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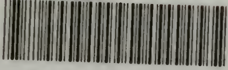

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THE ROMANES LECTURE

1913

The Imperial Peace

An Ideal in European History

BY

SIR W. M. RAMSAY, M.A., HON. D.C.L.

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IN THE SHELDONIAN THEATRE

MAY 8, 1913

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THE IMPERIAL PEACE

THE Romanes lecturer, as I am informed, is free to expatiate in almost every field except politics and religion. It is not hard to resign oneself to exclusion from the field of politics, which presents hardly any temptation to a scholar except the allurement which a forbidden garden offers to weak human nature. I have guarded against that temptation by choosing a subject which is so obviously ideal and so inconsistent with actual conditions of political life in this country and in Europe generally, that he who speaks about it is necessarily shut off from the realm of political facts.

But to Scottish temperament like that of the present speaker, it is hard to be debarred from the field of religion. The mind of the Scotsman has been formed by generations of amateur theologians and of constant listeners to the stern and long sermons in which the national temperament used to find pleasure and sustenance. The Scot may have lost the art of listening to sermons; perhaps with the national caution he is unwilling to admit the theological competence of the preacher; but he cannot divest himself of inherited tendencies; his thought naturally runs into theological or religious forms; and his reading sooner or later turns towards theological or anti-theological literature.

You may perhaps allow a Scot to have a text; and I propose to take my text from a writer of the pre-Renaissance time—that period in history when the European world is generally understood to have been stagnant and absolutely unprogressive, its few thinkers

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being almost wholly occupied with the most barren and useless problems, deducing unpractical and unreal inferences from fantastic and unreal principles by a capricious and purely subjective method of reasoning. It is true that the mediaeval thought in Europe worked itself out without care for the facts of science, or even for the apparent facts of the world around it. It lived and moved on a plane by itself: it evolved itself according to the laws of its own being: it did not work with an eye on the world of sense, or endeavour to keep step with the facts of common experience. Yet on that account its reasoning is perfectly free, untrammelled by what you may call 'common sense'; and therein lies its interest, its charm to a few, and the secret of its power and its truth.

Why should it accommodate itself to the alien world around? Why should it pay any heed to the wars, the cruelty, the horrors, the ignorance, that reigned in politics, in international relations, and in the administration of the law? It recognized that there was nothing true, nothing just, nothing real, in contemporary society, and it turned away from its surroundings to gaze on such truth and reality as it could make for itself.

In the unfolding of this mediaeval thought, the steps are—(1) this ought to be, for such is the will of God; (2) this must be; (3) this is. What ought to be is, such is the simple rule. The rest is sham, false, unworthy of the thinking man's attention, except as the delusive and misleading falsehood from which the thinker should try to emancipate himself and others. Only on one side, as a teacher and a preacher, did the thinker of the mediaeval time touch the world around him. Otherwise he lived apart.

Yet, after all, he was engaged on the same problems,

not merely of abstract philosophy, but also of sociology, as well as of religion, which touch us at the present day ; and his answers to those problems, though usually expressed in terms that are uncongenial to us, as being too abstract and too remote from the practical world, need only to be translated into modern terms in order to be intelligible and indeed convincing. They wrote and spoke for their own time. Words have changed their meaning since then, but the truth remains the same.

The poet of the Middle Ages, who interpreted with the insight of a prophet the heart of the Mediaeval world, has laid down, as the first principle from which reasoning about the welfare of human society must start, that universal peace is the end for which all our action is and should be ordered. When I approach this poet, I go to him as the seer who could look on the divine truth with the undazzled eye of the prophet ; and I quote only from one of his prose works, the Latin treatise on Monarchy. ' Of all things ', says Dante, ' that are ordered to secure blessings to men, peace is the best : by quiet the individual man grows perfect in wisdom ; and society as a whole is best fitted in the tranquillity of peace for its proper work, which may be called divine.'

Such is the truth as declared by a great thinker, who lived in the midst of a turbulent world, split up into many small rival states, all as a rule either on the verge of war or actually engaged in war with one another. The international life of Europe, that small part of Europe which came within the circle of a common intercourse, moved amid the jealousies, the ambitions, the mutual cheating, and the frequent wars of these petty princes and kinglets.

Has Europe really much improved since then in the fundamental facts of international relationship ? It is

now divided into a smaller number of larger states. The area of common intercourse is wider, and is nearly co-extensive with the European continent, besides embracing a number of extra-European states ; but is Europe freer from mutual jealousies and ambitions of rival states than it was ? For my own part I venture to believe that it is freer, and that it has made distinct progress towards the goal of human endeavour. It is, indeed, true that Europe is now divided, so to say, into a small number of fortified camps and armies ready for war, or nearly ready. It is true that war is now waged with the entire strength and the whole manhood and the collected resources of a nation, whereas in Dante's time war was waged with tiny armies, while the mass of the people looked on and applauded the winner. To imitate the words of the Roman satirist, nations staked of old their pocket-money on the chances of the game, whereas now they stake their entire fortune. Yet we have moved onwards towards that goal of justice and freedom which Dante describes as the end of human effort.

The remedy for the unrest and disorder of his time, as Dante dreamed, lay in the universal Empire. Before his eyes there unfolded itself a bright vision, in which the supreme monarch, high above the smaller states and their rulers, exercised a system of law and justice and order to which all the petty kings and governments must submit.

This monarch has no selfish aims, for he has nothing to desire : his monarchy is world-wide, bounded only by the circumambient ocean ; and there is nothing left for him to conquer or to gain or to covet. There is none with whom he can quarrel : there is no rival of whom he can be jealous : there is no opponent for him to fight against. He stands alone ; and for him happiness must lie in

exercising the powers of his being in the duties of his position. He must be, and therefore he is, the perfect man, putting in operation the true nature of man, and living for the good of the world.

He must be considered, as Dante says, to be the servant of all, because magistrates and kings exist for the good of the nation, and not the nation for the good of its kings or its magistrates. The end is marked out for the monarch. He is there because he ought to wish, because he must wish, and therefore does wish, that men be good and do good and enjoy liberty.

Of all things in the social body, says our prophet, peace is the best. It is necessary to guard against a misapprehension of what is meant here by the word 'peace'. Dante thinks of peace, not as a negative but as a positive idea. Peace is not the mere absence of war: it is the power that maintains order and makes moral law effective. It is the administrative force of Justice, and it is the necessary condition of freedom.

Now Justice implies power: a man cannot act justly to others unless he has the power of giving to all their due. Justice is not the getting of one's due from others: that is a base and unworthy and wholly false conception of the divine power that we call Justice. Justice is the paying of their due to others. It is not a demand for one's own rights; it is the giving to others of their rights. This is a profoundly significant idea; it springs from the insight of a prophet, who has looked deep into the heart of the world. 'Justice', says Dante, 'is a virtue regulating our conduct towards others,' and it cannot be turned into a rule which we can invoke to regulate the conduct of others to us, and to enforce the demands which we make on others.

Peace, then, is the condition on which man may work

out his true nature, and give free scope to the excellences which belong to his character. Peace is the power which enforces justice in society, which enables every man to behave fairly and justly to others, and which strengthens the tendency in each to be just to others. 'Where a monarch is, there justice is (or may be) strongest.' 'The monarch will most love the good of men.' Such is the true nature of man; and the monarch is free from the temptation to go outside of his real character. He has nothing to gain from doing so, and therefore he does not do so.

In the second place, the end of human society involves freedom, as well as justice. In freedom each man can develop his own nature; he can exist for himself and not at the caprice of others. This is possible only in the peace of the universal Empire, governed by the monarch for the good of all. Each man obeys the monarch; but the monarch orders each man to be free, to live for his own development, and to attain the true end of human existence.

The monarch, according to Dante, is to be the source of international law, and to govern in those matters which are common to all men in all the separate nations with a view to their peace. The cities and nations of the single Empire shall each be ruled by its own separate government or king, because each of these has its own special character and each requires laws adapted to its own conditions. He would not merge the separate states in a uniform and homogeneous Monarchy or Empire. These must retain, and ought to retain their own idiosyncracies: such is the law of nature and the character of man.

Dante's monarchy, therefore, is a balance of two different forces: on the one hand the individual character of the states, on the other hand the monarchically

imposed unity of the all-pervading and compelling Imperial order and peace. Only in this way can the individual man and the individual group of men work out their own being. Each man has his special character, and his expansive and growing nature supplies the force needed for his development: without this force he is stunted and narrowed. But this growth cannot find nourishment and scope for itself except in the peace of the Empire: without that peace it is wasted in long contention with others around. The Imperial peace dictates the law of growth.

It is an ideal monarch whom Dante describes. We see how untrammelled he is by historical fact. His mind was nurtured on the history and the greatness of Rome, and he could turn from contemplating the lives and acts of the Caesars to paint this picture of the monarch and to set it before his readers, not as an impossible ideal, but as the truth of things. How extraordinarily and fantastically absurd it appears to most readers; and they turn from it as a pretty but idle fancy. It is an ideal; but the ideal is the power in history. If the ideal could be reproduced in the common man, it ceases to be an ideal and a power. It must remain above us and in front of us; and therein lies its influence on mankind.

That this ideal has had a powerful influence on modern history is, I think, undeniable. The monarch in Dante's mind is supreme over all mere kings and princes, universal and absolute lord of all, while mere kings are exposed to temptation to violate the peace with their neighbours, to overstep their own bounds, and to covet their neighbour's property. Yet who can look dispassionately at modern facts without recognizing that an ideal such as Dante paints has been and is a strong power in the breast of many modern kings and rulers, tending to

ennoble their nature and raise them to a higher level of purpose and action ? High sense of duty and the warmest, sometimes almost passionate, desire for the good of the state and people have been increasingly powerful influences on very many modern rulers. It is, however, true that the zeal has not always been with knowledge ; and the cynical observer must sometimes feel, in this as in every experience of life, that there is in the world an astonishing amount of good will, good intention, and good feeling among men, but an equally astonishing lack of good sense and sound knowledge and the scientific spirit : how much of our lives is spent in scarifying and crucifying those who after all are trying in their own way to say the same thing and compass the same results that we are saying and intending.

Further, the monarch for Dante exists as the best and only means to compass the true end of society. He exists to introduce peace and order—a peace that is and that compels order—amid the smaller states governed by their princes and kings. He is as it were the embodiment in human personality of a supreme and absolute international law. He represents the compelling force of right, which makes justice and freedom reign in each separate state of the universal Empire, and enforces equity and order in the mutual relations of these smaller states.

I shall attempt, in the first place, to describe very briefly the origin of Dante's conception, and, secondly, to express it in the terms of modern conditions and thought. We understand better what he means by the Imperial peace, which is the gift of the supreme monarch to mankind, if we observe how his conception took origin and shape.

Dante indicates the source of his idea. His inspiration comes from the Roman literature, and especially from

'our poet', as he lovingly and proudly calls Virgil; and the monarch whom he portrays is the Roman Emperor. The idea had its literary birth in 40 B.C., when Virgil, in the Fourth Eclogue, told Rome, 'Your happiness is now being wrought out in Italy.' Forethought, science, and orderly government were inaugurating once more the Golden Age there. The alliance of good government with scientific knowledge was beginning to remake Italy and the Roman world; and would soon destroy all noxious plants and animals, produce all useful things in abundance from the earth, tame all that was wild, improve the nature of the soil and its products so that the thorn-tree should laugh and bloom into flower. This improvement is the work of the new Empire. Before that Empire was born, Virgil, in a sense, prophesied its birth. He wrote under the Triumvirate. He did not speak, nor think, of a monarch; and the one member of the Triumvirate whom he indicates quite as plainly as if he named him is Antony. At the time when Antony was embarking on an Eastern war, Virgil says that a new Achilles was sailing for another Troy, the West was giving order to Asia, and new argonauts were about to bring the distant Orient under the Roman peace. The thought of a single monarch was at that time not merely anachronistic: it was rank treason; the newly established rule was a rule of two Romans in the East and the West.

Yet, though less clearly indicated as a person, the ruler of the West and his wise administration of Italy was the subject of the poem. This incited and heated the poet's enthusiasm. Italy was the object of his love and the subject of his verse: the Romans have all that they need in Italy, the loveliest and best land in the world, when it is used rightly; but scientific agriculture is needed to

make this land what it should be. Dante and Virgil stood on common ground.

The reference to the ruler of Italy, Octavian, though more diffused than the allusion to the Eastern member of the governing pair, suggests and animates the poem; and no one at the time or later could fail to seize it. But there is a divine or a Roman idea, which is far more important than the reference to Octavian. The child, the new and young Roman, was already born out of the long sufferings of his goddess-mother in the Civil Wars: he was about to begin his education, the education that befitted a Roman, in war and in public office.

History gave a meaning to the idea. The young Rome was the Imperial Rome; and, as it turned out, the Emperor was the incarnate god on earth, and the bearer of the majesty of Rome. Of this development Virgil, as he wrote, was unconscious. There is no dynastic idea in this poem, though it easily adapted itself to the Imperial idea, as that idea was formed. Virgil was too true a prophet to dream merely of external forms in the future. He saw the young and new Rome, not the child of any individual Roman. He foresaw dimly the glory of a regenerated and ordered world, not the continuation of a dynastic succession.

The Empire, as it was gradually formed by Augustus from 27 B.C. onwards, corresponded in a real though very imperfect way to Dante's ideal. Augustus and his successors governed as guardians of the people, and dated their reign by their tribunician authority as champions of the commons. The Emperor was always in theory, and very often in fact, on the outlook for opportunities to do good to the Roman people and their subject provincials. It was one of the best purposes of the Imperial policy to educate the subject provincials to be worthy

of Roman duties and life, and then to place them on the plane of Roman citizenship. Rome expanded by gradual steps, individual after individual, region after region, till it was coextensive with the Empire, and there were no longer any subjects, but all were Romans, lords of the world. Unfortunately, another process was in progress whereby the Romans became all mere subjects; and the provincials, while nominally elevated to be Romans, found that they with the Romans were sinking to the level of slaves.

Yet the ideal of the Empire continued long to be a power. Even under the tyranny of Domitian Statius caught a glimpse of it. Trajan felt it deeply through the discipline of a soldier, and Marcus through the training of a philosopher. It was the spirit which kept the Imperial law growing and ever young.

The Roman law lived on, and with it lived the Roman Imperial idea. In the University where Mr. Bryce's essay was produced, it would be unbecoming for the ordinary man to speak, or even to quote from him a sentence here and there, about the persistence of the Imperial idea in the mediaeval world, and the dominance of the Roman law in the mediaeval schools. The northern barbarian had found his pleasure and his business in war: the only honourable death for the Norseman was in battle or in the sea. It was from the Roman Imperial law that he learned to make war for the sake of peace.

I may, however, quote the words in which Professor Kleinclausz, of the University of Dijon, sums up the spirit that animated one of the greatest and most humane of conquering monarchs, Charlemagne. He states in a few words what I need an hour to say.

'Charlemagne set before himself an ideal, and he believed in that ideal. His aim was to make his Empire

a moral community, one vast Christian city. This it was which completed his glory. That glory springs indeed from his power, for men always admire those who have given orders to multitudes of men; but his power is embellished by the grandeur of the Carolingian ideal, the moral union of humanity in the *Imperium Christianum.*'

The ideal which a great man of action set before himself as the goal of his endeavour is the ideal which our poet nearly five centuries later cherished and championed and described. Yet people talk of the Middle Ages as dark and benighted and barbarous. The ideals and the dreams of that period were often glowing with light. We have not yet realized them; but we have progressed so far that the dreams of a few are now the ideals for which many, both men and women, work and pray and suffer. The dreamers of the Middle Ages were the heralds of the educated peoples of our time.

Modern society, while passing into a new stage of growth, acknowledges and accepts as fundamental all the essential part of Dante's doctrine. An ordered peace, a peace that enforces progress through justice and freedom, is to us, as to Dante, the end and aim of mankind. We are faced by the same problem. How shall there be constructed a supreme order able to enforce that universal freedom and justice combined which constitute the active power of peace?

In modern times, as in Dante's time, the rivalries of the various nations and states are the cause of war. That some higher power, able to enforce compliance with its decisions, and able to give just and fair decisions in every case, should exist, is the condition on which the peace of Europe has always seemed to depend. Dante's dream was that the supreme monarch was a power equal to the requirements. What shall we say about the future in Europe?

Nationality in the sense of a racial, or in the East a religious, type and ideal has become in modern times an extremely strong force, much more powerful than it was formerly, a force which has often enabled a weaker nation to stand against an apparently stronger state, and decided the victory in more than one great battle. This force sometimes becomes a grave danger in international crises, and threatens or actually causes war. In the future the want of sympathy between Slav and Teuton appears as probably the most serious difficulty in the path of European progress.

Is this development of national individuality a good or an evil? That it constitutes a danger is undeniable: that it is the expression of a feeling which may easily be pushed to exaggerated and mischievous form is also plainly evident. If with Dante we assume peace to be the condition most favourable to and most to be desired by mankind, and if we differ from him (as many do) in regarding peace as a passive state, the mere absence of war, then we should have to condemn the modern growth of national feeling as entirely evil, because it is in present conditions a constant danger to peace. In 1876 it compelled the Czar to declare war on Turkey, against his own wish and judgement. In March 1913 it threatened for some days to force another Czar into an Austrian war. Examples are numberless: the danger is always present and often acute.

For my own part, I should refuse to regard as evil a power which has been steadily growing through modern history. It is a great power, which may be turned (like every vast power) to evil or to good purposes; but to condemn it as evil is to declare that the tide of European development has been for a long time setting steadily towards evil. To pronounce such a condemnation no

one is obliged, who remembers that the peace which is really good is a positive power, the force of order, and not a mere negative condition. It is the orderly balance of active and powerful forces.

It is not my purpose to discuss this as a question of philosophic reasoning. I leave this loftier path to greater intellects. For me it is too hard; and I propose to take an example from history, one with which I have some small opportunity of becoming familiar, because it has entered into and made my character from infancy.

I mean the union of the two warring parts of Scotland with each other, and the union of England and Scotland in one country: two processes which may be taken together, and which are, perhaps, not always rightly understood.

There were no insuperable difficulties to be overcome in this union, as events have shown; and yet there were considerable difficulties. There were very diverse elements to be fused in one nation, the Gaelic, the Briton, the Saxon, and the Norse, which presented at least two very diverse types—types which remain as diverse to the present day as they ever were.

Circumstances in the thirteenth century were bringing about the union of England and Lowland Scotland gradually and naturally. The process was slow, but inevitable. It was merely accidental that Lowland Scotland was severed from England: there is on the whole probably less natural racial diversity between Lowland Scotland and North England than there is between North and South England, and certainly far less diversity than exists between the Gaelic Highlands and the mixed Lowland population of Scotland. The mutual hatred and antipathy between Highlands and Lowlands was exceedingly strong, and persisted to a comparatively

recent time. A friend of my own, a scholar and thinker and author, only a few years older than myself, who was born on a Scottish farm not far from the 'Highland Line', the old limit between the races, told me he remembered in childhood how an alarm arose of a cateran raid, and panic reigned in the quiet country-side. The alarm was, of course, groundless; but that such a raid could still be thought within the bounds of possibility as late as 1845 to 1850 is suggestive of the lasting terror that those raids inspired and the antipathy that they engendered.

In the thirteenth century it seemed likely that Lowland Scotland would go with England, and that Oxford would continue in increasing degree to be the University of the Scots. But a great king, one of the greatest in many respects that ever sat on the English throne, saw clearly the process which was going on, and took steps to accelerate it by diplomacy, by dynastic arrangements, and finally by war. The result was that the union was postponed for centuries. Real national union cannot be won by war and compulsion; the few apparent exceptions are only apparent, and serve to define more clearly the real nature of the process, about which a bare negative conveys no knowledge.

Yet the First Edward was, in a sense and to a certain degree, right. I do not mean that he would have defined his position and his motives in the same way as we might—but, in the wider view of history, what he was attempting was to weld the diverse peoples into a strong united nation. The attempt was premature. The tough intractable nature of the northern races was not ready for the process of union. They could not accept the same ideals and the same sentiments that ruled in the south. Those who successfully opposed the English king were

struggling to preserve a nationality, which the 'Hammer of the Scots' would have probably annihilated, rather than developed; and the nation would have been united only at the sacrifice of one stubborn and therefore useful element. The separatists and 'patriots' who resisted him and overcame his son were narrower in their aims, while he had the Imperial outlook. Yet, after all, a true instinct recognizes in their policy the creation of the Scottish nationality, and reverences them as having contributed to the making of a greater Britain.

In 1603 the process was nominally completed; but the unity that resulted was more dynastic than real: there was no common feeling or patriotism. The process was made possible by religious causes: the forces of Protestantism were strong enough to compel a union of the two kingdoms, and the English hatred felt for the Catholic countries carried wide support even among the English Catholics. But religion has never had such a hold on men of Western Europe as to make men into a nation and to dominate their hearts and overbear the other causes that work on them. The two peoples remained in heart and ideals almost as diverse as before. Nor did the closer union through the amalgamation of the Parliaments in 1707 produce a real unity. It was a political device; but it did not remould the hearts of men.

The career of the energetic and hungry young Scots. still lay outside the British Empire. Their own country was too poor, and too little used for the good of man, to give an outlet or offer a reward for their energies. In earlier time they had flocked in thousands to the service of France, and in the seventeenth century they sought a career, the Catholic families in the Catholic countries, the Protestant families with the Protestant leaders, of Central and Western Europe and in Sweden; in the

eighteenth century they went further afield into Eastern Europe. East Prussia knew many Scottish pedlars, Russia and even Turkey gave a career to many Scottish soldiers. The English service attracted only a smaller number; until in the latter part of the century the experiment was successfully tried of forming the Highland regiments, and using the predatory habits of the Gaelic clans in the service of the Empire.

I venture to think that the unity of England and Scotland is the work of Walter Scott primarily, and of the whole common literature of the two countries. It was Scott who touched the heart of both countries, and made each appreciate the excellences of the other. The real union is a matter of idea, of thought, of common mental inheritance and occupation, of mutual appreciation and respect. That Scott was only the climax of a literary development I would be the last to deny. Johnson, dearly as he loved to make fun of the hungry Scotsmen, to whose eye the one beautiful view in his own barren land was the road that led to England—even Johnson was induced to travel in the roughest parts of Scotland and to appreciate in some degree the admiration which after all the Scots could feel for literary excellence.

And as Scott united England and Scotland, so even more completely did he unify Scotland. The 'Highland Line' became only an interesting archaeological memory. The exploits and the dare-devilry of the Highland cateran are as interesting a memory to the Lowland Scot as those of the Border reiver who preyed on the English and drove the cattle of Northumberland and Cumberland. The Macpherson who played a tune and danced a reel under the gallows-tree will never fade from the admiring memory of Scotsmen who would gladly have hanged him when he was living.

The point at which I am aiming is to answer the question, whether national idiosyncrasy and national pride are necessarily hostile to the union of two or more distinct races. Speaking for my own side, I should be surprised to learn that as a race the Scots are less proud of their nationality and its heroes, or less attached to their historical memories, than they ever were at any period in the past. I believe they are only more intensely Scottish, as a rule, than they formerly were.

The truth is this. The more intense is the spirit of nationalism in its highest and best form, the more powerful is the appreciation of the wider Imperial patriotism. In the fostering of that Imperial patriotism the worst possible course would be to discourage and try to extirpate the national idiosyncrasies, and to aim at a dead level of universal similarity to one general type. The truest Scotsman, the most characteristic and typical Englishman, is the best and most patriotic citizen of the Empire. Each may find it difficult to appreciate the other. If I may venture to quote my own experience, the most remarkable nature, the one which I have found it hardest to gauge or to comprehend, the one which oftenest impresses me with its unsuspected and unfathomed depths, is not that of any foreign, nor even Oriental nation, but the Englishman. And they say that the Englishman can never learn to appreciate the music of the Scottish bagpipes, except in a few cases where he has heard it in the last and most critical moment of a long and hard-fought battle. The story is familiar to all of the old Scot who, after forty-five years of a business life in London, confided sadly yet appreciatively to a young compatriot that it took a long time to learn how clever those stupid English are. He learned his lesson, however, and his respect grew.

If we argue from the particular case which has been quoted to the general law, nationalism is good when it can be combined with a sense of a higher unity; and the first condition of such combination is that the two or more diverse nationalities can share certain sufficing aims and ideals, and can respect and admire each other, remaining conscious of their diverse individuality, regarding the idiosyncracies of the other with perhaps a humorous but not an unkindly eye, no one nationality seeking to compel the others into an unwilling similarity with itself. Such compulsion may sometimes succeed in annihilating the weaker nationality; but it can never produce a unity in which each member profits by the strength of the other, and finds its complement in the other.

I have perhaps been labouring the point too much; but it seems in my judgement of decisive importance. The growing sense of nationalism throughout Europe is not necessarily antagonistic to peace. It may, however, easily become so, when it degenerates into Chauvinism, narrow and ignorant self-love, and inability to appreciate the qualities of other nationalities. That is in Dante's phrase the failure in justice; it is the inability to give others their due; and where that is there cannot be peace.

Modern life aims at a higher ideal than Dante's Empire. To produce between two or more different nationalities that higher unity which makes and is peace—not the mere absence of war, but the positive capacity to mix with one another freely and appreciatively, rendering every man his due—that is the ideal both to Dante and to us. Dante required for this end a supreme monarch, an 'over-lord' (as Freeman would have called him) among the kings and states, like Agamemnon among the

Grecian chiefs; and he demanded that this monarch should have the power to compel obedience, a power that Agamemnon did not possess. A mere *primus inter pares* was not enough. There must lie in the monarch's hands always the ultimate appeal to overwhelming force, which he has the moral right to employ, because he is the servant of all, labouring for the good of all. Under his fostering care, and in no other way, can those common higher ideals flourish, which produce the higher unity of peace and concord.

The modern ideal is the voluntary acceptance by the separate nationalities of the course of action which is most conducive to the good of all. For the supreme monarch among kings our ideal is to substitute the free choice by all of what is right and good for all. There is no longer any question of a common government, or of unifying the diverse nationalities in one European or one world-wide state. The nations are and remain separate.

This is an ideal that lies far distant in the future. Is it, we ask, a mere fancy, the empty dream of an unpractical mind? or is it the real truth, as yet unrealized, of human life, that ideal which exists in the future and which compels by a certain attractive force the direction of social growth in the present?

In the present the weakness of this ideal lies in its utter lack of compelling power. It has no lever, still less any fulcrum, to move the world. Archimedes was ready with his lever, provided that some one could supply the fulcrum; but where is the modern Archimedes of social growth? An ideal has power in proportion to the fixed and reasonable character of the mind on which it acts; but this ideal appeals to the reason of the unreasonable, and to the steadfastness of the capricious and the changeable. Every wind of national conceit or irascibility may

disorder all the conditions in which lie the power of an ideal.

Yet it is of the essence of this ideal that it seeks no compelling force. It acknowledges its weakness in the present, and it trusts to the future. It expresses itself in Europe as the concert of the Powers. The very mention of that name generally elicits a smile on the listener's face. It has become rather a joke in the world. We think of it almost as an irresponsible infant, with the trustfulness, the weakness, and the charm of an infant. Still, it is probably a growing infant, although its growth is slow: thirty years of time by the clock and the sun are but a day in its life. There are, however, other causes, to which I should be inclined to trust much more than to the methods and meetings of diplomacy for the realization of this ideal. Of these, two call for special attention—the annihilation of distance and the cultivation of common thoughts and interests—or, to use vague but familiar terms, intercourse and literature.

It is a truism to say that distance fosters diversity, and the annihilation of distance tends towards unity. The Roman Empire, the model of the higher unity including diverse nationalities, failed to solve the problem of distance. In the first century the Empire was aware of the difficulty in its path, and had already done more to solve the problem than was ever achieved until the nineteenth. There existed great freedom of intercourse through the Mediterranean lands, in which the Imperial unity was maintained. Very extensive plans of travel could be conceived and arranged in advance during that and the following century. By land and by sea great numbers of travellers were constantly passing to and fro: Roman officials, civil and military, tourists, scholars, professors of philosophy, perchance even of archaeology, merchants,

letter-carriers, were always travelling between the capital and the provinces. The travelling was, to our ideas, slow and fatiguing, and the accompaniments and equipment were rudimentary. But travelling was possible; and the eager, enterprising spirit of man, or the pursuit of the means of livelihood, or the needs of government and administration, drove many to it. But the difficulties of further development were not overcome, and the means of locomotion remained primitive.

Many scholars and historians have described the reasons for the downfall and ruin of the Roman Empire, and I have essayed the task like others: but I venture to differ from them all (including myself), and to think now that the prime first cause lay in the failure to solve the problem of intercommunication. In a detailed estimate of the degree to which the problem was solved under the Empire, I have maintained that the Roman government sought rather for certainty than for speed. It was content with a slow rate in sending out dispatches and communicating laws and regulations to the provinces. It was more desirous to know beforehand at what date a regulation would be put in force, than to have it put in force quickly; and this was wise policy. Only tidings of disaster were carried at highest speed; and the messenger reporting a danger on the frontier was marked by the ensign of a feather, which symbolized that his journey was to be like the flight of a bird. The news of victory might travel more slowly in the bearing of a laureated courier. Such was the theory, as it was put in practice by the vigorous emperors.

But all this was utterly insufficient to cope with the situation. The Empire grew weaker as it grew larger. It could not maintain its organism against the disruptive forces of nationality. The provinces overcame the Empire.

The military strength was not kept on such a level of readiness and efficiency as should guard the frontier against the outer world of barbarism. If the succession of able and active emperors could have been kept up, the vigour of the state might have been maintained; but the weak and incompetent rulers allowed the currents of communication to slacken and the unity of purpose to become dissipated; and thus the common life of the Empire grew weak. Educational system had been defective, but with vigorous intercommunication it might, and would, have improved. All chance of improving the Imperial postal service and opening it to the public was lost. There was not sufficient vitality in the state to improve its own condition and cure its diseases. From this first cause all other evils either arise or become worse.

In discussing this subject with scholars and practical men in the United States, I was impressed by the unanimity of their opinion that the states could not have been held together if the machinery of rapid transport had not been organized. The life-blood moves rapidly: it stagnates when its motion is impeded. Such is the experience of history.

On intercommunication and the increase of real familiarity with others, and understanding of and friendly feeling towards others, which are thereby produced, the growth towards the ideal peace depends. The common literature of the world, the common sympathy with noble ideals, the general admiration of the same great men and great thoughts, are stimulated by wide intercourse, and will in turn make the intercourse wider. Those who know the world most widely, find some of their most valued friends in other nations, and yet return to a home that they value all the more. The evening brings all home.

Besides the lack of compelling power to enforce its

decisions, the modern ideal suffers from a serious fault—a fault which some would count fatal. There is no sufficient provision or means for reaching a right decision in any practical matter, and no guarantee that the decision is right. The general sense of the world is the only deciding tribunal. How is this sense to be taken, and who shall decide whether it is right ? There is no recognized tribunal to appeal to : there is no agreement as to any form in which the appeal shall be made. In practice the old-fashioned English way of redress, to write to *The Times*, is as good as any other.

The monarchical idea, as it appears in Dante, suffered from the defect that there is no sure means of getting your monarch. Dante seems to hold that any, and every, monarch will be suitable, because he will go right in the absence of all temptation to go wrong. Let us grant, as I think we may, that the able and good monarch offers in practice the best means of reaching a right decision on the business of the moment ; but we must add that the foolish, weak, and idle monarch offers probably the worst. Dante thinks there cannot ever be a monarch of that class ; but this is a dream. To put the matter with the exaggeration of an epigrammatic balance : the monarchical Empire presents a supreme tribunal that is sometimes right and sometimes wrong, whereas the modern ideal presents a system that is never right, but always halting, uncertain, and, at the best, half right and half wrong.

There seems to be no way out of it. Rousseau would have it that the 'general will' must be right. The 'general will' is the sovereign power ; and the sovereign can do no wrong. We can resign ourselves in a monarchy to the assumption that the monarch cannot do wrong. He is, so to say, the umpire ; and we all agree to accept

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his decision, and call it right. The government of the state must go on; and this assumption is necessary. The modern ideal, however, claims to supersede the older ideal, as being better: it is not justified in making this assumption.

Moreover, there is, in practice, no case where all are agreed in their decision. There is always a majority and a minority. Is the minority always wrong? Ought not opinions to be weighed rather than counted? There are cases where we would, most of us, set more store by the opinion of one man whom we trust than by the voice of the crowd. Every true and great thought has begun by being the opinion of a minority, and has ended, or will end, by convincing the majority.

Such is necessarily the defect of seeking after an ideal. We are involved in a process of growth; and growth must at any single moment be illogical, uncertain, wavering between the past and the future, neither one thing nor the other. The minority, confident in its rightness, must be content to wait: it must answer the poet's question, 'Wilt thou trust death, or not?' with an unhesitating 'Yes'. Many opinions have begun by being the opinion of a minority, and have ended by being the opinion of none. The minority that is right will become a majority, and must live for the future, acquiescing in the imperfect present. Faith is the power by which we live. The peace of conscious and quiet strength is our ideal. The struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, degradation and progress, is always going on; and an inert peace, which meant the abandoning of this struggle, would not be a good, but an evil. Yet war, as Dante says, is only the last means. 'When two peoples are at variance, they are bound to try in every possible way to arrange the quarrel by discussion.'

The notion that union and unity can rest safely, or ever do rest, on considerations of material profit, may be set aside. The opinion of modern writers has changed in a remarkable way in regard to this cause. In 1885 one of the greatest of the historians of Rome spent a week as my guest in Oxford, the first time he had ever been in England. His conversation turned several times on the future of the British Empire. His opinion was confident: the Empire had in it the inevitable seeds of dissolution, which were rapidly maturing to their inevitable result. The colonies had nothing to gain from the union with England; the interests of the colonies were opposed to, and inconsistent with, the interests of Britain; and they must go in the direction that was most advantageous for themselves. What may be for the material and immediate advantage of the colonies I cannot pretend to know or to guess. But it is now generally recognized that the union of the Empire rests on sentiment and not on calculation of apparent material interest. It rests on the possession of common ideals of liberty and free individual development, on historical memories and on the English literature.

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