never well, for any practical benefit to be derived from fighting.

The Crusades, the earliest campaigns of the European nations, were perfectly typical of the French military spirit. Those strange adventures, made up of so many and various motives, lofty and sordid, yet contained an inner flame of spiritual aspiration which, in spite of the best efforts of the intellectualists, still keeps their memory bright in history. Moreover, this spiritual incentive, which drew the Red Cross hosts together and bore them eastward (almost as if they had been carried along on some invisible tidal motion) was practically entirely French. No one, so far as I know, has ever attempted to estimate what Christianity in Europe, through later ages, owes to the fervour and self-sacrifice of enterprises which, judged by the material standard, were so entirely fruitless. How much of the homage the Church commanded, and the lofty position it achieved, were due to this universal exhibition of devotion unto death? How

much of our European civilisation, based on national co-operation in the unity of a common faith, has been made possible by the spiritual welding together of the modern nations by means of the Crusades? These are questions which will never be answered, for such spiritual factors are not subject to exact analysis, but whatever the benefit received, it was mainly contributed by France. From the first and greatest and most spiritual of the Crusades (which was practically altogether French), they by degrees deteriorate in spirit, and precisely as they do so does the French share in them diminish. The last page was, however, written by the hand that wrote the first, and in the person of the French King, St. Louis, who inspired the final sacrifice, was incarnated all that was most knightly and most spiritual in mediaeval thought.

In another of the saints of France the same loftiness of motive is apparent. St. Louis and the Maid of Orleans were twin stars. Both reveal to coarser ages the purity of an original inspiration. It would be impossible to match either of them in the history of another nation, the peculiarity of both being that, by appealing to the highest faculties of human nature, they have become representatives of absolute ideals. Joan of Arc gave to French patriotism a significance so lofty as to be of universal application. In the eyes of the world she embodies not so much French patriotic fervour as the nobility of the patriotic sentiment itself. She, more than any, has been the recipient of that lofty devotion of noble minds which to the vulgar and commonplace is so exquisitely incomprehensible. So much does she belong to the world that, though we English were the chief sufferers from her prowess, yet we revere her memory almost equally with her own countrymen, while the last unspeakable act at Rouen, for which we were responsible, is as much execrated on this side of the Channel as on the other.

But the most conspicuous example of French idealism is the great French Revolution itself. Apt as we are to judge that event by the military aspect it wore when we

ourselves came into collision with it, we sometimes forget that its real significance lies less in what it came to be than in what it originally intended to be. Backed up though it was and precipitated along its course by inarticulate sufferings and wrongs, the French Revolution in its conception was essentially a philosophical movement. It was a thought before it was an act. The political revolt of 1792 was preceded by an intellectual revolt of corresponding energy, and the effectiveness of this intellectual revolt (and what made it the parent of the whole revolutionary propaganda in Europe through the nineteenth century) was its powerful appeal to abstract ideas. It attacked the wrongs of the time, not because of the misery they produced, but because of their inherent injustice. The whole object of the tide of thought which led up to the Revolution was to define the eternal laws of right and wrong which control human society. I know not how the plan would have succeeded elsewhere ; certainly it is not our way of doing things ; but its effect in France was to instil a profound moral purpose and moral energy into the drama and raise it from a matter of French into a matter of universal concern.

The whole episode has to be considered from the Continental point of view as the Continent existed towards the end of the eighteenth century. The universal ascendancy of absolutist ideals, the consternation of the tyrannies of Europe as the bomb-shell of the Revolution burst in their midst, the spectacle of the great Powers gathering like kites along the French frontier to deal with a menace to their own existence—such are some of the factors in the situation as it arose. The hostility provoked by France was the hostility which those who profit by the existing state of things never fail to feel for the idea destined to dissolve it. If France, dragging herself with infinite difficulty and horror out of the clutches of the *ancien régime*, was confronted by the opposition of the Holy Alliance, it was because she stood forth as the representative of the down-trodden ideal of liberty upon the Continent. The two antagonistic principles, Freedom

and Absolutism, recognised each other as instinctively then as now, and closed in the same deadly embrace.

Professor Westlake is right when he says that the Tricolour in 1792 was the flag, not of French liberty only, but of liberty as a universal ideal. France was Europe's emancipator. "Behold," she could say, "I draw a sword on tyrants." The moment passed swiftly. The ideal broke itself on national barriers and died in the clash of arms; yet while it lasts, while the splendid exaggeration "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" (the "shall brithers be for a' that" of poor Burns) breaks from her lips, France is France at her best. She is as much the champion of the pure idea as she was at the time of the Crusades.

And she is France, too, at her most invincible. The French revolutionary armies were at their greatest, be it remembered, in those earlier campaigns when faith in the revolutionary cause was still fresh. During those years they revolutionised the art of war; but it is noteworthy that though Napoleon's genius and the memory of unparalleled victories continued to inspire them, the quality of the troops deteriorated steadily as the army developed into a mere fighting machine. The devotion, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the intelligence, and eager initiative which distinguished the early armies, and enabled them to develop the extraordinary mobility which was the despair of their opponents, were the result of the soldiers' participation in the lofty motives for which the nation believed itself to be fighting. However these wars might end, they began by being, on France's part, wars for freedom, and France remained invincible in those wars only so long as that inspiration endured. As it faded, her great fighting qualities faded along with it, and by the time she confessed herself battling for conquest and dominion the end for her was in sight.

Without exaggeration then, it may be said of France, and of France only among the nations, that she fights, not for her own things, but for the things of mankind. The same conclusion may be tested by her failures. It may

be tested by the Seven Years' War in the eighteenth century, or the Franco-Prussian War in the nineteenth. On every such occasion her weakness on the field is the precise counterpart and reflex, as it were, of the frivolity of her motive. As French strength has sprung out of loftiness of thought, French feebleness has sprung out of selfishness of thought.

Nor is this common ; on the contrary, it is peculiar to France. Place Prussia by her side and compare the results. No one will deny the military prowess of Prussia, but no one will maintain that that prowess has ever distinguished itself in the service of universal ideals. Can one see Prussia fighting for the Sepulchre of Christ, or for the rights of man, or for liberty, equality, fraternity ? As a matter of fact the wars of Prussia have all been directed to strictly Prussian ends. This has been their design.<sup>1</sup> I do but accept the definitions of her own statesmen. It is only, I believe, within recent years that the Prussian theory of union between war and diplomacy, the theory that war should take its place as a permanent and avowed factor in statecraft, has been enunciated in so many words. But Prussia has always acted on that theory. Not a Prussian war but has been conceived from the strictly Prussian standpoint as a means of materially benefiting Prussia. We struggle hardest for the things we most value. The rewards that excite Prussia are mundane. She is most formidable when fighting for territory and wealth, just as France is most formidable when fighting for liberty or religion. There are some solemn people who are fond of examining the ethics of war. Is war an evil ? they ask. War, it may be answered, which is the instrument of a selfish ambition,

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the second volume of Treitschke's *History* contains an elaborate account of the Treaty of Paris of 1815, and it is most curious and interesting to compare the attitude of Prussia with that of the other Powers. The general feeling was that France should not be dismembered and made a prey of. Prussia was the exception, and there is indeed something almost animal in Prussia's fury at being baulked in her natural instinct to gorge her appetite on a prostrate enemy. Treitschke entirely shares the feeling.

is probably among the most evil employments that wretched little human beings can engage in. On the other hand, war undertaken to vindicate and preserve those lofty ideals which ennoble and sweeten life is the most splendid of all mortal activities. Some of the holiest pages in history are those dealing with the wars of France.

The considerations we have been dwelling on have a present importance. It is the abstract idea which stands for unity. We are many. Each one of us—Italian, Russian, Frenchman, Englishman, Serb, Belgian—has his own more or less isolated standpoint and more or less isolated ambitions and fears. But over and above these, in this great test-match between liberty and tyranny, we have a thought in common. And the more we can draw out this thought; the more we can conceive of liberty, not as a national but as a human ideal which the nations of the West are mutually pledged to realise—the more, in a word, we can profit by the example and inoculate ourselves with the spirit of France—the nearer shall we attain to the singleness of mind out of which singleness of act proceeds of its own accord.

But these considerations also have a past importance in the practical work achieved in building up the present alliance. Let us recur for a moment to the great Revolution amid the throes of which was reborn the conception of liberty. "In France, more distinctly than elsewhere," I have said in another volume, "the idea leads the way." It was during the decade from 1750 to 1760 that, in the sphere of ideas, the revolt declared itself. "The appearance of the Encyclopaedia may be likened to that moment in a general action when, to the scattered shots of scouts and advance guards, succeeds the roar of heavy guns in position. The effect of the publication in affording a rallying-point for independent thinkers was decisive. The persecution by the Court and the Jesuits broke in vain upon the movement. D'Alembert might be choked off, but the indomitable Diderot gathered round him



a body of associates of unflinching tenacity. The crisis had in it something of the excitement of an actual conflict. It differs from most philosophic enterprises in this, that the theories and definitions of the Encyclopaedists are not abstract theories and definitions, but are designed for immediate use. They are not shot off into the air, but are aimed at a mark. "The appearance of the first instalment of the Encyclopaedia may be taken as the formal declaration of the mind of France for the nation and the people, and against the Court and the privileged class."

I have called French ideas *ideals*, and they have that tendency. They incline to the abstract. Yet they do not on that account leave hold of the actual. The peculiarity of the French mind is the fusion in it of the idealistic and the practical. It loves ideas, but with reference always to their realisation.

"Political ideas have been grasped as instruments; philosophy has become patriotism," are phrases in which Lord Morley defines the character of this great mental awakening. In article after article of the Encyclopaedia the evils of the age are hinted at or criticised. That more than a quarter of France was lying untilled or abandoned; that arbitrary imposts resulted in the flight of the population to the large towns; that immense tracts of land are turned into wildernesses by the abuse of the game-preserving system; that an equal distribution of profits is preferable to an unequal one, since the latter results in the division of the people into two classes, "one gorged with riches, the other perishing in misery." These are the kind of points raised, and these, it will be observed, are thrusts dealt in earnest. "The Society of Jesus clamoured for the suppression of the publication. The King wavers between a snarl and a whimper. It is suppressed and Diderot is imprisoned. It is continued and Diderot is released. Meantime the movement all over the country gathers head. In every province and country town the pens are going. Ideas,

with that wicked sparkle in them which marks them as missiles, are hurled from all sides against king and courtier and priests alike. The closeness of the act behind the thought is indicated by the public excitement, and outrageous placards, pamphlets, and satires of an increasing bitterness give that excitement vent."

The French Revolution was never blind violence. It was violence stimulated by ideas and the French love of thinking. Intelligence and ferocity were curiously blended in it, and the ferocity was largely excited by the intelligence—by the perception, that is to say, of what there was radically unjust and immoral in the rule of the old régime. Vividness of thought it was which led to such fearful energy of action. But, more than this, it was vividness of thought also which made the French Revolution, so to speak, catching; for it is ideas, and only ideas, which are independent of circumstances and like flying seeds can carry the germs of action from one country to another.

England's experience of the Revolution, however, was in the main an experience of its latter phase. It was by this phase at least that our final judgment was dictated. Many an ardent liberal, many a sanguine optimist sighing for the deliverance of humanity, greeted the rise of the revolutionary movement with acclamation and high hope. But these sentiments, as the Revolution gradually changed its character and purpose, changed, too, to their opposites, until at last the original emancipatory effort was forgotten in Napoleonism, and liberty was swallowed up in the tyranny which overwhelmed it.

The more reason why we should learn sharply to distinguish the Revolution's two aspects. It set out to strike the fetters off the limbs of nations, to unbind Europe. From this purpose it derived its strength, its vitality, and its stimulating and animating influence. This inspiration was mastered and taken in hand by an individual of genius, and, thus utilised, became an instrument in its turn of the very power it purposed to destroy

—an instrument of tyranny. The Revolution went the full circle. It was not until the idea of liberation had quitted the French arms and Napoleon appeared as the European tyrant that the strength wielded by France passed to her enemies. The tremendous uprising of the Spanish nation in May 1808 and Dupont's surrender at Baylen with twenty-three thousand men were to the allies a trumpet call. From that moment the character of the Napoleonic struggle changes. Hitherto France has been striking at tyrants. Henceforth the nations of Europe are fighting for freedom against the arch tyrant France.

One aspect of this confusion of the issue is worth attention. We are all inclined to judge ideas by what seem to be their practical results. The principle of liberty, the cry of "Liberté, égalité, fraternité," had resulted in blood poured out like water and in the stability of the very idea of government being fatally compromised. Nothing else apparently had come of it. It had convulsed Europe and then passed leaving her prostrate.

Not unnaturally the course taken by the Revolution came to be accepted as inherent in the nature of liberty itself. It was argued from this precedent that democratic freedom must needs signify an eruption of blind passion passing under the control of a single despotic will. Inevitably it followed that, by the monarchical party, or party pledged to the Renaissance conception of absolute government, every least trace of liberal ideas, or slightest stirring of liberal propaganda among the people, was viewed as a symptom of a dread disease, which, if allowed to run its course, would do as it had done before, would pass over Europe like a harrow, leaving a trail of broken thrones and mangled bodies in its wake. The keynote of European statesmanship from 1815 to 1848 is this state of terror into which the Revolution had cast Europe. There came to the front in these years a school of diplomacy and a type of politician quite peculiar to the epoch. Diplomacy and politician both are distinctly of the

autocratic and aristocratic order. They are not, however, cruel or rigorously and fiercely oppressive. Their mien and aspect are courteous and urbane. Unsleeping vigilance is their common characteristic combined with a peculiar gift, comparable to the faculty of scent in a hound, for catching the slightest symptoms of democratic initiative. With engrossed attention, ready at the least indication of unrest to apply the usual remedies, these state detectives ponder the movements of the people. Not a trace of constructive statesmanship appears during those years. All Europe is stricken still and motionless, while kings and ministers and their agents, in every country, in every town, spy and whisper and watch with ears intent to catch the faintest whisper of the forbidden word liberty.

Of this European attitude of mind the central example is, of course, Metternich. The reactionary period we are speaking of is indeed striking and curious in this, that it brought into grotesque prominence in the councils of Europe the one nation which has made reaction the consistent object of its policy. Austria alone among European nations has done this. Austria alone has turned the disintegration of the national sentiment and the discouragement of national aims and aspirations into a deliberate means of perpetuating the power of the State. In this purely negative form of tyranny Austria had no rival ; or if in Turkey she had one rival, it was not one whose methods admitted of general adoption.<sup>1</sup>

Austria during these years presided over Europe, and, it may be said, dictated the policy of Europe ; and

<sup>1</sup> Yet it must be remembered that during these years Europe was not at all prepared to dispense with Turkey's services on account of her barbarity. Her bloodthirsty instincts were condoned by the fact that at any rate she was on the side of tyranny. Castlereagh, in particular, like so many other statesmen of that time an inferior copy of Metternich, never failed in loyalty to the State which subjected liberty and patriotism to the methods of the abattoir. Turkey's waxing and waning measure the waxing and waning of the reactionary forces in Europe.

Metternich was Austria's representative. Born and bred in the centre of the autocratic tradition, the son of a Rhenish nobleman who had himself held high office in the Austrian Government, his cosmopolitan culture polished and hardened by the training of a diplomatist and a close acquaintance with the intrigues and court politics of the chief capitals of Europe, Metternich was a perfect example of the detached type of statesman which the Renaissance and the school of Macchiavelli had bequeathed to Europe. Of the sense of nationality he appeared to be unconscious. Of popular rights and liberties and popular participation in the Government he was more than contemptuous. Such interference disgusted him as the taking part of the pit in an opera would disgust a sensitive critic. The business was one for trained performers. His natural inclination to resent such unmannerly interruption, moreover, was sharpened by the dread of which we have spoken, the dread of witnessing a repetition of the scenes of the Revolution. To anger was added terror; the terror which the established order of things always feels for innovation; the terror which, during the whole period of reaction, was the mainspring of European politics.

It would be impossible to follow here the machinations of Metternich, or even to attempt to do justice to his extraordinary vigilance and to the range and extent of his operations. His eye was everywhere. England, Russia, Italy, Prussia and the German states, Greece and Turkey all felt his influence and were swayed by it to a united reactionary policy. He had been the guiding spirit of the Holy Alliance; he had formed the Federal Constitution which assured the triumph of despotism in every petty German principality; he had instructed Prussia in the art of suppressing dangerous opinions by a close supervision of education. His spies and agents inspected every school and college and examined every newspaper. Upon Northern Italy his rule fell like the iron frost which sometimes nips the

buds of a premature spring. The whisper of liberty had already been heard in the land when Metternich deployed the forces of reaction. The Austrian provinces of the North were terrorised into submission not more by the presence of a great army than by a system of supervision which watched all pens and overheard all conversations. His dream was to extend his influence, if not his rule, over the whole peninsula, and this he largely realised by his treaties with subordinate states, according to which the latter bound themselves to a policy consonant with Austrian ideas, and undertook to participate in a joint system of espionage which was to keep under its scrutiny every state and party in Italy.

But, indeed, were we to endeavour to trace the policy of the Austrian we should have to undertake a history of Europe during those years. For, throughout this period, while other individual nations might be ready to suppress such indications of liberty as directly affected themselves, yet there was one only whose antipathy to liberty was, so to speak, disinterested, and equally prompt to take action against it wherever and in whatever circumstances it appeared. It is not too much to say that during those years Metternich kept under constant supervision every inch of Europe for traces of the spirit he hated. His breadth of view, his patience and perseverance, no less than the skill and swiftness with which he dealt his blows, distinguish him as the *statesman* of reaction, and one of the greatest enemies with which the spirit of liberty has had to deal.

Yet all this genius and all these pains never really succeeded in their ends. The very restlessness of Metternich was a sign that the danger was there. Nothing could efface the French Revolution. That awful event—both the thought that led up to it and the act itself—had proved and shown to the whole world that despotic power in Europe was not founded on a rock and that tyrants are no match for peoples. Henceforth the idea of liberty stood up like some new feature in the

landscape, the creation of an irruption or landslide, ever present to the eyes, and never far from the thoughts of men.

In Italy, in Germany, in Hungary, in Greece, in England, even in Prussia, the Revolution, as launched under the auspices of the National Assembly, awakened in the hearts of patriots thoughts not henceforth to be quenched. Instinctively and tacitly that grim experience was separated into its two main elements. Napoleonism, the terror of so many tyrants, was nevertheless recognised by the one virile aristocratic nation of Europe as itself the embodiment of the autocratic ideal. Prussia, in Napoleon's meteor-like course, saw her own career of conquest outlined. On the other hand, the democracies of Europe went back to the earlier years when, in the first flush of emancipation, there had broken from France's lips her famous appeal to the instinct of liberty and to the sense of common brotherhood among the nations of Europe. It is with the latter element we are concerned. The modern conception of liberty, the conception of it not as a scholar's theory but as a stimulating and vitalising force in real life, dates from the French Revolution.

It was, as the reader knows, 1848 that signalised France's influence and proved to what extent, beneath the frozen calm which Metternich had maintained, the ferment of ideas had been growing. The fall of the French Monarchy and the declaration of a Republic shook every throne in Europe. Democratic and constitutional ideas carried all before them. In 1789 they had stirred men's minds. In 1848 they were translated into political action. In Germany a growing liberal party was already insisting on the reform of the Federal Constitution and demanding a German Parliament. On the fall of Louis Philippe, as at a signal, the people rose everywhere. In every petty state, which for so long had submitted to the will of despotism in its most contemptible aspect, the demands of the popular party for freedom

and reform were granted. Patriots and Liberals, whose days had been passed hitherto in eluding the search of Metternich, found themselves in a day more powerful than princes. It appeared, it seemed certain even, at this moment that the union of the German states, including Prussia, would be effected on constitutional lines. Prussia itself had strongly felt the impetus of the new ideas. No people had more to hope from freedom, for no people were so sunk in Egyptian formalism or held so firmly in the grip of an iron routine. In every town and village the whisper of freedom was heard. Berlin rose. The palace was besieged. Frederick William acceded to the demands of the constitutionalists. Prussia, it was agreed, should enter the Federation of States not as leader but as equal. The triumph of liberal principles seemed assured.

So, too, in Austria a language was heard which seemed altogether incongruous in such an environment. Hungarian patriotism revived, and the demand for a constitutional government was irresistibly pleaded by the eloquence of Kossuth. "From the charnel-house of Vienna," he thundered, "a prison-laden atmosphere steals over us. The future of Hungary can never be secure while there exists in the other provinces a government antagonistic to every constitutional principle. Our task is to found a happier future on the brotherhood of all the Austrian races, and to substitute for the union enforced by bayonets and police the enduring bond of a free constitution." The demand was furiously seconded by the Viennese, and while the people armed and barricades went up, and Liberals and patriots harangued at street corners, and the Government yielded, trembling, to the public demands, the old statesman, who for thirty-nine years had been the incarnation of the pure spirit of Austrian reaction, crept forth an exile from a city defiled by all that he most hated and feared in politics.

To say that all this was the work of France would be to exaggerate. There are ideas which at certain



seasons seem to be in the air, which are catching. And yet the power and logical consequences of those ideas, together with their appropriate form and expression, may to a great extent be determined by the nation most susceptible to them. It was, in this respect, in the nineteenth century much as it had been in the twelfth. France led the way in Gothic art because she led the way in Gothic ideas. The mediaeval mind, with its strange (as it seems to us) mingling of spiritual and practical considerations, received in France its keenest and most characteristic expression; and the art which incarnated this dualism, and mixed spiritual vision with the toil and jests of daily life, was therefore pre-eminently a French creation. French Gothic, some say, is the only Gothic. But this is to say too much. The ideas underlying Gothic were everywhere at work. They were operating on life throughout Europe, and would in due course have worked through from life into art. But they would have done so, one feels, less effectively had it not been for France. France gave them their logic, gave them, in art, their purity of form and keen expressiveness. And in these later days France has taken the lead in the same way. In the nineteenth as in the twelfth century popular emancipation has been in the air, and from the moment of its proclamation in the Revolution down to the present moment, when it forms the bond of the international alliance for liberty, it has been France which has inaugurated and matured the idea, France which has shown the way in practice, France which the other nations have waited upon ere they ventured to act themselves. It has been in recognition no doubt of this, her work as creator of the present coalition, that she occupies so commanding and solitary a place in the estimation and regard of the allies, so that her very name seems to contain the breath of inspiration by which our cause is animated.

But it was not amid the worn-out and disunited politics and races of Austria-Hungary that France's

example was to exert its full effect. In return for all she had received of rich intellectualism France transmitted to Italy the great northern ideal of liberty. If at this moment we had been able to take our stand on some Alpine peak betwixt Germany and Italy, we should have been witnesses of the most dramatic event in modern history, the birth of two nations. Swiftly and by the same degrees we should have seen them develop, each drawing to itself the loose fragments around it, each rising in organic unity and definite outline, as rival mountain peaks lift themselves into the sky.

Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends  
By Skiddaw seen.

The very details of their growth are extraordinarily similar. In either case the end in view—the confederation of a number of petty independent principalities, suffering under various forms of local tyranny, into a single nation—is identical. In either case a single, northernmost State is chosen to be the instrument in the work of unification, and the policy of this State is wielded by a Minister of exceptional insight and strength of character, drawing after him a well-meaning but doubtful monarch. Prussia is Piedmont; Frederick William is Victor Emmanuel; Bismarck is Cavour. Even the obstacles in the way are the same. Both countries have first to deal with the occupation or opposition of Austria, and by so doing accomplish half their task; and both have next to overcome the jealousy of France and so complete it. It is not often that such a likeness in human affairs offers itself as the shepherding into a single fold of the German and Italian States.

Watching the process of growth taking place under our eyes, the outward resemblances would be the first we should notice. But what if we had looked within? What if we had questioned the thoughts and ideals which these new nations were bringing into the world, the spiritual and inward purposes which were drawing them

together and which, in after years, they would stand for and champion? We should have found, had we made that closer investigation, that the inward contrast was equal to the outward resemblance. To impose her own ideals on the Empire of her construction, to govern with the sword what she had built with the sword, was Prussia's unshakable determination, and the thwarting and stifling of every liberal instinct which sought a union on constitutional lines was the indispensable means to its attainment. Union implied, as Prussia saw it, the sacrifice of the idea of liberty by each component State. "All hope abandon—at least all hope of liberty abandon—ye who enter here," might have been inscribed over the portals of German unity.

On the other hand, in Italy the idea of liberty was the very motive and inducement relied upon to carry the work of unification through. It was the cement which held every brick of the structure in its place. Piedmont stood for liberty as staunchly as Prussia stood for autocracy. Even in the days of disappointment, when Austria was for a little while re-established and every petty tyrant crept back to persecute patriots and quench the last sparks of freedom—even in those evil days Piedmont remained true, and Victor Emmanuel, staunch when every other Prince turned traitor, ratified the free government which his father had founded. "Italy must make herself by liberty," Cavour had said, "or we must give up trying to make her."

It would be impossible here to analyse or even to name all the consequences which have flowed from this inward spiritual difference, but one such consequence which has profoundly influenced the feelings of surrounding nations and the world at large I would specify. The reader will observe that the Prussian point of view is essentially personal. It connotes the rise of Prussia and the military might and ascendancy of Prussia, and these are issues which, of course, intimately concern the Prussian people. But they do not, save as they seem to threaten, affect

others. They are not a common ideal. The good that Prussia preaches is a Prussian good, not a universal good in which all can share. Its nature is concrete and individual, not abstract and universal. The means it has used have been as mundane as the ends it has sought, and by degrees its whole Imperial design has become impregnated, in all its motives and expedients and ideas, with that essentially materialistic flavour which we have learnt to associate with Prussian achievements.

And this being so—the designs and ideas of Prussia being thus personal to herself and of service to herself only—it has followed that nothing she has done has for a moment quickened the imagination and thrilled the soul of humanity. The German Empire, under Prussia's guidance, has made wonderful progress and achieved extraordinary results, but in the whole process of the construction of German power and pride there has been no episode and no word spoken or written which has had a wider than German significance. Not a thought, not an act in the whole work has for an instant touched the heart of the world as those thoughts and acts touch it which illumine the high principles common to the human species.<sup>1</sup>

It is here we touch the difference between Prussian thought and French thought. French ideas are pure ideas, ideas of things as they are not to France alone but to all nations. That is why they are infectious and why they are felt by all freedom-loving people in Europe to offer a basis of action for Europe in the future. They are precisely what Prussian ideas are not, international in their range, true for all; and thus they provide a

<sup>1</sup> Several writers have recently pointed out, as a distinct blot on English learning, that practically none of the chief modern writers of Germany have been translated into our language. Is not the reason to be found in what has been stated above—that after all these writers, however talented, are concerned less with general ideas than with German ones? The writer has been trying his hand lately on the "great German historian" Treitschke but without much success. The truth is the progress of liberty has provincialised this sort of stuff. It has no reference to the future.

field in which all men may be themselves and retain their full individualism, and yet may find themselves in process of time more and more united and in fuller and fuller sympathy because joined in the realisation of a single ideal. Italy in the revolutionary movement was following France, was inspired by France. Perhaps, as has been explained, it would be more accurate to say that France had earliest and most clearly apprehended a truth which, more tardily and not quite so clearly, had begun to dawn upon other nations.

From the level of Prussian thought and action let the reader revert for a moment to the noblest of Meredith's heroines, in whom, indeed, the very spirit of renovated Italy is incarnate, and to her followers, the leaders of the national movement in whom were instinct the idealism and poetry which, whatever some of us may think, are the inspiration of all that is finally enduring in the lives of nations. The thoughts and actions of Italian unification touched in this way the genius of a foreigner precisely because they were a matter of universal concern. And they were of universal concern because they vindicated the beauty and the value of a principle vitally important to the human race. From the first the spiritual forces in the Italian enterprise are the dominant forces and lift the whole drama to a level where material considerations scarcely count. Had we to choose the moment in the Italian adventure most full of assurance for the future we should choose no moment of triumph, but the "splendid dream" of "'48." There are few episodes in all history so high in sentiment, so pure in their spiritual quality. It failed? Well, it is the fashion to say so. It broke itself upon Austria's discipline and the resources of organised warfare. But it put the final result past doubt. It revealed the spirit in which Italy acted. Novara made Magenta certain.

Therefore it is that, among all who love liberty, Italy herself is the more loved because of her services in that cause. In England the love of Italy is native. The

thoughts of all of us are apt to recur, with an affection sometimes amounting to longing, to her scenery, her mountains and cypresses and terraced vineyards. Often we picture the white curves of Alpine slopes, seen from the plains or the blue level of lakes, brooding, like the white breasts of swans, as Meredith said, over the olives and grapes of Lombardy. But our affection is not due entirely to her scenery, nor even to the art of her cities. Beneath these outward attractions there exists the consciousness of an inward affinity and sympathy. Italy has fought for freedom, has ranged herself with the Powers which are the sworn champions of liberty; and over and above that, has enriched the cause of liberty with a gift which is her own.

For this she has done. Each of the three Western nations has contributed something of its own to the common ideal. France has made liberty rational, England has made it practicable, Italy has made it beautiful. I shall not be held to be depreciating our own achievements if I say that Italy's efforts on behalf of liberty suggest to us ideas which our own experience fails to suggest. The spirit I have spoken of as animating the Italian Revolution—the spirit of aspiration and pure idealism, the spirit of Mazzini—is not native to England. The genius of our race, essentially practical, usually restricts itself to so much of an ideal as can be turned into immediate action. Moreover, in England all parties and all classes have more or less co-operated in carrying on the same constitutional work, and in consequence our progress has been for the most part of a deliberate and methodical kind, involving not so much the exercise of heroic and imaginative efforts as a mild practical perseverance in the affairs of daily life. But Italian aspiration has been faced with apparently insurmountable obstacles, both as regards the armed forces of the foreign invader and the resistance of tyranny and despotism entrenched within her own borders. Only by an ebullition of purely spiritual sentiment and self-sacrifice could she hope to

overcome such material impediments. She made, however, the effort. She rose to the occasion, and by so doing she has revealed the beauty and poetry and romance of liberty in a way that is a revelation to all of us. The history of Italian unification not only attracts, as I have said, the world's attention because it deals with a principle of world-wide significance, but it attracts also the world's admiration and gratitude because it invests that principle with an added beauty.

The events we have been considering happened fifty years ago. The rise into organic form and unity of the German and Italian kingdoms belongs already to the records of past history. Nevertheless those causes are to-day living in their effects. The middle years of the last century were an epoch of frantic debate in which nation by nation argued out and settled for itself the question whether it would be for liberty or against it. In no case was the decision then arrived at reversed. Germany, its aspirations after freedom thwarted and stifled by the iron Prussian will, accepted Prussian dominion, and became the willing instrument of the Prussian military and autocratic tradition. That was decisive for Germany. Her choice placed her definitely on the side of reaction and the nations that were pledged to reaction, just as Italy's choice placed her definitely on the side of the group of nations pledged to freedom.

Henceforth, in spite of superficial quarrels and alliances, the place of the two nations in Europe's great quarrel was assured. Germany might fall out with Austria on the question which of them was to lead the reactionary forces. Italy might be drawn by diplomatic manœuvres into a quasi-alliance with the Germanic Powers. Nevertheless, as the day drew on which was to decide the issue between liberty and physical might, all lesser engagements yielded and gave way. That issue was paramount. It penetrated to the core of life and vitally affected the spiritual and intellectual outlook of Europe. No other consideration or motive mattered in comparison with

this, and accordingly when the moment of final decision came it was in obedience to their conviction on this issue that the nations ranged themselves. The reader remembers the gathering torrent of public enthusiasm in Italy which swept away like straws political intrigues and triple alliances and all other hindrances to Italy's fighting. That was the great national ratification of a decision arrived at fifty years ago.



## CHAPTER VIII

### MODERN LIBERALISM

Its endorsement of materialism—It perpetually generates out of itself the forces that withstand liberty—Its appeal to the baser instincts of the people—Memories of elections—Failure of Liberalism to appreciate national aspirations—Its failure due to its inability to comprehend spiritual motives.

THERE are very few people, I believe, who do not look beyond these days of suffering and endurance to a better and brighter national life in the future. We should be sorry to think, and not many do think, that it will be with us after the war as it was before—that we shall go back to our old ideals and be absorbed once more in our old materialistic purposes. That cannot be intended. Rather what makes the national loss and suffering endurable is the profound consciousness that this is a price that we are paying, that the very intention of all this suffering is that, purified by it, man may adapt his thoughts to truths which are of permanent importance and may appraise at their real value the superficialities and irrelevancies amid which so much of his recent existence has been passed.

This is our hope. Through this war we are meant to attain to something we did not possess before. But what are we to attain and from what direction are we to expect the light? Can we answer those questions, or is the prospect all made up of vague conjecture?

It seems reasonable to believe that one thing the war is destined and intended to teach us is to reassume, once

more consciously, the ideal of our nation and race. A national peril such as the present has the effect of superseding individual aims and objects by national aims and objects. Our country in its peril appeals to its own share in each of our natures ; England speaks to the England in every one of us ; and though we might not, before this crisis, have been strongly conscious of patriotism, yet now, by an act of sympathy, the latent patriotic sense in all of us so dilates that men are ready to lay down their lives for a cause they had hitherto scarcely given a thought to.

This being so, it seems that in the sphere of ideas too, as in that of action, the same effects should follow, and that, just as men are able to act on the national scale so they should be able, too, to think on the national scale. They should be able to realise what it is that England stands for, the purpose and intention which England herself has it in her mind to work out and develop for the world's benefit. Can we put ourselves in England's place, can our thoughts go with hers through the vistas of the past ? There can be no doubt as to this purpose of England, for it is the one thing in our history which has never changed. From the days when our wild ancestors, surging westward, overwhelmed the ordered officialism and ponderous routine of Rome, and on its ruins built up their own self-governing communities, tingling with individual initiative, and in their every act and law, and in all their daring experiments in art, exhibiting to the world the spirit of liberty which possessed them—from that day to this what is not changed save the ideal we started with ? We have changed our language ; we have changed our art ; we have changed our religion. In place of barbarism we are civilised ; in place of ignorance we have much knowledge. There is no element, no factor in the national life which has not been altered out of recognition, save only that primitive instinct of liberty which was used to reanimate the Imperial lethargy and to substitute independence for control as the mainspring

of society. That contest has not been altered, nor the combatants. The influences that make for freedom and the influences that make for dependence are little different from what they were. A wanderer from the Middle Ages coming among us, though he found all else strange, would recognise the signs of a free citizenship pressing its ancient claims, and a feudalism doggedly defending its ancient privileges. Not in a merely sentimental, but in a literal and historical sense, liberty may be said to be our national ideal. Some day our English history will be written on these lines, taking this instinct of liberty as its central motive and the clue, as it were, to the whole historical drama; treating campaigns, and the reigns of kings, and the rise and fall of governments as mere excrescences and accidents, and the struggle towards a fuller realisation of liberty as the main theme and spinal cord of the nation's life.<sup>1</sup> This is what binds our history together from age to age and gives it unity and sequence. It is the thread on which outward acts and events are strung. It is what has made all progress in civilisation and science possible, for it is the power which upholds and sustains the very structure of our society. I cannot but think that such a history, when it comes to be written, will, since it deals with what gives history coherence, be the most coherent of all histories.

And what will such a history have to narrate? What threads will it select and follow, leading from the past down to the present, and on into the future; threads which we ourselves are weaving to-day? We cannot go wrong in saying that it will recognise what is so plain—the interaction and mutual leaning on, and support of, each other by the forces of Christianity and liberty during the mediaeval age; and how, in the following era, the eclipse of the spiritual sense fell like a palsy on liberty itself; and again, as we approach these days, how the

<sup>1</sup> I suppose these are the lines on which Acton's *History of Liberty*, certainly the greatest book that never was written, would have proceeded.

struggles of liberty, reft of the help of Christianity, to reassert itself, have been like the struggles of some stricken creature whose efforts to dart forward cast it back in writhings upon itself. The history I speak of will follow these movements, and will linger upon this last. Nor can we, if we would throw our might into the right scale, do better than so linger also.

More than half a century ago Mazzini taught the world a lesson which the world has been very slow in learning. He taught that if the love of liberty were joined to a lofty and pure moral purpose in its use and exercise, then it would be achieved and enjoyed. But if liberty were sought for base ends and material purpose, then it would elude its pursuers and prove always unattainable.

And the reason for this is plain enough. He who proposes for himself a material aim proposes an aim which is realisable, and the realisation of which is the object of his constant efforts. He pursues that he may enjoy, and enjoy in this earthly sphere. But the point of view of the man who pursues and that of the man who enjoys are different and even opposed to each other. He who pursues demands free access to the prize, a fair field and an open course, and the removal of artificial barriers and restrictions. But once he has attained his object his opinions change. His aim now is to enjoy what he has won, and so far from calling out for an open course and fair field for all-comers his desire is to secure his booty by as many safeguards and barriers as possible. Thus do those who have attained the common object turn upon those who have not attained it, and withstand their advance. What is here spoken of is matter of common knowledge. The vast majority of those who achieve wealth and position are examples. When they set out upon the race they are Liberals, Radicals, Socialists. They are for equal opportunities for all, and for the obliteration of class privileges and all other obstacles to their progress. They make, as a rule, great

play in these days with the word liberty. But when they have seized their prey the change comes. What should freedom, or equality of opportunity, profit them now? They have run and won, and now would enjoy their winnings in peace and security. This is the thought of each new-comer as he fights his way through the magic portals and leaves the surging, jostling crowd behind. "Give us all a chance," he shouts as he struggles to the front. "Lock the door," he growls as he takes his seat at the banquet.

The transition is a permanent part of our politics and a chief factor in their application. We are like an army besieging a fortress. We rush to the attack; we scale the walls; we reach the battlements; and then having forced an entrance what do we do but turn our weapons upon those with whom a moment ago we were fighting shoulder to shoulder. And not only do we do this, but the defender, the enemy who holds the wall, knows that we will do it, and counts upon it. It is thus he recruits himself. So versed is he in these tactics that you will see him stretch out his arms to the best and hardiest climbers and pull them over the walls, that they may help pour down molten lead on the heads of their late comrades.

This, I say, is the normal procedure. The prizes society has in view, striven for by all, are defended by those who achieve them. In this way, year by year, a percentage of the more adventurous and successful change from attack to defence, and help to maintain the powerful party whose business it is to guard its own possessions. It is said of Radical peers that their principles never survive a single generation. The truth is, they have got what they wanted. Thus our liberty, serving materialistic ideals, itself constantly paves the way for reaction and automatically generates the antagonism which is to withstand it. The Bishop of Oxford has been telling us lately that the hope of democracy consists in education, and Mr. Arnold Bennett and Mr.

Wells and others are never tired of emphasising the same conclusion. But why should education make this difference? Will education shift the motive? Will education teach people that to make a fortune and be made a peer are not the best things life has to offer? Education will add vigour to the competition, will tremendously stimulate the attack, but, in an exactly proportional degree, it will stimulate the defence. A little higher up or a little lower down the social scale it matters not, the point of balance will be reached. Education or no education, so long as the motive in command of life remains materialistic, reaction will continue to recruit itself from the ranks of liberty.

So we return to Mazzini's argument on the value of the motive. Set mankind in motion towards an end it can realise and achieve and you have introduced a motive of permanent discord into society. Set it in motion towards an end too lofty ever to realise and you have struck the note of unity. This is the difference between the spiritual motive and the material. The spiritual motive unites society, the material motive divides it. We were speaking some way back of the arrangement of a Doric temple, mystically controlled and governed as it is from that point in mid-heaven to which all its walls and columns obediently incline, and the influence of which, by inspiring the whole building with a common purpose, invests it with the grand sentiment of unity which it so powerfully embodies. It is so with the ideals which govern human conduct: the higher they are the more they harmonise and unite; the lower they are the more they divide and disintegrate.

The contrast is in nothing more admirably brought out than by a comparison between the action of our modern Trade Unions with that of the mediaeval Guilds. Lujo Brentano identifies the two institutions and argues that the Unions grew out of the Guilds. Their chief aim in any case was identical: it was to guard and preserve the liberties of working men. Their influence on life,

however, was widely different. The Guild evolved for the British workman a life, rude in many respects, but ennobled, as it were from within, by an inherent sense of its own dignity and worth, a life which expressed its own splendid unanimity in the puissant energy of Gothic art. What sort of a life does the Trade Union evolve? A life, it must be conceded, with little dignity or innate pride in it, and with still less agreement; a life of irritable unrest and discontent, of base quarrels for base ends, of labour not ennobling but degrading; a life ugly in itself and productive of nothing but ugliness.

Such is the contrast; and to what is it due? Both institutions, as I say, are sworn defenders of liberty, and indeed exist for the purpose of maintaining the liberties of citizens against all encroachment. But though their object is identical the motives by which they are inspired are wholly different. The Guild sets before itself a spiritual motive, a motive which, it is true, cannot in this world, and does not hope to be, fully attained, but which, just because it cannot be attained, draws together its followers into a single body, and thus uniting them, invests them with dignity and power, so that, agreeing in matters spiritual, they speak with authority on matters temporal. On the other hand, the Trade Union introduces a purely material motive, and with it a spirit of discord which thwarts every design it undertakes; so that, though it has the means at its disposal and sees its aim clearly, yet it is always hindered by furious opposition and dissensions from achieving its desire.

But widely should we err if we supposed that the degradation of liberty, through its association with base motives, is peculiar to Trade Unions. It is a consequence (I say it as a Liberal reluctantly and with shame) which inheres in the whole cast of thought of modern Liberalism. Already it seems a long time to the days before the War, yet it is easy to recall those events, and in particular it is easy for the writer to recall the last general election,

his personal participation in which introduced him for the first time to the party ideals. Above all, the drift of the regular official Liberal speeches, always the same, comes back to-day with a deep and terrible significance. Why has the Liberal party so utterly failed to grasp or find speech for the inward meaning of the present War; why has the thought of a Europe bracing itself for a century for this struggle—the example of every fight for independence and every patriotic example culminating and drawing up to this—left it cold and uninspired? One would have thought that Liberalism—if there is anything, as it pretends, between itself and liberty—would be moved by this great battle for the ascendancy of liberty in Europe to no common manifestation of hope, enthusiasm, and eloquence. Why has it not been? Those election speeches of official Liberalism are droning their answer in my ears as I write. It is an answer that still has significance.

The English workman, and particularly perhaps the English peasant, is perfectly capable, I have always thought, of taking a genuine interest in the ideas which constitute the essence and spirit of Liberalism, those ideas, I mean, which have to do with the growth and development of liberty, the part it has played in history, and the spiritual forces with which it is inextricably allied. But while our peasants are able and willing to identify themselves with the central conviction of their race, they get little opportunity of so doing owing to the fact that this view of politics forms no part of the official treatment which is now paramount. It seems that the generality of political speakers are in dread of talking, as it is called, "over the heads of their audience." Not understanding that men may be wise by instinct who intellectually are quite uninstructed, they presume that to talk seriously and thoughtfully to a village audience is mere waste of breath. It is a fatal blunder, and its consequences are being widely felt at the present moment. They are felt in a very



prevalent lack of any real depth of Liberal conviction. Constantly appealed to on the selfish, narrow ground of the personal profit to be derived from particular measures, the Liberal democracy insensibly adopts the habit of judging Liberalism by the standard which its own politicians have set up, the standard of immediate material gains and losses. It takes the official speakers at their own word. It follows their train of reasoning, and sums up each act of legislation simply as it affects their cupboards or their pockets. We gave you this, we gave you that ; you will get this, you will get that—such is the burden of the eloquence of the party speakers. What wonder if the average peasant comes to regard his chances of “making a bit out of it” as the test of a good Government? So sedulously, indeed, and so successfully have his views been narrowed down to instant gains by a long course of party oratory, that when such a measure as the Insurance Act is passed, which demands an initial outlay instead of proffering an immediate dole, he is nonplussed, and becomes suspicious, even indignant. Something, he thinks, has gone wrong with the machine. This is altogether contrary to any political philosophy that ever he was taught. Official Liberalism laments his short-sightedness, but does not ask itself how far it is itself to blame for that short-sightedness.

The present writer having for some years previous to the War been Liberal candidate or prospective candidate in one of the largest and most Tory of the southern county divisions, has had the usual opportunities of listening to the delegates of the Home Counties Association explaining the Budget, explaining Tariff Reform, explaining the Insurance Act, and has been able to observe the line taken by them, the arguments relied on and the sentiments appealed to, as well as the impression made upon the audience and the after effect in the neighbourhood, and it may be said at once that the instruction given, useful as it was in many ways, was

totally devoid of what ought to be the most essential qualities of any such teaching.

That politics should become more and more officially organised as time goes on is probably inevitable. The tendency has been for some time past for central associations to organise regiments of speakers, whose business it was to study the measures of the party programme in order that they might act as their interpreters to the country. No sooner did it appear, from the closing in of the enemy's forces upon a particular issue, that such a question was to form a subject of controversy between the parties than the trained and disciplined light troops of Liberalism were flung out in clouds over the country to withstand the threatened attack. They were, so far as my experience goes, and as one would naturally expect them to be, a body of able and intelligent men, and they did work which was not only useful in itself, but which, were it not done, would lay the party open to the most damaging treatment at the hands of its adversaries. But their exposition, from the very nature of the case, was bound to be a limited one. Switched on, now to this subject, now to that, obliged to mug up every question as it presented itself, their activity expressly confined to that measure, their attention concentrated for the time being upon it and it alone, it necessarily followed that their handling of it was of a purely explanatory and practical kind. They understood the Bill. They explained the Bill. They had the entire contents of the Bill at their finger-ends. But they did not travel beyond the Bill; and the part it might play in realising the Liberal ideal of breeding a race of free men and free women was a consideration altogether outside their survey.

So circumscribed a treatment was bound to be inadequate. For Bills are like building-stones. Each one has not only to be trimmed and cut to fit its own place and fulfil its own functions, but it is also to be regarded architecturally as an essential part of the structure of Liberalism. The Insurance Act, for instance, contained

within itself certain provisions for the welfare of working men and women. But that did not make it a Liberal measure. An Act distributing free beefsteaks every day to working men would likewise provide practical benefits, but it would not be a Liberal measure ; very much the contrary. The Insurance Act was typically Liberal because, in the first place, being based on the just claims of labour and the contributions of working men and women, the benefits it offers are such as a free people can accept ; and because, in the second place, those benefits are such as must needs be a powerful aid and stimulus to independence of life. Therefore the Act is in its right place in the Liberal edifice, and relevant, as it were, to the style of that architecture.

Now evidently some ideas of interest might be opened up on this side. Liberalism is not a matter of politics only, and would be incapable of realisation if it were so. It embraces life. Political enfranchisement little avails a section of the community which exists in a state of dependence, for employment, housing, and help in time of sickness, on a socially superior class. Such people are unfree in the conditions of their lives. Their lives it is which need enfranchising. Hence the intimate concern of Liberalism with life, and its instinctive endeavour to foster such conditions of life as make for independence. No section of society can remain permanently free in the political sense, yet abjectly dependent in the conditions of its life. For either the spirit of liberty will spread from politics to life, or the spirit of servitude will spread from life to politics. Either, then, the Insurance Act might be looked at as a measure tending to the development of free conditions of life, and, in country districts, where it is most needed, suggesting the efficacy of union and infusing into every cottage home a quite new sense of security and independence, or it might be considered as a sort of bran-pie for poor people, into which they had but to dip to extract some material benefits—free medicine, or doctors, sick pay, sanatoria, and the rest of them.

That the latter interpretation of the Act was necessary to the right understanding of it no one will deny. But I maintain that the former interpretation was also necessary; nay, that it was the most necessary, for it deals with considerations which are of more powerful influence, go deeper into life, and are of more effect in moulding character than the others. Yet it was practically ignored. The writer has listened to speakers by the score on this subject at country meetings, and the one and only impression given always was that the Act was "a good thing," was "good business," and that the contributor would get his money's worth out of it and a bit over, and incidentally that, as a wideawake customer and one who knew on which side his bread was buttered, he would support a Government which laid the butter on so generously.

That was all. Of the Act as a move in the slow struggle for liberty, of the supports it brought up to where they were most needed, and the effect it was likely to have on the future development of the Liberal cause, not a word. The speakers, who had been especially coached in the provisions of the Act, and sent out to explain it, were not to blame. Many of them would readily have taken a higher view of their mission. The present writer, when he has suggested to some of them that the side of the subject to which he has alluded did in fact exist, that it was calculated to appeal to men's imaginations, and that it was a pity to ignore it, always met with ready agreement. Though it was not for them to open up that side of the question, yet they fully saw the advantages of such a course when put before them. Why had they not heard before of that obvious interest in so great a question? Why had it not been made their business to handle the measure in its relation to our national ideals? How did it come about that they should be supposed to be equipped for the elucidation of such an Act as this and yet never have given a thought to those very aspects of it which are

fraught with most profound significance? I do not know what leaders of ours instruct these emissaries, but upon them a great responsibility rests. It was said that no one went out from Pitt's presence uninspired. "The ardour of his soul had set the whole kingdom on fire," says Macaulay. "It inflamed every soldier who dragged the cannon up the heights of Quebec, and every sailor who boarded the French ships among the rocks of Brittany." We could do with a touch of that spirit to-day in our political propoganda, but it does not appear to be forthcoming.

We got rather tired at last of the sort of stuff that was served out to us. However poor men may be, they are not readily inspired by appeals to the pocket alone; nor is an audience united by such appeals, nor does it disperse with a sense of enhanced political insight after having listened to them. Some of us were fitfully interested; a few practical spirits might attend throughout and be prepared with intelligent questions at the end. There was some curiosity, and, thanks to Tory help in explaining the Bill, a good deal of misunderstanding of it prevalent. But when all doubts had been dispelled, and all the benefits in store for them had been elaborately displayed and made the most of, the villagers would still turn homeward with an air of discontent or indifference. It needed no lifetime's experience of them to know that they were unsatisfied. Though they had heard of many material advantages coming their way, yet they wanted something more, something different. They wanted some recognition and appeal, not merely to their instincts as poor men, but also to their instincts as free men and Englishmen. They wanted to be told of something nobler in the Act than that it gave them ninepence for fourpence and medicine for nothing. It is a little depressing, when one has a nodding acquaintance with want, to have it assumed as a matter of course that all one's thoughts and desires are of a sordid quality. "What can such poor miserable drudges as you want with anything save immediate

material relief?" was the implication contained in every speech. The poverty was true, no doubt; but something else is true too. There is hidden away in the characters of these people an aspiration, a hope, beyond their present lot, which, though quite indefinable to themselves, does dimly associate them in the purpose and destiny of their race, and, when no recognition of this higher hope is forthcoming, the feeling generated is one of lassitude and depression.

A town-bred speaker often misunderstands country audiences. He must have recognition, and unless he gets it he will cast about in his repertory of small jokes and local allusions for ammunition to "wake 'em up" with. They do not want waking up. A rustic audience is at its best when quite silent and stolidly attentive. Speak to it simply, but of important things. Speak to it of the ideas which have governed history and the motives which, ever since England was a nation, have inspired popular enthusiasm. It will listen quietly, but do not speak for applause. Speak as if you were speaking to England herself. These men are mere bits of England that have got momentarily transplanted in here from the soil where they belong. They have the character of the earth they plough and the cattle they tend, yet they are capable of assimilating ideas in a way of their own, and if you chance to have said something of real import to them (such as you would like to put in a book and be remembered by), though they make no sign at the time, they will very likely chew the cud of it for days and weeks afterwards. They tempt one to dwell on what there is mysterious in the human understanding; for it is not to any consciously reasoning faculty you seem to speak in them, but rather to some dumb profound racial instinct of which they themselves are unaware. "In the soul of one who is ignorant," wrote Wilde in one of those moments of insight which illumined his prison life, "there is always room for a great idea." I have often thought that the lives of these men, and their hereditary

intimate familiarity with the stuff England is made of, has fostered their instinct as much as it has undoubtedly diminished their quickness of thought and understanding. This is what throws the town speaker out of gear with his country audience, that he cannot distinguish the difference between a consciously intelligent appreciation of facts and arguments and an instinctive inward appreciation of sentiments and ideals. The former type of understanding belongs to the towns, the latter to the country. Any one can speak to a town audience, for nothing is so easy to handle as facts, but it needs impulses of deeper birth to move an audience of peasants.

We call England free, not because she is or ever has been really free, but because she is, as she always has been, struggling towards freedom, because that is her ideal. There is no peasant in the land so dull as not to feel this if you put it to him clearly, having first thought it out clearly in your own mind. You speak, when you talk to him on such subjects, not to that limited intelligence of his, but to the something far deeper, to what in him is character and temperament rather than mind, and binds present and past generations together in a single racial endeavour. Be his brains what they may, he is of English clay. This, I say, is our Liberal advantage, that preaching Liberalism we preach a doctrine which touches the quick of English character. Yet that advantage we deliberately forgo. Instead of striking the deep national chords which all hearts thrill to, we keep tinkling away at the thin treble notes of gain and self-interest. And then, when we have exhausted ourselves in gifts and promises, and find our forces after all dissipating, we bitterly upbraid our followers and lament that "there is no gratitude in politics." Thank heaven at least for that! It will be an ill day for liberty when the people follow a Government for doles. Rome was enslaved by free bread, and you may win a dog to follow you on the like terms. We want, not servile gratitude, but the co-operation of free men.

Contrast what we might have done with what we did. We might have enlisted on our side the staunchest and most steadfast instincts of our race, for these instincts exist "in widest commonalty spread," and are always ready to respond to the note of sincerity and conviction. This the writer would emphasise as a matter of personal knowledge and experience, for, though himself an indifferent and unpractised speaker, he has never addressed a village audience without being intensely aware of the rugged English sentiment latent in it, and aware, too, that success in approaching it is a measure of the sincerity and sympathy of the speaker. We hear a great deal too much about the stupidity of the people. It is men of a shallow way of thinking and office-trained minds who make these charges. The English people are far from shallow, but you yourself must know how to voice English convictions before you can sound them. Official Liberalism could not voice those convictions. It did not even know of their existence. Yet the voice of official Liberalism was almost the only Liberal voice the people ever heard. That voice, speaking to them in the name of the Government, explained to them the Government's conception of the meaning of Liberalism. Is it to be wondered at that the great democratic movement of 1906—I do not say did little, for thanks to energetic party leaders it has done much—but so little confirmed itself in the popular goodwill and touched so little the popular imagination? It is we ourselves, we preachers of Liberalism, using our principles for vote-catching bait, who industriously and persistently have educated the people in a mean creed, and now wonder to find their hearts so little engaged in it. With every passing year we lost a little ground, and that not from any attacks of the enemy, for never was a party more bankrupt in all that should make it formidable—men, ideas, a constructive policy—than the Conservative party after 1906. No, we lost ground simply from our own inability worthily to represent our cause. There



is an ancient allegory about the sword that one knight alone could draw, the bow that one hand could bend. We could not wield the weapons that were put into our hands. Our greatest measures and reforms, explained as we explained them, aroused no enthusiasm. The peasant still thought the squire's jolly greeting, as he rode by on his way to the meet, a better and cleaner thing than the snuffling "ninepence for fourpence" that Liberal speakers were dinning into him.

I dwell on this because it is above all things necessary that we should understand what the debasing of our ideals is responsible for. The tendency of which I have given an instance pervades the whole of Liberalism and infects the attitude of the entire progressive party. Naturally, and as we have seen must be inevitable, this confirmed materialism of aim inspires an equivalent antagonism. The fiercer the attack the more vigorous the defence. As liberty was changed into Liberalism, and the great doctrine which had ennobled an earlier generation degenerated into the greedy struggle which degrades modern life, the political position has developed into a thinly disguised strife between those who want to get and those who want to keep. The cause of the change is in the mind of man, in the motive of his conduct and the goal towards which he has turned his eyes. For two hundred years the inward cause has operated. Year by year, as intellectualism grew and extended its sway and the spiritual instinct weakened and declined, the motive of human endeavour was correspondingly lowered, and as this happened the universal truth, witnessed to by all life and all art, that the lofty motive unifies while the debased motive disintegrates, was once again illustrated.

The reader may think that in days like these, when doing counts for everything, I am overprone to revert to vague and transcendental influences. But let him look closer and he will perceive that spiritual influences may themselves be intensely practical, so much so that

the most tangible and commonplace benefits may be utterly impossible to achieve without their help. It is one of the most unfortunate results of the separation of spiritual motives from daily life that a practical view of such motives has become unusual if not impossible. The very word spiritual conjures up in people's minds an impression of sanctimoniousness, an odour of affected piety, and that subtle atmosphere of humbug and make-believe with which our treatment of the subject for generations has invested it. It had, however, once upon a time, a totally different aspect. Its significance to the workaday world is that it alone can furnish an adequate motive to life. We all feel, at least all feel who have not been assimilated by the political system, that party politics have become disintegrating in proportion as they have become materialistic. The war, bringing the longing for unity, has brought also the knowledge that unity is not to be attained under the guidance of low and sordid motives. The lofty ideal unites, the low ideal divides. We long for wider views, for a more harmonious progress, for an end to the fierce bickering between class and class, for a wealth conscious of duty, and a labour inspired by the sense of its own worth and sincerity. We want these things, and they are practical things, and the lives of men here below in the street and field and workshop will never be happy until they get them. Nevertheless, though the effect of these things is mundane, the source from which they issue is not so. By one means only can they be secured, by lifting the inward motives which inspire human conduct from the material to the spiritual plane.

## CHAPTER IX

### MODERN CONSERVATISM

Our idea of aristocracy—Its origin in the eighteenth century—Its purely materialistic character—Georgian life and Georgian art—The separation of the classes—Supremacy of the “ great families ”—They have worked ever since for class not national aggrandisement—The consequence is they do not stand to-day for the national cause in the full meaning of the word.

WE endeavoured in the last chapter to show how the spirit of materialism, eating into Liberal ideas and gradually debasing them, had turned them into dis-integrants of national unity. If from Liberalism we turn to Conservatism, if from Democracy we revert to Aristocracy, we shall find the same motive acting with precisely the same results in that sphere also.

And the first point to be noted in regard to English aristocracy is that it is solidly founded on fact. It does not rely upon lofty ideals and abstract principles, but upon things that can be seen and handled. Its arguments are beautiful houses and old gardens, and timbered parks, and dazzling motor-cars. With these it convinces and overcomes. It exhibits to the world, and advertises all over the landscape, the attractions of what seems an almost perfect order of life, a life with its own exceptional standard of manners and courtesy and taste, its own amenities and luxuries and refined surroundings and delicate framework of art, its own incomparable talent for spending time and money gracefully on things that do not matter. This life, in all its harmony and completeness, it holds up before the country, as the priest holds up

the consecrated wafer before the prostrate congregation. What can mere human reasoning do against such eloquence as this? Matthew Arnold, in one of his most admired passages, contrasts the powerful influence of Oxford's ancient towers and gardens with the fugitive efforts of men who come and go. It is the happy fate of the Tories that they are able to rely on the same kind of brick and mortar arguments diffused over the whole country.

Moreover it must be remembered that this ideal, so constantly demonstrated and flashing its attractiveness before all our eyes, is not only a very conspicuous ideal and a very beautiful ideal, but also that it is a universally attainable ideal, an ideal, that is to say, which acts as an incentive even to those who, as yet, are not partakers of it. This has been of immense importance to it. It is the difference between the English and French systems. The French *ancien noblesse* was, of course, a much more perfect thing in aristocracies than anything we have done in that line in England. But though its art and manners and wit and taste were much ahead of ours, it lacked our instinct of self-preservation. It made the fatal mistake of cutting itself off from public support. Guarded from within, its beauty and luxury strictly inaccessible, it refused, with lofty French idealism, to dilute itself with recruits, who indeed might in a physical sense strengthen it, but who beyond question would seriously deteriorate its quality. Lonely and inviolate, beautiful but doomed, the French aristocracy moved with colours flying to the inevitable catastrophe. The clashing of the guillotine was the people's comment on a perfection from which they were definitely excluded.

From this fate the English aristocracy was preserved by that excellent practical instinct, which we possess in common with elephants, for testing ground before we tread on it. Better a more or less mongrel aristocracy in sound health than a pure one with its head off. Since people would not, so it was argued, destroy dukes if they

had a sporting chance of becoming dukes themselves, the first thing to do was to convert a sufficient number to encourage that expectation. In this way the aristocratic order in England was secured by committing its defence, not to its own members only, but to all who hoped that they, or their sons, or their son's sons, might some day claim a share in it; that is to the general public. Prompted by this dim ambition thousands of potential republicans play their part in the English aristocratic system as supports and humble props to its greatness. Country-town butchers and grocers feel that their sirloins and sugar are nourishing a loveliness in which they, or if not they their descendants, have a potential personal interest. In short, this beautiful exhibition of materialism is held up not to be adored only but to be participated in by the whole country.

However, the attractions of the aristocratic order are too well known, and have too intimately penetrated English life, to need description.<sup>1</sup> The reader who consults his own emotions will be perfectly familiar with them. My object in alluding to the subject here is to point out the difference between the aristocrat's ideal as it now exists in England and as it once existed. At present, it will not be denied, the aristocratic order is valued and pursued quite simply for materialistic reasons, because it offers to all who attain it a superior degree of luxury, comfort, ease and enjoyment. It is, compared with workaday life, what a Pullman car is to a third-class compartment, the most comfortable way possible of making life's journey. This view we have got so accustomed to that we are apt to think there is no other. There has nevertheless been another. The original idea of nobility in England was strictly based on service—primarily, of course, military

<sup>1</sup> It is often argued that refinement is a more than materialistic merit. All, however, depends on the order in which you place things. If the result of social refinement is to place its own slight qualifications ahead of the essentials of life, to value the imperceptibilities of manner more highly than truth, and sympathy, and kindness, and courage, then that very social refinement turns into a spiritual and intellectual vulgarity of the first order.

service. To be great meant to have served greatly. It was for high and valued services done to the nation, or king as representative of the nation, that honour was conferred. And for centuries, though gradually weakening, this idea—that the great English nobles were the great English servants—remained permanent and instinctive. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it waned, and during the eighteenth was supplanted by an ideal of nobility in keeping with the character of a thoroughly material age. Henceforth the old idea, that a title was a public recognition of public virtue, passed out of sight, and the opposite view was taken that it was a passport (to be bought for hard cash like the Pullman ticket) into a highly enjoyable and luxurious mode of life. So complete was the triumph of the new theory that the standard it set up has prevailed to this day. We no longer connect aristocracy and service; we connect it with an exclusive and delicate luxury. Not how may I best serve England, but how may I secure the best of everything for myself, constitutes in these days the lure and attraction of rank. To belong to the “upper” social class, with amusements and sports, and a luxury and refinement and almost a language of its own, is the ambition of thousands, not five per cent of whom connect such a consummation with any act on their part of self-dedication to lofty and national causes.

It is not enough, then, that we should declare for an aristocracy. It remains to be asked what kind of aristocracy: an aristocracy of the old national type or of the modern selfish type? The two are opposed. What has a class, recommended by the delicacies and good things it has to offer, in common with a class sanctified by service and knit by use into the organism of the nation? It is between these we have to distinguish, and the best way to do so is to recur to that moment in our history when the change was effected, and when were instilled into the aristocratic ideal the leading characteristics which it still retains.

Has the reader ever asked himself, standing before a Gainsborough, a Reynolds, or a Romney, what the social significance of such an art as this may be? It is not hard to determine. The point of view of the period is made obvious at a glance. That century saw the rise, development, and decline of what we still think of as pre-eminently our national school of painting. But that school was not really national at all. It surveys life strictly from the standpoint of a particular class. However much we may admire Sir Joshua and his group, is it possible to gauge the scope and character of their work without being struck by the narrowness of the limits within which they moved? Lord This, the Countess of That, the Duchess of So-and-so and her children, the Ladies Mary and Betty Something-else—so runs the catalogue of their canvases. How circumscribed, one cannot help feeling, is the area of life from which this art drew its inspiration. Nor were those narrow limits ever overstepped with impunity. Has eighteenth-century art produced a single great religious composition, or any historical or other event of general interest treated adequately? Not one that I know of. More widely instructed than the rest of his circle in the ideas of the Renaissance, it was Sir Joshua's ambition to deal with those ideas with Italian amplitude, and his experiments are of extraordinary interest as showing that it was exactly in proportion as he approached towards or receded from the strictly aristocratic standpoint that his own art acquired or lost power and vitality. His imaginative characters put on reality as they draw on this common source of inspiration. The intuitions or guesses of classic thought and classic myth, so profoundly and humanly significant, failed to reach him of themselves. But let Lady Mary or Lady Betty be his dryad or Diana, and the subject immediately became thrilled and inspired as it developed the patrician charm which was the prevailing test of beauty.

The same bias shows itself in dealing with the most ordinary occurrences of common life. The villagers and

peasantry, the cottage interiors and rustic scenes of George Morland, Old Crome and others, are conceived out of no endeavours to realise that life as it existed. These sleek cottagers and buxom wenches, ignorant but happy, humble in their circumstances, but placid and contented, and, as it were, designed by Nature for their lowly lot, who trudge beside the waggon or dance around the may-pole, have no relation to any living English peasantry; least of all to that peasantry at the moment of deepest degradation and misery it has ever sunk to. They are a representation of rustic life, not as it was but as aristocratic taste desired it to be, and, perhaps, imagined it to be. And so, too, as regards Nature herself the same rule holds. The meadows and woods and rivulets and hills, the gnarled oaks with bossy limbs and clustering foliage, the dappled sward, the torrent and the rock, have all the same indefinable air of sleekness and docility. They seem to form part of the amenities of some ancestral domain. The trees are of the kind that grow in parks, the wilderness where it exists is carefully studied and arranged, the glades are of the made-up variety known as the picturesque. The very dogs and horses of these pictures are of the same character. They gambol with an obedient playfulness. They arch their necks and prance with a mettlesome spirit which never exceeds the bounds of propriety, and the flash of their saucer eyes is always corrected by the glances of languishing admiration which they cast upon their masters.

It is not a question of subject only. The evil goes deep into the very nature of the art itself. Of what kind is the change of mind we are conscious of in passing from the gracious no doubt and graceful canvases of the Reynolds group to those grave and exalted compositions—annunciations, visitations, crucifixions, and the like—which, changing little, and passing with slight emendation from hand to hand, move like solemn thoughts through the development of Italian art? There is the change of sentiment, of course, inseparable from the



change of subject ; but that is not all. There is a change also in the quality of the painting. The great spiritual subjects have uttered themselves in compositions of a grandeur and dignity quite outside the conception of Georgian art. The types of face and head, the single figures and the groups, are endowed with a monumental simplicity and significance which have very little in common with the fluent gracefulness of Gainsborough or Romney. This the theme itself insures. Georgian painting, lacking the high seriousness of Italian art at its greatest, lacks also the noble sense of composition which that seriousness engendered.

But painting after all is but one branch of art. What is remarkable about the Georgian creative epoch is that every one of its manifestations bears the same aspect. The furniture, the porcelain, the silver, the decorative details of ceilings and mantelpieces, the pottery, the sculpture, the architecture of the period, since they all very obviously act in obedience to the same motive, must be open to the same interpretation. If we have rightly caught the spirit of eighteenth-century painting, we shall find that all the other arts and crafts guarantee and reiterate our inference. There is no difficulty in divining their character. The whole of eighteenth century art, it is very evident, is pervaded by an extraordinary and unusual refinement. There is nothing in it exuberant, redundant, or over-emphatic. It is severely restrained, in a high degree cultured, exceedingly well-bred. Not a trace does it exhibit of the superabundant vitality and warmth of popular art, but rather inclines to a certain coldness and arrogance of expression, its very perfection of taste lending it an air of exclusiveness, as of a thing aloof from common appreciation, and of too delicate an order to be understood by the vulgar. In short, in all respects, it is intensely aristocratic, and it is its aristocratic purpose, or tendency to deal with its subject-matter entirely from the aristocratic standpoint, which constitutes its note as a style.

This becomes clearer if we compare it for a moment with the only other period in British art which can take rank as a great creative epoch. Gothic art, like Georgian, has the stylistic note. Its inspiration, however, is not aristocratic but democratic. Lacking the attraction which we associate with good taste and refinement, it is replete with the energy and vitality which art only acquires when it is used to express national emotions and aspirations. In every respect there is an entire divergence of view between the two epochs; but the clue to all differences consists in the different relations which in each case are assumed to prevail between the workman and his work. The Gothic conception of art and craftsmanship is that they are processes belonging to and emanating from the national labour. Man is condemned to a life of toil, but this solace and recompense is awarded him, that he is permitted to ennoble toil itself by using it as a means of self-expression. Through this medium he may utter his faith and longing, or tell the story of his life. Thus defined, art shares with language in being one of the two chief modes of expression of humanity. It is as much the speech of the hands as words are of the lips. How many are there who have used that mute utterance who otherwise would have had no outlet for the thoughts that were in them! This, after all, is the greatest, the only adequate reward of labour. By no wages is labour dignified. Pay it a pound a minute, and what then? You make it worth a man's while to do it, but you do not change the nature of what he does. If the work itself be mean and mechanical, mean and mechanical it will remain, and mean and mechanical it will make the doer of it, however highly paid it may be. But set labour free to propose its own solutions and voice its own ideas of what is meet and becoming, and the act of toil is itself transformed. The hands are become instruments of the mind. Imagination and mental activity prompt the tools and feel, in their turn, the stimulus of

creation. The toil of a country, culminating to this outlet, matches some great orchestral symphony with all its varied instruments—the tapping of a million hammers and notes of plane and saw and chisel—uniting in its harmony. This is what ennobles toil.

This theory—the theory that art is a requisite of the people, emanating from and uttering the national life—was the root of the whole Gothic creative movement. Its importance and the part it seemed to that age to play in the economy of life may be gauged when we remember that it forms an inseparable portion of the ideal of liberty which may be said to be the contribution of the Gothic race to the sum of human experience. The two were indissolubly united in their origin and growth. The great mediaeval guilds, of which something has been said in an earlier chapter, were not founded exclusively, nor even primarily, to guard the rights and privileges of craftsmanship, but to guard the rights and privileges of citizenship. The originating motives of these powerful associations had their roots in the social circumstances of Europe during the Dark Ages, and their purpose was the vindication of popular liberty. It is in them that we first catch sight of that idea of popular freedom which was to form the basis of European civilisation. The oath of the guild man to his brother was an oath to stand by him against the oppressor, to make good his rights and to redress his wrongs. In a word, these organisations were as much political as industrial, and recognised no difference between the right of a citizen to govern his labour and his right to govern his other actions. Such was the Gothic ideal of citizenship. In the domain of art we know it best by, and recognise its effect most clearly in, the sphere of architecture. Apart altogether from their aesthetic value, what gives significance to the great Gothic cathedrals is that they stand for the original and characteristic theory of the Gothic people that the ideals of art and craftsmanship were not matters of individual culture and research, nor to be

introduced from any extra-national sources, but were ends to be achieved by labour itself through the united action of the working people of the country. Nothing of Gothic origin will be understood if this is not understood. Gothic labour is essentially free labour—labour free to express its own ideas in its own language. Daring and difficult as are the structural forms employed in our national architecture, no expert knowledge was found necessary to their creation. Architects they knew none save the guild masons and carpenters. They were built by working men, and represent what working men felt to be appropriate and becoming. Above all the works of our race, they plead in vindication of the Gothic theory of the democratic nature of art and craftsmanship.

An idea like the Gothic idea, once it has got good hold of life, must needs die hard and slowly. Its influence was felt through the sixteenth, and even well on into the seventeenth century. The determined effort of English-born builders in the Tudor age to evolve what may be called an insular Renaissance—that is, to construct a style of horizontal proportions out of the earlier vertical forms of Gothic—is one of the most interesting, as it is the most neglected, of the episodes in architectural history. Tudor architecture, a horizontal style of Gothic origin, is pure Northern Renaissance, and, so far as I know, its sole manifestation. It is a fine example of the tenacity with which the tradition of free labour maintained itself in a country instinctively attached to the cause of liberty. Not easily did it occur to the sturdy English craftsmen, bred in the Gothic tradition, that life could make demands upon art which it was beyond their skill to satisfy. Nor was it English life that ever, as a fact, made such demands. The natural ripening and expanding of the national character could and would have found utterance in terms of national art. What could not so find utterance was the Italian culture which made of the Renaissance a foreign accomplishment and the perquisite of an instructed minority. The

idea of the superiority of foreign culture implied the superiority of the foreign art in which that culture was embodied. In vain the British workman entrenched himself behind the national architecture. The mischief lay deeper than he could reach. If the forms of mediaeval art appeared contemptible to the taste of the "Augustan age," it was because the national and democratic spirit which had animated those forms had itself come to seem contemptible. In building, this separation of the architect from the rest of the workers (which signified the division between art and national feeling and sentiment) does not seem to have occurred till the seventeenth century was some years spent. Down to that time "the designs of buildings," as Mr. Blomfield tells us in his *History of Renaissance Architecture*, "seem to have been supplied indifferently by carpenters, masons, or bricklayers." By degrees, however, the influence of the cultured classes bore its natural fruit in the sphere of construction. Slowly the British craftsman, persuaded of his own nothingness, relinquished the thought of a national craftsmanship expressing the national life, and resigned himself with a patience that was partly apathy and partly despair, to reproduce the pomps of Versailles, or the classical formalities of Roman baths and temples.

What then we find on surveying the general course of art from the rise of English nationality down to the eighteenth century, is that a democratic theory of art, though weakening as it went, lasted on practically to the rise of the aristocratic movement. Through the sixteenth century it was ailing; during the seventeenth it was dying. Before the end of the latter century, but probably not much before, the great Gothic tradition—which had not only played such a part in the history of art, but was so indissolubly associated with the struggles of the mediaeval boroughs in the cause of liberty—was laid in its grave. It was followed, as ebb follows flood, by an exactly reverse movement. The old style had taught that art belonged to the people, that

through it the national life found utterance, that all labour was ennobled in that process of utterance. Georgian art contradicted every one of these propositions. Art, it said, was not meant for the many, but for the few. Its motives were to be sought, not from within the national life, but entirely from extraneous sources. Its purpose was not to ennoble toil but to adorn leisure. The whole sequence of contradiction concentrates on the denial of the popular character of art. The most marked characteristic of Georgian art, and that towards which all its motives tend, is its extreme disdain of everything that savours of democracy. "The people," so it roundly asserts, "are a *canaille* whose ideas on art are in the highest degree low and vulgar. As for the nation to which we English have the misfortune to belong, everything it has done in the past has been vitiated by a set of dull rascals who have turned art into the expression of their own boorish fancies and ignorant desires. Let us take warning by the barbarous Gothic style which was the product of popular initiative, and separate the subject entirely from so pernicious an influence. Let us forage among Roman ruins or pick up hints from Italian and French workshops; but let us never again stoop to accept a motive of national origin, or tolerate the slightest participation in matters of art on the part of the English people." Such, literally transcribed, is the doctrine preached by the whole body of Georgian art and craftsmanship. It was a doctrine which had never been heard in England before.

And now, having noted the character of eighteenth century art, let us turn back to the history of the period to trace the causes of its origin. Art being an expression of life it follows that all changes and revolutions in artistic styles must have occurred in life before they appear in art. The aristocratic style in English art declares itself unhesitatingly, suddenly, definitely. Its ascendancy is not only complete, but clearly dated, like the plague, or the fire of London. So, too, the events

upon which it rests must be distinguishable with a like precision.

A moment's investigation will show that they are so. A noteworthy feature of the Civil War and Revolution which, in the seventeenth century, disposed of the theory of the independence of the Crown, was that the people were striving for powers which they were not themselves, when it came to the point, prepared to exercise. Democracy in the seventeenth century achieved the subordination of the Throne to the Constitution. But democracy, disunited, uneducated, and politically inexperienced as it was, could not run the Constitution itself. That task was, for a period, carried on by the aristocratic order, and the immediate effect of the decline of monarchical authority, instead of being an addition to the liberties of the people, was an addition to the prestige of the nobles. From the day on which Dyckvelt, the Dutch envoy, returned to The Hague, in the spring of 1688, bearing letters to the Prince of Orange from a group of the leading noblemen of England, it may be said that the vindication of the cause of freedom had passed out of the people's hands into those of the peers. It was championed no longer by the village Hampdens and Pym and Cromwells of England, but by aristocrats of the calibre of Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Halifax, Devonshire, Danby, Bedford, and Peterborough. These, though posing as the trustees of the national cause, were primarily the representatives of a particular section of society, and the ultimate consequence of their diplomacy was an accession of strength to their own order. The problem they had to solve was how to retain in their own hands the sceptre that had been knocked out of the hands of the King.

One thing from the first was clear, all must be done in the name of liberty and the Constitution. The appearances of representative government were indispensable. They had been fought for too hard to be allowed to lapse, and they were, in fact, jealously provided

for and safeguarded by a series of measures which are still regarded as the corner-stones of our Constitution. The Bill of Rights abolished finally any appeal to hereditary or divine right, or any title to the Crown save the will and vote of Parliament ; the substitution of annual votes of supply for permanent grants extended Parliamentary control over the executive government ; while the Mutiny Act, by an annual ratification of the provisions in regard to discipline and pay, vested in Parliament the absolute disposal of the Army. Endowed with the full authority of government, it only remained for Parliament to adapt its own machinery to its new responsibilities. This was done by the evolution of the Ministerial system,<sup>1</sup> which conferred on what now became the " Ministry " of the day the solidarity and cohesion necessary to concerted action. No change in that era of change had more effect in consolidating Parliamentary government than the substitution of a homogeneous Ministry for a group of nominees of the Crown. With the passing of these provisions the supremacy of Parliament was established. It had made good its claim not only to the disposal of the Crown but to the absolute control of the finances and armed forces of the nation, while its position as the seat of the executive Government was defined by the conception of Ministerial responsibility. The arrangement seemed the realisation of everything that the patriots of fifty years earlier had bled for. Not Pym himself could have amended it. The only possible ground of distrust that might have occurred to him would have been that the chief architect of the new arrangements, far from being, in any sense, a patriot and lover of freedom, was that most crafty and treacherous intriguer of the age—the Earl of Sunderland.

It had always hitherto in English history been accepted that Parliament and the people were one, and the experiments in tyranny of kings had always been especially directed against the " People's House " ; the silencing

<sup>1</sup> Responsible to Parliament.



of the voice of the people's representatives being reckoned equivalent to silencing the people. Many heads, however, are better than one, and the Lords evolved a scheme much more subtle and effective than had ever occurred to the cleverest of kings. Why not divide the House of Commons itself from the people? Make it powerful by all means; make it omnipotent. Nothing could be more democratic and popular. But make it at the same time non-representative.

This was the line taken by the artificers of the Revolution. The means by which they prevented the Constitutional machinery they had devised from being perverted to the uses of popular government were of two kinds. They consisted, first, in the elaboration of the system of pocket boroughs, and, secondly, in the careful and systematic bribery of members of Parliament. The first of these expedients guarded the approaches to Parliament, just as salmon nets guard a river's mouth. The second dealt with individual members who had slipped through these initial impediments, very much as the angler with rod and line deals with the fish which, in spite of guardian nets, has succeeded in making its way up the river. A place, a pension, a promise, or a sum of cash down were the baits which, in the hands of such skilful fishers of men as Walpole and Newcastle, rarely failed to land their quarry. Together these formed the method by which England was governed for more than a century. By their means the composition and control of the House of Commons were transferred from the people to the great families whose gold had bought the borough or bought the member. The Lords were prompt. The year 1688 inaugurated the aristocratic era, and, as a recognised and almost official procedure, bribery seems to have begun with the appointment of Sir John Trevor to what Macaulay calls the "secret and shameful office" of Distributor of the Secret Service Funds in 1690. The practice soon became indispensable. Walpole had a way of putting his hand in his pocket which seems to

have been peculiarly irresistible, but every Minister in turn practised the art, nor was any other way of directing Parliament thought to be possible. The reader will remember Henry Fox's astonishment at being invited by Newcastle to lead a House of which he did not know which members had been bought and which had not. Even Pitt, while leaving the business to the Duke, whose chief interest and solace in life it was, never seems to have questioned its necessity.

But it was more on the purchase of seats than the purchase of members that the aristocratic party relied in securing to themselves the government of the country. The wealth of the great families, the Bentincks, Campbells, Cavendishes, Fitzroys, Lennoxes, Russells, Grenvilles, was, as Green points out, "ungrudgingly spent in securing a monopoly of the small and corrupt constituencies which formed a large part of the borough representation." Such was their success that at one time the Duke of Norfolk was represented by eleven members, Lord Lonsdale by nine, Lord Darlington by seven, and many other peers by similar numbers. (See Taylor's *Origin and Growth of the English Constitution*, p. 467.) In 1821 Sydney Smith writes that "the country belongs to the Duke of Rutland, Lord Lonsdale, the Duke of Newcastle, and about twenty other holders of boroughs. They are our masters." Moreover, the enterprise of the aristocracy did not stop at the boroughs. Its wealth and influence, unchallenged by commercial competition, and predominant to a degree scarcely realisable in these days, were lavished on the county constituencies, and Green computes that, "of the county members, who were the weightier and more active part of the House, nine-tenths were for a long time relatives and dependants of the Whig families."

In short, to any one who looks behind the fine-sounding constitutional phrases which the statesmen of the eighteenth century were careful to use on all public occasions, it will be apparent that the scheme of the great families for intercepting the Throne's power on its way to the

people was completely successful. In the sacred name of the Constitution and of the liberties of the people, the patrician class had divested the Crown of its pretensions to independent authority, and vindicated the supremacy of Parliament and the State. In its own interests, it had then, very quietly and surreptitiously, cut the ties which united Parliament and people, and coolly assumed control on its own account of the House of the people's representatives. How much of this was conscious, and how much the blind result of circumstances, we need not inquire. The result in any case was the same. So long as its arrangements lasted, the aristocracy ruled England with an unquestioned authority such as it had never before dreamed of possessing. For the first time it stood alone. Always hitherto it had had a powerful monarchy or a powerful House of Commons to deal with. Now at last it had triumphed over both ; it had crushed the one and bought the other, and it reaped the reward of its prompt action in a century of supremacy, during which it imprinted its own image indelibly on the annals and aspects of its country. Not till 1832 was the broken connection between the people and their representatives re-established and the reign of the " Venetian Oligarchy " terminated.

It will be seen, then, that the aristocratic ascendancy was, as I began by saying, an event as salient and clean-cut as the art in which it took shape. It was born in 1688, and died in 1832. In the first year considerable powers were deducted from the Crown. In the second year they were passed on to the people. In the interval they were appropriated by the Peers. The means, also, by which they were retained are clear and distinct. Everything centred in the representative principle, which is the democratic hold on government. It was essential to sever the connection between Parliament and the people, and the peers severed it in the way we have described. In short, the aristocratic period in our history is a definite and distinct period. It stands in

the landscape like a big bridge, spanning the gap between Monarchy and Democracy, and resting on the twin buttresses of bribery and borough-mongering.

Now let us bring our two lines of thought together. Just now, in speaking of the art of the period, I pointed out that its chief characteristic was its complete severance from the national life, and its express and definite rejection of all popular inspiration. This was what was new in the art and constituted its note as a style. But this is the very idea on which the aristocratic party based its whole claim to political power. Describe the motives which are paramount in the artistic sphere, and you describe those which are paramount in the political sphere. Both are identical in their detestation of the old Gothic tradition which maintained that government and art were popular functions and inseparable from the idea of free citizenship. Both, fiercely rejecting this proposition, are agreed in upholding its opposite, namely that government and art are the perquisites of a privileged minority. Art and statesmanship are in complete accord. The name of Newcastle should be coupled with the names of Reynolds, Adam, Sheraton, Flaxman, and Wedgwood; for the state of things which he devoted all his skill and cunning to maintaining was the state of things which they devoted all their skill and cunning to celebrating and adorning. Georgian art is a picture of Georgian life, and inspired by its very spirit.

Only in interpreting it we must allow for what is negative. Georgian art is as significant for what it conceals as for what it exhibits. What it exhibits is the splendour of a class; what it conceals is the life of a nation. Will the reader, the next time he visits an eighteenth-century collection, think of the much in such a collection that is eloquent by its absence? What has become of the democratic vitality which overflowed into mediæval art? How does it fare with a national life which has been thus cut off from the language of art and craftsmanship?

How was it bound to fare? In another volume<sup>1</sup> in which the French art of this century—that art so glittering and gorgeous, so fastidious, so entirely saturated with the aristocratic spirit—was touched upon, I pointed out that the condition of the French people might, from the evidence of that art itself, be easily divined. That the French democracy was downtrodden and enslaved is a fact not more clearly recorded in history than it is exhibited in every object of sumptuous display in the Wallace Collection. It is exhibited in the very absence of all that should be here but is not, in the lack of popular participation in the whole pageant, in the strangling of every motive of democratic origin. It is easy, once we think of art as the expression of life, to feel the eloquence of this dumbness, and to divine, behind the polish and glitter, the hunger and the tears. Often I have thought, so imminent seemed the catastrophe gathering over all this splendour, that one more sinister bit of furniture might well be added to the Hertford House Collection, and a model of the guillotine find an appropriate place among the masterpieces of Gouthière and Reisener.

So, too, with us. The century of aristocratic ascendancy is distinguished by a popular degradation without parallel in English history. If the reader doubts it let him turn over the careful and dispassionate pages of Mr. Sydney's *England and the English in the Eighteenth Century*, or, indeed, any other authoritative work on the society of the age. Let him consider one or two points separately. First, let him reflect on the prevalence and growth of the more brutal kinds of crime, on the constant outrages, not by night only, but in broad daylight, in the London streets, on the gangs of desperadoes, armed with knives and bludgeons, who issued from slums and alleys to rob and murder at the very doors of theatres and in the public thoroughfares; though scarcely from any summary can one gain an adequate idea of the state of almost bestial anarchy, sketched by

<sup>1</sup> *The Works of Man.*

the gazettes and journals of the period, in which the lower strata of society were at this time sunk. Secondly, let him attempt to compute to what a point of callous scepticism the devotional instinct of the country had degenerated, and he will find that what Mr. Sydney calls "the miserable stagnation and spiritual mortality which reigned in the national Church" was but the reflex of a similar spirit of hopeless indifference among the people. Finally, let him dwell for a moment on the national vice of drunkenness, the seeds of which were during this time sown in the English character. "Painted boards were suspended from the door of almost every seventh house, inviting the poor to get intoxicated for a penny, and dead drunk for twopence." Fielding, in a pamphlet written in 1850, declared that "gin constituted the chief sustenance of more than 100,000 people in the capital alone, and that if it continued for twenty years longer at the same rate there would be few left among the lower classes to drink gin at all." But the sternest indictment of all is perhaps the Bishop of Gloucester's statement: "There is not only no safety of living in this town," he writes to the Bishop of Cloyne in 1752, "but scarcely in the country now, robbery and murder are grown so frequent. Our people are now become what they never were before, cruel and inhuman. Those accursed spirituous liquors, which, to the shame of our Government, are so easily to be had, and in such quantities drunk, have changed the very nature of our people." This is how it fares with a people whose daily toil is of the kind that degrades, not ennobles. Matthew Arnold used to declare that the English working classes had become "brutalised." But the brutal element in work is the act of toil unenlightened by thought, unenlightened by invention and imagination. To extinguish invention and imagination is therefore to brutalise labour, and this is exactly what the Georgian theory of art does. The substitution of foreign designs and motives for those of native origin cut at the root of the English

workman's interest in his work and severed, as it were, his mental relationship with it. Henceforth, while his hands moved his mind was idle. These conditions of labour were on the national scale and had their effect on the national character. "Brutalised" is the word applied to that effect by Arnold. "Cruel and inhuman" is the expression of the Bishop of Gloucester. In both France and England the degradation of the democracy was written in its misery and squalor, nor was it by accident that the culminating moment of the aristocratic ideal, here and in France, should have been the moment when the French people were living on nettles and the English people were living on gin.

What, then, the aristocratic influence did for art is, it seems to me, plain. It separated art from life. For the theory that art was democratic it substituted the theory that it was aristocratic. But it attained its end through life. It had become separated in life before it set to work to embody itself in a separate art.

In short, the point I would emphasise is this—that the change in the character of the English aristocracy which was consummated in the early years of the eighteenth century was a radical one, entirely differentiating and even opposing it to the order of nobility as it had once existed in this country. Froude's description of Tudor England is among the best things he wrote, and without doubt, in seizing on national consciousness and the supremacy of national duty and service to the country as the prime motive of society, he has correctly interpreted the spirit of that age. "The duties of property were," he points out, "more considered than its rights." "Land never was private in that personal sense of property in which we speak of a thing as our own, with which we may do as we please; and in the administration of estates, as indeed in the administration of all property whatsoever, duty to the State was at all times supposed to override private interest or inclination." Possessions were regarded "rather as a revenue to be administered

in trust than as a 'fortune' to be expended in indulgence." I need not perhaps labour the point. This was the last phase of the truly English aristocracy, the aristocracy which still placed national considerations before all. It has to be thought of in connection with those stately yet entirely English Tudor and Elizabethan mansions and manor houses which still blend so comfortably with the mellow English scenery. Pass on, two centuries. The classic façade of an eighteenth-century palace is not a stronger contrast to the Elizabethan mansion than are the owners of the two styles of building to each other. A new type of noble has arisen whose point of view is no longer English, but simply aristocratic; who no longer thinks to the national scale, or aspires to represent the full interests of England, but who, on the contrary, in opposition to the claims and rights and liberties of the people, has set up his own exclusive class interests and class ascendancy. Individual exceptions there have been in plenty, but these have been due to individual initiative and independence of mind. I speak of the collective consciousness of a class. Judged from this point of view the plain truth about the Georgian aristocracy is that it had ceased to be English or to represent England. It thought and acted and governed and achieved for itself alone.

And this separation it has maintained or struggled to maintain. Quite recently there have been striking examples of its fidelity to its original intention. What was the motive that operated in the prolonged struggle over the veto of the House of Lords? Was it not a struggle between a nation and a class? Was not the fighting spirit of the Lords generated entirely by class instinct, or only by national instinct in so far as they could feel that the interests of the nation were contained in the interests of their own class? Again, the most important policy of the new aristocracy in the eighteenth century was its policy of land enclosure, which, by transferring the common lands from the people to the gentry,



revolutionised country life in England. This, too, has lately been questioned, and certainly the evidence collected as to the effect which this new land policy has had upon the lives, characters, and homes of the peasantry was of a kind gravely to disquiet all lovers of England as a nation. But the possessing class did not fall into the error of regarding England as a nation. It never permitted its attention to be distracted from its own interests as a class to the interests of the country as a whole. Though the question did not mature it was made abundantly clear that the English aristocracy proposed to treat it strictly from a class point of view.

But the most striking example of this limitation is the extraordinary capacity developed among well-to-do country people for living a life wholly restricted in thought and ideas to their own environment. What may be called the *Morning Post* section of society scarcely apprehends the existence of England as a whole. The millions of the great industrial cities who make up the bulk of England are not to this class real at all. The only real England is the England over which they hold sway, and in which they can still maintain the traditions and enjoy the illusions which are among the most precious of their family heirlooms. Beyond question the most remarkable trait of this section of society is the extraordinary perseverance and, indeed, success with which it continues to live a little Georgian existence of its own in the midst of the twentieth century. Not only is it inspired by the ambitions, hopes, fears of Georgian society, but it still sees life precisely as Georgian society saw it. Modern England, the England that has come into being since the Georgian epoch, the England of vast populations and inarticulate desires, it simply ignores, while its whole attention is restricted to the narrow range of those circumstances which still bear the Georgian stamp and upon which therefore it is still able to act. The stream mounts no higher than its source, and modern conservatism is still bounded by

the limitations in which it had its origin. It began as a class idea and it remains a class idea. Never was any party less national, less truly English, for what it understands by England is not England at all, but only such relics of a tradition, never vital, as its own efforts are able to maintain. Even in days like these the *Morning Post*, the organ of this social section, cannot for a moment rise to the national level. It cannot help, all the time that it uses the word England, and exhorts us to be patriotic Englishmen, tinkering away at its own little class conception of what England and Englishmen are to be. England is to win, but the England that is to win is not to be an England fighting for the great English ideal of liberty, an England linking itself to the instinct of freedom throughout Europe and helping, out of that instinct, to forge the bonds of future concord and co-operation. These dreams, which seem to some to be turning to realities under our eyes, are peculiarly offensive to eighteenth-century instincts, and the *Morning Post* always refers to them as "mawkish cosmopolitanism" or "sickly sentimentality." No—the England that is to win the war is no such generous, large-souled, forward-looking England as this, but a Metternich England, an England given over to reaction, an ignorant bigoted England, nursing perpetually in its stupid little soul the stupid hate that is to perpetuate its own provincialism. Back in their usual sequence wheel the dull old landmarks in dreary association—conscription, protection, England for the English, Irish rebels stamped on, ideas of all kinds hunted down as dangers to the established order—back they wheel the old landmarks that indicate stagnation and are invariably associated with the decline of liberty among a people.

What, let us ask, in days like these, is the value of a patriotism like this? Patriotism, I suppose, does not simply consist in shrieking for England and the destruction of England's foes; it consists in identifying oneself with England, with English thoughts and English

ideals, and the purposes of English history. "We are what we love." Loving England means being England; it means entering into the full meaning of the national existence. But into how much of England's existence do the *Morning Post* and its readers enter? What are they patriotic for? Their own domain, the country landscape and village, the park and garden and Georgian mansion, and the Georgian ideas that go with them. That is all; the real England, the England of roaring cities and teeming crowds and independent virile thoughts, that is fighting this war, and paying for it, and working for it, and going to profit by it, is an England utterly outside their ken. Who, sometimes, in country places, amid the vestiges of the feudal tradition, has not stood amazed at the narrow limits within which men's minds can be content to range, and at the flawless self-complacency with which a small section of society can satisfy itself that it is in its petty and irrelevant existence that the soul of England is incarnated? Alas for class patriotism! Like one of those African torrents that rush down from the Atlas to be slowly absorbed by the desert sand, it dwindles and diminishes as it flows. It has no part in the future. It is identified with no expanding idea. How much more ennobling and consolatory, to touch for a moment a graver note, would it be for that class could it feel that the lives it loves are being given for no narrow retrospect of an England that has been but never will be again, but for an England representing the cause of human progress and brotherhood, an England whose will and intention—one might say it then without irreverence—were the will and intention of God Himself.

Do not let the reader misunderstand me. I am not arguing against aristocracies in general, but against an aristocracy in particular, against an aristocracy which, breathing the Italianised air of the Renaissance as we received it, and adopting some of the arguments of Machiavelli in their meanest aspects, was responsible

for the greatest scheme of political trickery and the most thorough system of peasant spoliation known to history, which has steadily subjected national ends to its own class interests, which has been the most implacable enemy that English liberty has ever known, and which has bequeathed and handed down to the present time limitations which have tended not a little to paralyse our will and our strength in our hour of need. Against such a fundamentally un-English and anti-national aristocracy and the work it is doing one may and must, in days like these, when only national ideas count, protest with all one's might. It is the work this tradition has done which has been our chief weakness in this present crisis to-day, for it has bred a class of aliens among us whose minds, long sterilised by being cut off from the main current of progressive ideas, can no longer think on the national scale, or form any true conception of what the word England stands for.

Neither modern liberalism, then, which formed the subject of the last chapter, nor modern conservatism, which forms the subject of the present one, is, as it seems to me, adequate as a moral force to the present emergency. They neither of them represent England's guiding thought. They fall too far short in spiritual imagination, and are too deeply imbued with material aims properly to represent that thought. They have their place among the signs of the fluctuation of the human mind which have characterised centuries. An acute observer living through the decline of the Tudor age in England might have seen this time coming on. Observing the swiftly inpouring tide of intellectual ideas, the tendency to accept rational and material standards of value, and, on the other side, the decline of spiritual motives and aspirations, he might easily have forecast the results which have ensued. Already the materialising of life's motives prophesied the social and political division which has since taken place. All that we have since suffered of disintegration and disruption has been

but the registering in outward aspect of an inward change already effected. We have undergone a spiritual deprivation, and in consequence we find it hard to realise the full significance of the cause for which we are fighting. We shall mob Prussia in the long run, no doubt. But shall we come through the ordeal with cleared vision, with a deeper understanding of the evil of tyranny in all its aspects, and a deeper appreciation of the spiritual possibilities contained in the principle of liberty ; or shall we overcome the arch tyrant only to fall a prey to the petty tyrannies of our own breeding ? If the latter, our victory will be but half a victory ; for though we shall have dealt with Prussia we shall still have to deal with ourselves.

## CHAPTER X

### THE FUTURE

Goethe's prophecy of European unity—The preparations of science for that end—Necessity of Germany's inclusion—Struggle of ideas in Germany—The rise and growth of Social Democracy—It is the most powerful party in Germany, and it is on the side of liberty—Liberty is the ideal which is to harmonise and unify the life of the future.

A HUNDRED years ago Goethe with prophetic vision foretold the inevitable union in common intellectual and spiritual ideals of the European nations. It is to the credit of Professor Allan that, even in this hour of reaction, he keeps that goal in sight. "Our highest hope should be the laying of foundations for a federation of Europe." In a sense of course those foundations have been already laid. During the last century the natural and material obstacles in the way of union have been dealt with by a series of scientific triumphs and developments, which have done much to obliterate the estranging influence of time and space. That immense achievement in the physical plane awaits still, but awaits confidently, its due results in the spiritual and intellectual planes. The foundations of international understanding have been laid in things that are not to be explained away; in iron and steel, in the power of steam and electricity, in punctual machinery, in sure practical knowledge and concrete unshakable fact. It is childish to pretend that division and isolation can issue from such conditions, or can be perpetuated under their influence. When Professor Allan

tells us that " what we are fighting for is, I think, the establishment of a European order corresponding to the actual fusion of interests that has taken place " ; when he says that " we are fighting for the idea of Europe against Germany's idea of the State," and that " we desire a more European Europe," he is telling us in fact that we must fit our ideas to an environment which already exists.

At the same time there can be no agreement nor any kind of lasting harmony and concert between nations save through the influence of some recognised ideal common to all. We cannot agree to agree. Agreement supposes something to agree about. It supposes the acceptance of some supreme aim, or constructive purpose in life, drawing all minds and wills to one end, and thus tending to produce that agreement, that unity, which Professor Allan desires. What is the unifying principle of Europe to consist in? Certainly the steam-ships and railways and electric wires, which bring us into contact and communication, will not of themselves supply any such principle. They are prepared to circulate ideas, but they cannot produce them.

There the apparatus stands : its metal paths winding through mountains, over rivers, from town to town and capital to capital ; its steamers circulating from port to port ; its posts plying ; its mazes of thread-like wire charged with an invisible correspondence. There the apparatus stands which can communicate thought, which can propagate an ideal worthy of universal acceptance. But as yet no such ideal has appeared to utilise it. It has the appearance, with all its immense paraphernalia given over to petty services, of some vast mechanism running to test its efficiency rather than engaged about its proper business. Yet the mere fact of its creation seems to foreshadow its proper use. Invention in its great days seemed in itself an advance. By all who took part in it it was thought of as progress. And although a later generation has challenged that view, finding no very

definite results as yet forthcoming, yet it may be the originators had in them a thought nearer the truth than ours. They were inspired by the possibilities latent in their machinery if worthily used. To use it for petty ends and then blame its pettiness is no logical confutation of their faith.

Whatever the message may be which that vast installation is awaiting, whatever the idea that is to unify the Europe of the future, it is clear from the nature of the preparation made, insuring as it does the internationalising of all knowledge, all thought, that this idea will be held in common by the nations. The war has shown that there is no room in Europe for conflicting ideals. If its fruits are not wasted it will establish unity as the fundamental condition of European life, and the recognition of the inevitability of unity as the test of political intelligence. Such a scheme presupposes the inclusion of Germany, since evidently there can be no united Europe in which Germany is not included. Thus immediately on the conclusion of the war we shall be forced into relations with our enemy which will seem unnatural and grotesque. While still smarting from our wounds we shall be asked to recognise the fact that all peace terms which do not allow and make provision for the free and willing participation of all nations, Germany as well as others, in a common federation will be terms foredoomed to failure, as violating the fundamental conditions of modern life. This question of the inclusion or exclusion of Germany from the coming union will, it is easy to see, be the issue most fiercely contested of any, and on which the gravest consequences will hang. To many people the inclusion of Germany, after all that has happened, in a European scheme seems an impossibility. She has, they will tell you, proved herself an alien and must be treated as an alien. It is not we who excommunicate her; she has already excommunicated herself. Such arguments as these, on which reactionists rely, the emotions and impulses to which they confidently appeal, the literary



style and accent which they affect are known to all of us. I will not here discuss them, but will content myself with drawing attention to one or two facts which are bound in the long run to influence moderate people.

The first of these is the existence, veiled by the war, and therefore the more needing attention, of the powerful liberal, or constitutional movement within the German Empire which is to be identified with the earlier movement of the middle of the last century. Failing, after efforts in which it was as nearly as possible successful, in securing in its hands the moulding of the new Empire, German liberalism retired into obscurity to evolve by patient thought the great Social Democratic propaganda, the steady development of which has been for many years the most significant portent in German politics. No statement is oftener made, yet none belongs more palpably to the grosser order of prejudices which the war has engendered, than the statement that Germany as a whole has gradually been so penetrated with Prussian ideas as to have become one in mind with Prussia herself. To any one retaining the use of his reasoning faculties it is evident, not only that this is not true, but that the reverse is true—that the revolt against Prussianism within Germany (and for matter of that within Prussia) has been yearly growing stronger, better disciplined, more highly instructed and more widely influential. None indeed has viewed this growth with more bitter misgivings than Prussia herself. That spirit of liberalism which Bismarck was able to overwhelm and brush aside has fed since then on the most vital thoughts of Europe. Cut off from practical participation in politics it has, in the slow deep-thinking German way, concentrated itself on theory, and its growth and progress have in the main been the results of a patient intellectual propaganda. If the reader would appreciate how German liberalism has thrived on such a diet, let him study the rise and development of the Social Democratic party. He will find not only that the growth of the movement has been swift and steady throughout the

Empire, but that it has tended unceasingly to embrace the more thoughtful elements in the official liberal party, and that it is in character and principle the loftiest political influence, as it is also the most powerful party, in the State. And he will find one thing more. He will find that this great party, standing as it does for what is highest and best in German political thought, has itself long since singled out the Prussian enemy. Year by year it has pitted its strength against its redoubtable antagonist, and although the resources of Prussian imperialism have so far withstood it, yet its own confidence in its steadily waxing strength, as well as the exhibitions of rage and alarm to which it has excited its adversary, seemed to point to a day not very distant when it would grapple with him on terms of vantage. "Bebel's words, that if the Social Democrats had won Prussia they would have won all, are perfectly true," observes Von Bülow. He adds: "The Social Democratic movement is the antithesis of the Prussian state." The struggle was between these two, between the spirit of despotism in its most concentrated form on the one hand, and the spirit of liberty in its most constructive form on the other. With consternation and hatred and despair the Prussian party watched the growth of liberty, not only as an attack from without but as a disintegrant acting from within. How far this growing peril was decisive in precipitating, as in 1866, the desperate remedy of war, we need not stay to inquire. It is enough to emphasise the weight of the liberal movement itself. In the twenty-two years following 1881 the Social Democratic vote grew from a little over six to over thirty-one per cent of the total votes polled, and this in the face of a persecution carried on by the Prussian party and the Emperor with extraordinary vigour and perseverance. More weight still, perhaps, attaches to the purity of motive and high character which even its enemies recognise as characteristic of the party, while in point of intellectual capacity and intellectual influence it may be said to stand by itself among German factions.

In many respects indeed it is as pure an expression as any yet achieved of the spirit of liberty which is to animate modern Europe, and it is perhaps significant in this respect that certain authorities quoted by Baron von Hügel should be able to testify to the revival among the Social Democrats of Christianity and the spiritual instinct.

What then I would put clearly to the reader is this—that in trusting to German adhesion to a free Europe we have on our side, working to the same end and existing for that identical purpose, the most powerful, enlightened, and progressive of German social and political parties; a party so powerful and so progressive that in all probability it would but for the war have solved within a few years the German problem in the European sense. This is one thing to remember, this powerful factor within the bounds of Germany always making for liberty and international unity. Perhaps the time is approaching when the patient and severe training of this great party is destined to be not only of inestimable value to its own country, perhaps even to save its own country, but also to promote the cause of Europe by its fine expression of liberal ideas.

I am reckoning the resources of liberty. What it has to trust to within the German Empire is the never yet used party which seems to have been trained and equipped in the past with a view to this very crisis. What it has to trust to outside Germany is whatever there may be among the Allies of broad-minded statesmanship and disinterested thought and spiritual intuition. Broadly speaking it is coming to be recognised, among people whose ideas count, that nothing of real value or enduring influence can be imposed from without. It is the difference between life and death that dead things are moved from without, live things from within. The inward spontaneity of effort, the effort that springs out of the soul and mind of a nation, is, as was pointed out in the early pages of this book, the very test and mark of that spirit which we call liberty in its action and progress in its

effects. There is, I say, at present a widespread instinctive recognition of this fact. It is generally felt that nine-tenths of the tragedies and brutalities of life spring from our desire to impose our own solutions on others rather than allow them to work them out for themselves. It is true there is a strong Prussian party in English politics, with which it is sad to see a group of young liberal thinkers allying itself, whose idea of suppressing Prussianism is that the tyrannic principle shall be transferred from the hands of Prussia into our own keeping. The old firm is to continue business under a new name. Germany wanted to tyrannise over Europe, therefore Europe will tyrannise over Germany. At that rate in twenty years' time England will be the home of absolutism and Prussia the stronghold of liberty, while Europe will be more divided than ever.

Against such a catastrophe is to be set that trust in man which holds that all lasting progress and permanent solution arise from within and never are or can be imposed from without. Liberty is the right to exercise this inward action. To love liberty is to be conscious that this inward action is a movement towards the light, towards human progress and development. We are fighting to establish that principle. To arrange, while so fighting, for the oppression of our enemy is to strike a blow for freedom with our right hand and a blow for tyranny with our left. There is, I say, a strong feeling in the air, confirmed by the great South African experiment, and further grimly enforced by the example of Ireland, that never coercion but always trust in the inward effort is to be the very clue and touchstone of all progressive politics. Would that we had a Campbell-Bannerman to evoke this instinct and give it weight and authority in the approaching European settlement. Nevertheless it exists, and it is a great asset. Those statesmen who, at the moment when every stupid and vindictive impulse in the country is clamouring to inflict its will upon the conquered, have the resolution to withstand

that clamour in the sure knowledge that the outcome of the whole struggle is intended to be European unity based on the acceptance of the ideal of liberty—those statesmen will find themselves upheld and carried forward by two great favourable forces: by, in Germany, the influence of the most powerful and most thoughtful political and social party in the Empire, and, in Europe generally, by an ever spreading and growing confidence in liberty itself as an instrument of enlightenment.

Thus, after all, the thought that will most surely guide our steps in the future will be less a concern for any particular nation than a consciousness, growing always clearer, of the nature of our own ideal and the influence it is destined to exert on life. To this I would finally turn. I have spoken more than once of the longing natural to man to render life intelligible by bringing it into harmony and agreement with the faculties of his own nature. The explanations of the universe he is always preparing invariably have this end in view. What we are after is a coherent scheme of life based upon the harmonious co-operation of all the human faculties. Any faculty, left out, will sooner or later break the scheme up. Thus the spiritual faculty, omitted from classicalism, in due time broke up the classic scheme. Thus again, the intellectual faculty, omitted from mediaevalism, in due time broke up the mediaeval scheme. Unless the mind of man can find room for complete development within the proposed scheme it will itself split it asunder.

The Prussian scheme is, as we have explained, coherent. It does provide for the exercise of all the human faculties; it does achieve their agreement and mutual co-operation. Nevertheless as a scheme of life it is inadequate, because the idea by which it is inspired does not spring from within, is not a spiritual idea at all, has none of the qualities of an abstract or positive truth; but has its origin in the outward circumstances of life and merely reveals the potency of material facts. It

reverses the right process, and instead of working from the soul through the mind and so into the facts of life, thereby spiritualising the whole of human existence, it works from outward facts through the mind back to the soul itself, thereby materialising all spiritual and intellectual issues. Whoever follows from its outset the career of the Prussian philosophy will see this sequence verified. He will find it implanted, in the first place, in certain harsh and strongly defined circumstances of life. He will find it, in the second place, seeking intellectual sanction and forcibly imposing itself on the German mind and intellect. And finally he will find it transferring its own values to the spiritual sense itself, and prompting a religion which is but the ethical justification of a limited and particular existence. Here is an inverted progress, a progress from without inwards. No doctrine mounts higher than its essence. Prussian thought is bounded in Prussian life : it is merely the justification of the Prussian point of view.

What have we to oppose to this? Another kind of harmony, another kind of progress. The idea of liberty has its root in man's inmost being. It is the expression of the identity of the soul. Embodied in Christianity, it was sent into the world to reconcile the spiritual and rational faculties. Failing to find a footing in the withered classic intellectualism, it shattered the whole classic civilisation to pieces, in order, by reducing it to the dust of its own atoms, to prepare it to receive the spiritual leaven. Not in Roman law but in Gothic instinct was the religion of liberty to find its opportunity. Cramb's description of the barbaric soul, dazzled by Rome's authority, submitting to its religion as to an evil spell, is rhetorical. The barbaric soul and Christianity met as lovers meet who supplement each other's necessities. In the barbaric soul Christianity found the vehicle through which it could penetrate and suffuse life, while in Christianity the barbaric soul recognised the spiritual self of that instinct of liberty which it already worshipped from afar.

I will not recapitulate. Start a spiritual thought upon its way and you shall watch it soaking through the soul into the mind and life of man until it has achieved a harmony proportionate in range to its own essential truth. We have seen to what extent the spiritual thought of liberty succeeded during the mediaeval age in harmonising life, and how during the Renaissance the very denial of its spiritual quality and origin struck liberty itself to the ground. Now there dawns once more a day of hope, a day when the spiritual sense, rejuvenated and renewed, shall take its place as the inspiration of life, and intellect, in the fulfilment of spiritual aims, find the demands of its own nature for the first time realised. Then there will be made visible in its grandeur of design—though not in its limits and extent, for never can the extent of that which has progress for its germ be made visible to mortal eye—the outlines of a scheme of life based on the principle of liberty. Here is our solution. If it gives free scope to men's faculties, if it drives one unifying thought through all the various phases of spiritual, intellectual, and physical being—then, no doubt, it will prove permanently acceptable. Nothing will ever break it up, for the agencies which broke up other schemes will be fully provided for. So far from their activity dislocating the present scheme, that activity is required to reveal its merits. Based upon liberty, that is upon the idea of development, it naturally follows that the fullest and most complete development is itself the essence of the scheme.

Will it achieve these great ends? Will it succeed in establishing itself? Is the day really dawning when a clear perception of the illimitable hope contained in the word liberty is to break upon the human mind? We can only say in answer that much will depend on the strengthening and reinforcing of the spiritual sense by means of the discipline through which Europe is passing. Is the reader one who readily acknowledges the spiritual influences that are in the air, vague reports and evidences

of which are so frequently forthcoming, or does he distrust such phenomena? Our estimate of such subjects does but reflect the bias of our own temperament. No definite decision can be reached. Gradually as time passes and the armies come home, and the citizens who were soldiers take over the duties of the older generation, life itself will solve the problem, though even then in terms too manifold and subtle to be exactly definable. Yet some things even now are certain. One is that more than anything the act of sacrifice itself—the paying of a heavy price for a thing—trains and chastens the mind. Ideals that have been thus hardly paid for, that have demanded the sacrifice of what is baser than themselves, reveal themselves more cogently; their forms stand out and their colours shine. It is natural to believe that our sacrifices for liberty will involve such a result. The tears shed in these days of trial are like the sharp acids used by photographers to bring out the features of their portraits. They reveal to our gaze the truths we live by.

And another thing is certain: it is certain that, taking the population right through, the change that has come over English life is not a change of habit only but a change of mind; and though the change of habit may pass, the change of mind will not easily do so. People to-day, in the work they do and the thoughts they think, are learning to sink the personal in the national motive, and especially is this the case with those highly endowed and nobly influential people who are the national leaders of society in all its classes. Will these, the war over, resume their old mental limitations? They will not be the same people. Whoever weeps and suffers and toils and rejoices for the common cause stimulates within himself an active desire or appetite, which will not cease when the particular food which fed it is cut off, but will look round for other food. A higher motive, once set going, can take care of itself, for it is maintained by the joy which of itself it communicates to the mind. Those, therefore, who have learned to obey such incentives may be trusted not soon



to unlearn the lesson. The war may cease, England may have no further need of them, but will the faculties which responded to that call, which strengthened as the struggle continued until they became dominant impulses and habits of mind, which expanded men's hearts with deeper emotions and their minds with loftier thoughts than any they had yet known, which changed the character of life itself from a trivial and vulgar to a grave and magnificent undertaking, will these efface themselves, leaving them to resume in content a baser and narrower lot? It is impossible. Their natures, spiritually enlightened, will adhere to motives which are able to communicate such meaning and interest, such an added lustre, intellectual and emotional, to the brief span of our existence.

But I shall not attempt to gauge—who could gauge?—the extent of that emotional capacity which England will develop out of its great act of self-sacrifice, and which, however indefinable, is destined to shape and bias all her thought and action of the future. It is above all the army which has been closest in touch with the forces which are to guide Europe. The war is an education: never was such a one known before. Not Padua or Cordova, not Paris or Oxford at their greatest ever drew to their cloisters so vast and varied an assemblage of scholars as meet to-day in the shell-swept trenches to listen to the preaching of the guns. Nor did the old universities teach profounder truths. For centuries to come liberty as a bond of union and a common ideal will dominate the world. Generation after generation will analyse and sift the subject, will reveal its latent possibilities, and forecast the lines of progress, ever unfolding from within and penetrating to the limitless future, of which liberty itself is the germ. But however much fuller their knowledge, no coming generation will handle the subject so closely as the present, or be so terribly intimate with it as a concrete fact. Russian and Serb, French and English, Belgian and Italian, a brotherhood of nations united by the same ideal, are supplying the solid experience out of which will

be woven the reasoned convictions and polity of the future Europe.

What will happen when our home-coming armies infuse into English life the ideas and emotions they have garnered? Will those new ideas and emotions, I ask myself, run in the old channels? will the ancient usages of English life contain them? I think of our English peasantry, the patient and dumb workers of the soil, will these return and take up their accustomed lot again? And I think of that other class we spoke of in the last chapter, the Georgian aristocracy, as we called it, will it in future be quite so ready to mistake class privileges for national traditions? War, in the old days, defined the origin of all leadership—to be first in self-sacrifice; and in war that ideal remains constantly present. The terrible realism of war disposes of all shams, all make-believes. Through this experience Englishmen are passing. Taken from an environment which had inverted the old order of things and exacted self-sacrifice and devotion rather than offered them, they have been replunged, as it were, in the original elements that go to the making of all true leadership. It is difficult to see these men, after such an experience, returning to the narrow range of Georgian thought, difficult to see them accepting a refined selfishness as their ideal in life, difficult to imagine them, after the large scale of their adventures and the varied associations they have formed, shutting their minds to every generous mutual aspiration and all the European hopes and thoughts for the future which the war will let loose, to take up again the old narrow range of ideas and sports and prejudices and the old deliberate sterilising of the thinking faculties.

These influences are, as I say, imponderable and not to be exactly defined, and for that reason it is profitless to dwell on them overmuch. Yet they exist and, however nebulous, form the material out of which the life and thought of the future will be constructed. It is for all generous and ardent minds to seize upon that fine material,

to see that it is not dissipated and lost. Of all the things it is pleasant to contemplate in connection with this heroic struggle, the lot of the thinker breathing a favourable air is among the most pleasant. Often he has had to put up with an air he could scarcely breathe at all; often his thoughts have passed unheeded while he himself has been beaten and broken down under the heavy wheels of custom and routine. But there is coming a time, not only when his ideas will be nobler and give more joy in the handling than heretofore, but when these nobler ideas will be hailed on all sides by a corresponding ardour of belief; when the thinker will find his dreams coming true; when he will not be able to think fast enough to satisfy the demand; when he who lived lonely, whose unshared thoughts made life a hermit's cell, will call the town neighbour and halve his dearest secret with the man in the street. English thought is apt to distract itself, to move with eyes reverted, watching the lagging steps of practice and quaking at the growing gap between. This is no way to lead. I knew a guardsman who went down, charging the enemy at the head of his men, and what the few who came out alive best remembered was that he "had never once looked back." In thought as much as in action to hesitate is to be lost. Not in explaining and arguing and qualifying, but simply in the contemplation of the ideal does the joy of thinking and its power of communicating inspiration consist. Yet there are moments when the ideal itself seems almost to descend on earth; when the very atmosphere vibrates to new ideas. Such a moment was the Renaissance, such the French revolutionary epoch, and such will be the epoch now dawning. Whoever in the days to come joins the two words liberty and Christianity will find himself addressing whole populations. The instinct of the people is infallible. Tell them that liberty resides in the soul; tell them that what the soul believes life becomes; tell them that Christianity by establishing spiritual independence delivers the simple and uninstructed from the deadliest of all forms of servitude;

tell them these things and you will draw their attention as only those can who speak along the lines marked out and guaranteed by the experience of mankind.

So long as there are Powers of Darkness and Powers of Light this struggle will be with us. The issue is hidden, and we do not know whether after all, less by war perhaps than by slow processes of spiritual atrophy, tyranny will not triumph in Europe. Perhaps the final decision in the great world-argument is reserved for a duel between the two hemispheres, and that it is for that end that America develops her strength and her resources. Prussianism is not our enemy's only aspect, and we may easily enough dispose of that armed and open peril only to sink gradually under some of the more insidious attacks, political or social, of the tyrannic spirit.

One thing is certain: the power of liberty to unite, to harmonise, to build up a consolidated Europe, will depend on the extent to which it is realised as a pure idea. Thinking made Prussia the leader of tyrants, and thinking may make England the leader of free men. On the other hand, the failure to think will confirm her provincialism. None who love liberty could wish otherwise. Why should the keeping of a great ideal be vested in the hands of a people who persistently mutilate and degrade it? In truth our "struggle for existence" is waged not with Germany but with ourselves, with our own spiritual and mental dullness and sloth. If our existence is for the world's good we shall continue to exist, but not, it is to be hoped, otherwise; not if we definitely fail in passing on to mankind at large the thought which has been the inspiration of our own national history.

This, however, is no time for doubt or misgiving. How indeed should such an aspiration as ours, culminating through so many centuries, an aspiration of which mere glimpses and partial revelations have sufficed to inspire whole epochs, now revealed in its fullness fail to find instruments worthy of itself? In the greatness and truth of that aspiration our hope and confidence reside.

Disinterested thought will more and more be attracted to the ideal of liberty as its capacity for enlisting all the faculties of human nature is more fully revealed. This is our security. Liberty is that which secures and safeguards all growth, all development. Growth and development are contained in it as the oak is contained in the acorn. It never can become obsolete. Every step in advance, every new horizon opened up, is but a further justification of the original impulse. The richer the fruits of liberty the more assured becomes the authority of liberty itself. Barely can we take in, barely conjecture the possibilities that liberty as a principle of life opens to our mental vision ; but just as, from some Alpine summit, through gaps in floating mist, the traveller may catch glimpses of the dim richness of the Italian plain, glimpses lost again as he descends into the valleys of the foot-hills, so from the vantage point of this great war may we obtain as it were a bird's-eye view of the future of the race as it will be under the auspices of the principle we are vindicating. In such moments of insight the end towards which the freedom-loving nations of Europe are painfully stumbling is revealed, and the unity they seek seems, through the operation of a single central truth, penetrating the mind and intellect of man, and drawing after it in willing co-operation every human faculty, to be already established. It would be hard to say whether the material or spiritual causes stand to gain most from such a reconciliation. I have tried to show in the last two chapters that what our civil life has long suffered from, in its ugliness and selfishness, has been the debased and purely materialised motives which have inspired it. It feels the lack of the spiritual motive. In the same way it is, I think, evident that what our spiritual culture suffers from, in its profound insincerity and affectation, is its failure to participate in material interests. The spiritual can no more do without the material than the material can do without the spiritual. Not till the citizen feels that his material interests are one and the same with his spiritual

interests will the former become dignified and ennobled and the latter honest and robust. These need this fusion, and how is it to be secured? It is to be secured through recognition of the fact that liberty, which is the essence of citizenship and foundation of all civic life, is as much spiritual as intellectual, that it must, as we said of the Prussian idea, realise its spiritual self ere it can hope to embrace the mind of man and accomplish its destiny in the world. Where, then, is liberty's spiritual self, or in what does it consist? I say that, whatever else it may be, and whether as a religion it be true or false, Christianity is this. It is the guardian of liberty in the soul. Eliminate Christianity, eliminate, that is to say, the idea of a direct revelation, and you are thrown back inevitably on the best that the human mind can make of spiritual affairs. There is no alternative. You must take God's word or man's. One convinces by authority, the other by argument. The choice is between faith and knowledge. But while all may believe, few can know, and so surely as this is true does it follow that Christianity is the root of liberty and philosophy the root of tyranny.

It is this consciousness that Christianity stands for liberty which is going to make the difference to the world. Most of the happiness in our history has arisen from their identification, most of the misery that has supervened has sprung from their separation. Their identification will bring all the resources of life to animate Christianity, and all the resources of Christianity to exalt life. It is towards this union and fusion of the two hitherto most often opposed sides of human nature that our sacrifices for liberty, and consequent clearer comprehension of its nature, must lead us. This is the message which Europe awaits, the goal towards which it is feeling its way. He who fixes his gaze on the obstacles in the way, the ignorance and prejudice, the hate and worst of all the treachery, by which the cause of liberty is hampered, may sometimes doubt the issue; but he who looks to the action of the inward leaven will foresee its inevitable

triumph. The mind of man has reached the point where it can feel the suction of the solution it is looking for drawing it forward. From this point there is never any turning back. The unbinding of Europe may even yet be a slow process, but the nature of thought itself renders it inevitable.





## APPENDICES

### A

THE fusion of spiritual and practical purposes in the mediaeval Guild is perfectly characteristic of the age. The earliest Guilds were religious Guilds—Guilds formed for mutual prayer and mutual spiritual comfort and support,—and it was on to this basis that the practical Guilds were by degrees grafted. But throughout the entire movement the spiritual motive remained essential, and it was, in fact, the decline of this motive which undermined the whole Guild system. Froude, who, whatever his general reliability may be, often has very shrewd things to say about English character, has some significant sentences on the corruption of the Guild law which followed inevitably on the weakening of the moral principles on which the law was founded. “Already in the 24th of Henry VIII., we meet with complaints in the leather trade of the fraudulent conduct of the searchers, whose duty was to affix their seal upon leather ascertained to be sound, before it was exposed for sale, ‘which mark, or print, for corruption and lucre, is commonly set and put by such as take upon them the search and sealing, as well upon leather insufficiently tanned, as upon leather well tanned, to the great deceit of the buyers thereof.’ About the same time the craft wardens of the various fellowships ‘out of sinister mind and purpose,’ were levying excessive fees on the admission of apprentices; and when parliament interfered to bring them to order, they ‘compassed and practised by cautile and subtle means to delude the good and wholesome statutes passed for remedy.’ The old proverb, *Quis custodiet custodes,*” adds Froude, had begun to verify itself, and he proceeds to mention the growing complaints and difficulties which marked the corrup-

tion and decline of the Guilds in Elizabeth's reign. The reason of it all was simple enough. "There were no longer tradesmen to be found in sufficient numbers who were possessed of the necessary probity" to run the Guilds on the old lines. The original institutions were kept pure, and worked effectively, because their members believed in and acted in accordance with the spiritual motives they professed. When they no longer so believed and no longer so acted their associations fell to pieces.

In short, if we looked closely into the matter we should see that the Guilds broke down for just the same reason that the monasteries (that other great buttress of mediaeval society) also broke down. They broke down, that is to say, because the incoming Renaissance, with its rational and material standards of life and thought, was undermining the spiritual susceptibility of the nation. The cardinal fact, as regards mediaeval life, is that it endeavoured to base itself on the Christian religion, the immediate result being that not only Christianity itself but the liberty inherent in Christianity were brought to play upon that life. The cardinal fact, on the other hand, regarding the Renaissance was its determination to run life on intellectual lines without the help of Christianity or any other spiritual motive, the result being that not Christianity only but its associate liberty also were driven from life.

## B

It is precisely this intimate hold of religion upon life during what we call the ages of faith which it is so difficult for us to appreciate. Mediaeval religion differs from modern religion in just the same way that mediaeval art differs from modern art. Religion and art both, in these days, are cut off from the common everyday life of the nation, and have in consequence lost whatever qualities that connection had to contribute. Both have fallen into the hands of a special class and are presided over by professional bodies, and both, in the influence they exert, are infected by that subtle atmosphere of insincerity and make-believe which distinguish the ways and manners of cliques from the ways and manners of humanity. There was a time when art in England seemed to invade all life and all work; when it was essentially a

common inheritance, a possession of the people. Perhaps it ought not to be called art, for it was a product not of the artist but of the craftsman, not of the studio but of the workshop. There were no artists in those days and no studios. Neither did there exist the least taint of that over-subtlety and far-fetched cleverness which renders so much of studio-bred art and studio-bred criticism unintelligible and of little interest save to experts. Art, so long as it remained in the hands of ordinary masons and stonecutters, remained in touch with general human ideas. It had nothing extra clever to say, and no one would think of going to it for the curious experiments that interest a few connoisseurs. But to make up for this it had a great gift for expressing with power emotions that were deeply and generally felt, as in the case of those coloured and vaulted interiors and sculptured angels and saints of Gothic art which were the everyday work of the Guilds and craftsmen of the period. This art took its instructions straight from life, and it seemed, in consequence, that it could not go wrong. Its branches shot high because its roots sank deep. Above all it preserved, so long as it remained an expression of life, its uncorrupted simplicity and perfect sincerity of accent.

The change is very extraordinary from this simple and spontaneous art to the sophisticated product of our own day; a product which, having repudiated common life, is in turn repudiated by common life, which the people have no share in and absolutely ignore, which is carried on surreptitiously in dim holes and corners by adepts and little coteries into whose lineaments and language and garb even has crept the tinge of humbug which invariably adheres to those who are isolated from life. This indeed is an extraordinary change; but it is not more extraordinary than the change which has overtaken religion. Of mediaeval religion as of mediaeval art it may be said that it soared to lofty spiritual heights just because its roots were so entwined with the everyday life of the people. With that life it was indeed inextricably mingled and involved. Perhaps to us, who have learnt so cautiously to separate the affairs of this world from the affairs of the next, a religion like the mediaeval, intimate to the populace as beer, in many ways coarse and familiar and easy-going, and as ready to jest as to pray, would scarcely seem like a religion at all. And yet it too retained its vigour so long only as it retained its broadly democratic character. It seemed to suck vitality out of the

life of the nation, and it was not till their connection was severed that it learnt the, perhaps more delicate and fastidious, but certainly less sincere and human accent which it has since acquired, an accent perfectly corresponding to the accent of modern art and approximating the pose of the pulpit to the pose of the studio.

The reader, therefore, who would estimate the possibilities of Christianity as a force in life must detach his mind entirely from Christianity as we see it to-day in England. He must throw his thoughts back to an age when, so far from embodying the feebly tyrannic spirit of a much weakened aristocracy, it embodied the full vigour and robustness of the democratic spirit in its prime. He must throw his thoughts back, that is to say, to the days when Christianity and liberty were one. Liberty in England, we must never forget it, is the prime national instinct, the instinct that governs life. No force or influence of any kind can retain its hold on English life that is hostile to liberty. The day on which religion, following in the wake of the Renaissance, loosed its hold on the principle of liberty was the day on which, by the same act, it loosed its hold on life.

THE END



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