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Democracy and Reaction

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DEMOCRACY AND REACTION

NOTE

SOME of the questions with which this volume is concerned were dealt with by the writer in a series of articles published in the *Speaker* between two and three years ago. Parts of these articles are incorporated in the present work, principally in Chapters VI. and VII.

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CHAPTER I

THE SCHOOL OF COBDEN

DURING some twenty, or it may be thirty years, a wave of reaction has spread over the civilised world and invaded one department after another of thought and action. This is no unprecedented occurrence. In the onward movement of mankind history shows us each forward step followed by a pause, and too often by a backsliding in which much of the ground gained is lost. Of the causes of this almost rhythmical, yet tragic, alternation we know little. Sometimes it would seem that the forces gathered together to remove some obstruction which directly blocks advance become themselves a hindrance to further movement. Sometimes the ideas which fill one generation with enthusiasm appear as though spent and worn

Or should we rather trace the reaction to the temper of the time and the mode of thought prevailing in the world? Is it that after the great reforming movement of the nineteenth century a period of lassitude has set in; that the ideals of the reform era have lost their efficacy, that its watchwords cease to move, while the blank thus left is filled in by shallow philosophies or sheer materialism?

The question is the more interesting at the present time, because of late the ideas of the reform period have shown signs of revival. The reaction has gone deep enough to touch, as it were, a quick, and has stung the social conscience into activity.

It may be that this activity is the beginning of a new life. Indeed, it is not impossible that the year 1903 will be regarded by historians as marking the end, and therefore also the beginning of an era in political thought. The sudden attack upon Free Trade in the middle of the year was hardly more unexpected than the solid strength of the defence offered by the established fiscal system. It might well have been thought beforehand that Free Trade was destined to

go the way of other political reforms which belonged to the same epoch and rested at bottom on the same principles. It had long been recognised that the Liberalism of Cobden's day was in a state of disintegration. The old cry of peace, retrenchment and reform had for many years ceased to awaken any response. The ideal of peace had given way to that of extended dominion. Retrenchment was impossible as long as new territories were constantly being acquired and retained by force, and the demand for domestic reform was silenced by the imperative clamour of foreign difficulties or frontier entanglements. The conceptions of personal freedom, of national rights, of international peace, had been relegated by practical men to the lumber-room of disused ideas. The whole set of conceptions which group themselves about the idea of liberty appeared to be outworn and unsuited to the needs of a generation bent on material progress and impatient of moral restraint. But now in relation to the fiscal question the discarded ideals have shown an unexpected vitality while the drift of the newer teaching has also become clearer.

The reaction has received a check. New forces have arisen and energies that slumbered and slept have been awakened. It would seem as though after all Free Trade would stand against the tide that has swept away so many landmarks of political reform and moral progress.

Cobden himself would have held it strange that Free Trade should remain the only abiding monument of his work. We may almost say he would have thought it impossible—for Free Trade to him was no isolated doctrine but part of a very compact political system. Cobden saw politics as a whole in which the parts were very closely united. Free Trade, non-interference, a policy of peace, the reduction of armaments, retrenchment of expenditure, popular government at home, self-government for the Colonies—these were not, as he conceived them, isolated views any one of which might be taken up or discarded without affecting the remainder. They were strictly interdependent. They were connected in principle and in practical working. A single passage will serve to illustrate this point.

Cobden is speaking of what he has done for agriculture, but the passage is given here not for that reason, but as a terse and clear statement of the main points of his creed and their mutual connections. Insisting that it had been his constant aim to reduce the burdens falling upon agriculture by way of compensation for the temporary difficulties which he saw would result from the adoption of Free Trade, Cobden says—

"It was with that view that I preferred my budget, and advocated the reduction of our armaments; it is with that view, coupled with higher motives, that I have recommended arbitration treaties, to render unnecessary the vast amount of armaments which are kept up between civilised countries. It is with that view—the view of largely reducing the expenditure of the State, and giving relief, especially for the agricultural classes—that I have made myself the object of the sarcasms of those very parties, by going to Paris to attend peace meetings. It is with that view that I have directed attention to our Colonies, showing how you might be carrying out the principle of Free Trade, give to the Colonies self-government, and charge them, at the same time, with the expense of their own government." *

Peace, arbitration, Colonial self-government, reduction of armaments, retrenchment, Free

* Speech at Leeds, printed in "The Manchester School," by F. W. Hirst, p. 251.

Trade, all are here. The link between them in this passage, it will be seen, is expenditure. This was the practical connection. War meant expenditure. The old system of holding the Colonies by force meant expenditure, and expenditure involved indirect taxation and made Free Trade virtually impossible. Conversely, Free Trade would diminish the commercial inducements to military aggression, and by limiting taxation to forms in which any increment is immediately felt as a palpable burden, would incline men to look at both sides of the question before plunging into war. Cobden is often mocked as a false prophet, sometimes very unjustly. But the function of a true political thinker is not to predict events, but to point out causal connections. The adoption of Free Trade by this country has not brought universal peace, but events have certainly justified Cobden's view that Protectionism is a heavy make-weight on the side of militarism and war. Again, few considering fairly the temper of our own time would deny that expenditure is the main restraining force which keeps a nation that has secured itself against attack from

This confession of faith by a typical Cobdenite is positive enough in ultimate principle. The negative side appears in the conception of the means by which progress is to be achieved, since improvement was expected rather from the removal of barriers which cramp individual enterprise than from the positive intervention of the State on behalf of social reform. But even here there are qualifications of the Cobdenite doctrine which are too often forgotten. Not only was Cobden for Free Education—a generation ahead of his time—but he was no less emphatically for restricting the labour of children. "No child," he wrote to Hunt, "ought to be put to work in a cotton mill at all so early as the age of thirteen years," being in this fully two generations ahead of his time. These things are too often forgotten when Cobden is criticised as an opponent of the factory acts.

But when all allowances are made it must be admitted that later thinkers found Cobden's theory of the functions of the State in industrial matters to be negative and unsatisfying. How far there is a real cleavage of principle

CHAPTER II

THE IMPERIAL IDEA

PARADOXICAL as it may seem, the new conception of Empire had its roots, politically speaking, in the older Liberalism. For it was the older Liberalism which made the Colonial Empire what it was, and it was to that Empire as Liberalism had made it that Imperialist sentiment in the first instance appealed. The appeal was, in this form, very difficult to resist. "See," the Imperialist would say, "this marvellous work of our race, this vast inheritance of the generations which we hold in trust for our descendants—in mere size the greatest empire of history, in variety of interest, in the extraordinary complexity of its composition far surpassing all political societies which the world has ever known. Consider how it extends the law of peace

tion.* You may object to the methods by which the Empire was built up, but here it is in being—a great fact, a tremendous responsibility. You could not be quit of it if you wished. Take it up then as the most sacred trust, and do not let it go in craven fear of being great."

The appeal was seductive, and taken at its face value, that is to say, without analysis of the political facts on which it was based, almost irresistible. One caveat indeed might be entered. The use of the term "Little Englander" as a term of scorn does not consist well with a "patriotic" or even an accurate view of our history. It might

* ". . . We, in our Colonial policy, as fast as we acquire new territory and develop it, develop it as trustees of civilisation for the commerce of the world. We offer in all these markets over which our flag floats the same opportunities, the same open field, to foreigners that we offer to our own subjects, and upon the same terms. In that policy we stand alone, because all other nations, as fast as they acquire new territory—acting, as I believe, most mistakenly in their own interests, and, above all, in the interests of the countries that they administer—all other nations seek at once to secure the monopoly for their own products by preferential and artificial methods. . . ." (Mr. Chamberlain at the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, November 13, 1896.)

By the gradual extension of self-government the anticipations of Lord Durham and Sir W. Molesworth were amply realised, and by the last decade of the century it appeared that the problem of reconciling Empire with liberty had been solved. The Imperial factor in the Colonies was represented by plain men of the rough-and-ready British type. Perhaps they were not always up-to-date. They were not skilled in identifying patriotism with their own party. Few of them understood the art of working the press, and none could for long have maintained a reputation for omniscience on a record of repeated errors. Their dispatches were prosaically accurate, and in the columns of a sensational newspaper would have appeared dull. They were not invariably prophesying, and when they did prophesy they were not invariably wrong. They were not specially skilled in finding precedents for in-

not, we would not, attempt to hold them by force. It is a voluntary bond, and a bond the obligations of which have never up to the present time been defined." (Mr. Chamberlain at Rochester, July 26, 1904.)

This principle is not the less valuable because it states succinctly and in general terms the political case against the speaker's South African policy.

war, we had no intention of occupying the country. Having occupied the country provisionally, we were still determined not to annex it. Having annexed it, we were convinced that the whole process was inevitable from first to last. On each several occasion we acted purely on the defensive, and on each several occasion we ended by occupying the land of our aggressive neighbours. Such is the fiction still solemnly maintained. The naked fact is that we are maintaining a distinct policy of aggressive warfare on a large scale and with great persistence, and the only result of attempting constantly to blink the fact is to have introduced an atmosphere of self-sophistication, or in one syllable, of cant into our politics which is perhaps more corrupting than the unblushing denial of right. No less than one third of the present territory of the Empire and one quarter of its population have been acquired since 1870, and the bulk of the increase dates from 1884, *i.e.*, it falls within the period during which Imperialism has become a conscious influence. And notwithstanding the disappointments attending on the

of the service in 1870, before the revival of Imperialism began; in 1895, when the Unionist Government returned to power; in 1898–9, the year before the South African War; and in the present year. The total expenditure of each year is also given.

	Naval and Military expenditure. 000's omitted.	Total expenditure. 000's omitted.
1875	24,507	73,605
1895	35,595	93,918
1899	44,283	108,150
1904	72,153	146,961

The meaning of this table may be put in one sentence. Militarism, based on Imperialism, has eaten up the national resources which should have gone to improve the condition of the people.*

Thus the peace promised by Imperialism

* In the early part of 1899 the movement in favour of a scheme of old-age pensions was at its height. The barrier was want of funds. The cost of any scheme of "universal" pensions was put at some twenty millions, and it appeared hopeless to ask the public to consent to so vast an increase in expenditure for such an object as the happiness of the aged poor and the thorough-going reform of the poor law. Yet within the few years that have passed, nearly twice the number of millions required have been added—for the benefit of whom?

has not been realised. Freedom has fared no better. Of all the acquisitions above mentioned, not a single one has, as yet, become self-governing. In the case of the Orange Free State, one of the most liberally governed, best administered, and prosperous communities of the world has been converted into a land of desolation,* subjected for the past two years to a despotism as absolute as that of Russia. No Irish Coercion Act has ever approached the arbitrary powers taken by Government under the Peace Preservation Ordinance, applying to the Orange Colony and the Transvaal, by which men can be arrested and imprisoned for twenty-one days without being charged with any offence,† by which they can be

* Or, in Lord Milner's words, a country "absolutely denuded of everything." (Bluebook, Cd. 155.) It was undoubtedly the desire of the British public that the devastation should be repaired; but, unfortunately, apart from any question of its administration, the grant made for the purpose was hopelessly out of proportion to the amount of the damage.

† Clauses 10 and 11 of the Ordinance run as follows:—

10. It shall be lawful for any Magistrate, Assistant

expelled from home, lands, and country on fourteen days' notice without trial and without cause shown, by the mere fiat of the Lieutenant-Governor,* by which, finally, any act or word supposed to bring Lord Milner

Magistrate, or Police Officer in any district to arrest or cause to be arrested without warrant any person in such district on reasonable suspicion of his having committed treason or any of the offences mentioned in section 18 of this Ordinance and to lodge such person in any gaol in the said district.

11. Upon the written order of such Magistrate, Assistant Magistrate, or Police Officer as aforesaid, the gaoler of the said district shall be bound to receive and detain in custody in the gaol thereof any such person arrested as aforesaid for such time as is specified in the said order, or if no time is specified therein, until the said gaoler receives an order from the Attorney-General or official on whose order the said person is detained for such person's release, notwithstanding that no charge is preferred against such person either at the time of his arrest or of his reception into gaol; provided that every such person shall be entitled to his discharge from gaol or custody unless within twenty-one days after such imprisonment criminal proceedings shall be commenced against him.

* Clause 24. It shall be lawful for the Lieutenant-Governor on its being shown to his satisfaction that there are reasonable grounds for believing that any person within this Colony is dangerous to the peace

practical maintenance of close oligarchical rule, by replacing white by yellow labour, the admitted motive being the fear of the political power of the white workman.*

But, to quit this extreme case, we cannot find elsewhere that freedom and equality have been fostered by territorial extension. On the contrary, that spirit of domination which rejoices in conquest is by nature hostile to the idea of racial equality, and indifferent to political liberty. The experiments in the direction of self-government in India have not been developed. The tendency is rather to curtail the measure of freedom already granted, and to restrict the opportunities opened to natives of India in the last generation, of taking part in the government of the country. The literature of Imperialism is openly contemptuous—sometimes aggressively, sometimes patronisingly—of the "coloured" races, and scoffs at the old Liberal conception of opening to them the road to self-development, and alternates between a sentimental insistence on the duties owed to them by the white man,

* Cf. p. 43 note.

a man who has no other means of livelihood, or perhaps of satisfying his creditors, may assign himself as a slave. But if he does so, he is not the less a slave because his original act was voluntary. If self-enslavement were tolerated, we might easily be confronted with the revival of a slave class in our own country, which would be augmented in every recurring period of distress. The truth is that there is no single and sufficient mark by which to determine the precise degree of unfreedom which deserves the name of slavery. The points of unfreedom or servility are many, and where there is either compulsion to work (as in the case of the Matabele and the Bechuana), or grave restraints on personal liberty which are not necessary for the performance of the labour contract, as in the case of the Chinese on the Rand, we cannot but admit that the arrangement is of a servile character. Under contemporary conditions there is an ominous tendency * to resort to such systems, and what is of even worse augury, is that they

* The prompt suppression of the Kanaka traffic by the Commonwealth Parliament shows a counter-movement of

are justified by British Ministers and officials with loose talk—at one time of the "dignity of labour," which the coloured man must

the happiest augury for the future of Australia. But in some quarters it would almost seem to be assumed that the Colonial capitalist may as of right demand facilities for the supply of cheap coloured labour in the lump from the Government, and one reads discussions as to the fair distribution and apportionment of such labour, precisely as though the men were chattels.

After the war, the mine-owners of the Rand first of all secured the re-imposition of the poll tax on natives. The object of this taxation, as avowed by their witnesses before the Boer Commission in 1897, was to compel the native to come into the mines, and neither Sir Godfrey Lagden nor Lord Milner could see "that it is any 'particular hardship' that the black population should find themselves compelled to work by the necessity of earning enough to pay their taxes." The Kaffirs were accused of laziness because they did not choose to come to mines, where, as we now at length learn from the Cape Government's report (published in Cd. 2025) they were freely flogged, frequently disappointed of the pay promised them, and subjected to conditions which produced a death-rate of 71 per 1,000 (as against a rate of 6·4 per 1,000 for English miners). It would be too much to say that the Kaffirs of the Rand are slaves, but no one reading the whole report could maintain that their condition is that of free workmen.

But the mine-owners were not satisfied with the supply of Kaffir labour, and their next proposal was to import hands from Uganda. It was in vain that

white is justified in feeling; at another of the need of some "stimulus" to labour, as though there were any necessary or justifiable stimulus to labour, beyond the desire to satisfy natural wants by earning a fair wage under healthy conditions.

Reference to South Africa has been necessary because it is the leading case of the Imperialist method, and here the contrast between the promise and performance extends all along the line. Imperialism was to give us a cheap and easy victory. It gave us nearly three years' war. It was to sweep away the abuses of a corrupt, incompetent and over-expensive administration. The present administration of the Transvaal is more costly than the former, and more completely in the hands of the capitalists. It was to abolish

such a system, whatever it be called, cannot be called a system of free labour. It is one of those systems, partaking of slavery, which, in successive Conventions, we explicitly forbade the Boer Government to introduce:—

"The South African Republic renews the declaration made in the Sand River Convention, and in the Convention of Pretoria, that no slavery or apprenticeship partaking of slavery will be tolerated by the Government of the said Republic." (Convention of London, 1884.)

built up by Liberal statesmen, the other based on the policy of Empire as shaped by a generation of Imperialist statesmen. It is not surprising that if he had been won to the name of Imperialism by the first picture he should have been gradually repelled from it as the lineaments of the second picture became distinct. Little by little it became clearer that the new Imperialism stood, not for a widened and ennobled sense of national responsibility, but for a hard assertion of racial supremacy and material force. The test case of Armenia had shown that after all protests against selfish isolation and the craven fear of being great, the Imperialist would incur no risk and sacrifice no shadow of material interest in a disinterested service to humanity. On the contrary it was precisely the encumbrance of our Imperial responsibilities which we were told made it impossible for us to intervene. Standing alone, this great refusal might have seemed to be dictated by an over-anxious love of peace. But to the unprejudiced observer, judging Imperialism by its actual performance, no such interpretation could long remain open. He was compelled

our "unprejudiced observer" was one of those —and they were many—who, keenly desirous of social progress, believed that the vigorous forward action of the State in domestic affairs would sort well with a similar vigour and activity abroad, he has long since found out his mistake. The dream of combining a "spirited," that is in reality an aggressive foreign policy with domestic reform has melted away. The absorption of public attention in foreign affairs paralysed democratic effort at home. The worst of Governments could always retain power by raising the patriotic cry. Foreign complications proved unfavourable as ever to public discussion, and the determination to rule others had its normal effect on the liberties of the ruling people themselves.

The growth of Imperialism has, in fact, been one of those surprises which play ducks and drakes with political prophecy. Both the friends and enemies of democracy inclined to the belief that when the people came into power there would be a time of rapid and radical domestic change combined in all probability with peace abroad—for

tion—such were the questions in which the best minds were absorbed, and which they believed would occupy the coming generation. In the light of the past ten years the bare statement reads like a satire on the vanity of human effort.

For social progress we have had out of the whole programme of the Nineties the partial fulfilment of one item—compensation for industrial accidents—to balance which we have had a reaction in finance, reviving a kind of class legislation supposed to be extinct, and a still more serious reaction in educational policy, threatening the definite reinstatement of clerical control. Lastly, as the outcome of two generations of temperance effort we have a measure aimed not at suppressing the temptations to drink, but at suppressing those magistrates who, with scanty powers, have done what in them lay to mitigate the evil, and entrenching the public-house behind the impregnable barrier of compensation. With this latest effort in social legislation the turning of the tables is indeed complete.

Here again it is not merely that mis-

line of thought, and the same lines of causal connection. But in proportion as that line has become clear and people have seen whither it would lead them, they have begun to doubt Imperialism. They have come to realise that the name stands, not for love of the Empire, but for the lust of Empire, not for the noble constitutional fabric built up by British energy and remodelled by the spirit of British liberty and fairdealing, but for the dream of conquest, the vanity of racial domination, and the greed of commercial gain.

CHAPTER III

THE INTELLECTUAL REACTION

THE political reaction briefly adverted to above is the expression of a far-reaching change in the temper of the time, which is by no means peculiar to our own country or to the sphere of politics. It is common to the civilised world, and penetrates every department of life and thought. If it is to be summed up in a word, we should call it a reaction against humanitarianism.

The sixty years which followed the Battle of Waterloo formed a period of fairly rapid social progress and of social progress correlated with an advance in social and moral science. Political enfranchisement, the reform of the Government services, Free Trade, the progressive regulation of the new industrial system, the abolition of negro

the banquet of civilisation. In a word, its governing principle was to deem those things best which do most to expand and further human life and happiness, and those things worst which do most to corrupt and destroy them. It was a movement of which the "Age of Reason" had dreamt, but for which it was inadequately equipped. The men of the nineteenth century knew more of history and more of the complexity of social cause and effect than their intellectual forbears. They were aware that a new Jerusalem could not be built in a day. Nevertheless, they held possible a progressive realisation of an ideal which could not be accomplished by a sudden political revolution. The rationalism which, in the previous century, had been Utopian, became in fact sober and more prosaic, but practical and progressive. The "ideas of '89" had been general and abstract, but the men of the period in question sought in very various ways, and no doubt with the usual amount of mutual misunderstanding and conflict, to give them concrete meaning and practical application.

Humanitarianism is now dismissed as

intensely occupied my thoughts, or constituted the aim of my labours; and though I may boast of having succeeded in accomplishing many good works . . . yet the achievement which I look back to with the greatest and purest pleasure was the forcing the Brazilians to give up their slave trade, by bringing into operation the Aberdeen Act of 1845." (Ashley's "Life," ii. p. 263.)

What, one wonders, would Palmerston have said to one of Sir A. Hardinge's despatches from East Africa with its contemptuous references to the "anti-slavery faction"? Thirty years ago the whole Empire was anti-slavery. Now, far from putting it down, we have on more than one occasion suffered the introduction of one form or other of servile labour under the British flag. It is difficult to conceive any great white nation waging war in these days on the slavery question. On the contrary, the prevailing, though perhaps veiled, opinion seems to be that the black or the yellow man must pay in meal or in malt for his racial inferiority. The white man is the stronger, and to the strong are the earth and the fruits thereof. If the black man owns land and lives on its produce, he is an idler. His "manifest destiny" is to assist in the development of gold mines for the

operative societies have not only increased the aggregate amount of wealth in the country, but have been the means of distributing it over wider and wider circles. Old workmen who still remember the privations of the forties look on the present state of their class as a paradise in comparison. Along with this social progress the chief political grievances have been abolished. Though neither religious nor political nor social nor economic inequalities have been done away with, yet their burden is so far lightened and so irregularly diffused that none of them press on any part of the community with such weight as to produce great sustained and widespread enthusiasm for their removal. The pressure for further reform among those who would most directly gain by it has slackened.

"On the other hand, whole classes have been won over definitely to the side of the established order. The great middle class, in particular, which seventy years ago was knocking at the gates of political enfranchisement, now finds all the prizes and privileges of public life open to its sons, the ablest of

whom crowd into the public services at home and abroad. If this favours Conservatism in general, it fosters Imperialism in particular, as was seen by Cobden nearly fifty years ago, when he wrote:—

"'Nowhere has the [peace] movement fewer partisans than in Scotland, and the reason is obvious—first because your heads are more combative than even the English, which is almost a phrenological miracle; and, secondly, the system of our military rule in India has been widely profitable to the middle and upper classes in Scotland, who have had more than their numerical proportion of its patronage. Therefore the military party is very strong in your part of the kingdom.' (Morley's 'Cobden,' ii. p. 144.)

"This would not have seemed out of place if written in 1902. But what was and is true of Scotland in particular is true of the middle classes generally. People talk much of the decay of Liberalism, and trace it, as is their wont, to this or that personal cause, but the great backward swing of the boroughs since 1868 is unmistakable, and its main cause is that Liberalism has done its work so thoroughly. The great middle class has become contented with its lot, and is far more moved by its fear of Socialism than by

any desire for further instalments of privilege. In the old days it was outside the charmed circle, and thus naturally was all for reform; now it is sufficiently inside to get its share of warmth, and has more to fear from the widening of the circle than to hope from the more equal distribution of standing room within it. In particular it applauds the lead given it towards Imperialism. It applauds it in its capacity of respectable parent with sons to put out into the world, of merchant with trade to develop, of missionary with religion to push, above all of investor with capital to seek higher interest than can be gained at home. The true leaders of the middle class are the financiers, who show them how to get more than 3 per cent. on their investments, and as long as any man, English or German, Aryan or Semitic, will show them this, and throw an occasional cheque to a church or chapel, he may do what he pleases and snap his fingers at investigation.

"Conservatism, then, with a heavy Imperialistic bias, has, for political and economic reasons, taken a strong hold on the middle class, which a generation ago was the back-

bone of Liberalism. Owing to the very success of Liberal efforts there has been a great transfer of the material interests from the reforming to the Conservative side. I would not suggest that all ardour for political and social justice is merely collective self-interest. But it is probably true that people who are denied justice themselves are more ready to sympathise with others in the same predicament, and more open to any appeal to general principles. Those who have all they want are far more disposed to believe that God is in His heaven, and that there is something wrong with those who cannot get justice done to them. In these ways, without taking a materialistic view of human motives, it must be admitted that prosperity and full political enfranchisement do tend to a form of collective selfishness, and that in this lies a real obstacle to the permanence of human progress." *

* The above passage from an article written some two years ago states, I think, fairly enough the political conditions obtaining in the period before the Corn tax and the Education Act. The further development of the reaction since that time has at length aroused the artisans and the more thoughtful of the middle class to a sense of

of the present day. The easy-going, stout, well-meaning, rather dull old gentleman, a little proud if the truth be told of his very dulness, and apt to conceive of it as an incident in that fundamental honesty which distinguished him from his sharp-witted neighbours, the well-nourished territorial magnate, slow-going, hard to move, but implacable when once stirred, narrow perhaps, but fundamentally just and honourable in all his dealings, is no fit representative of the average public opinion of our day. For that, we have ourselves coined a new abstraction:* "the man-in-the-street," or the "man-on-the-top-of-a-bus" is now the typical representative of public opinion, and the man-in-the-street means the man who is hurrying from his home to his office, or to a place of amusement. He has just got the last news-sheet from his neighbour; he has not waited to test or sift it; he may have heard three contradictory reports, or seen two lying posters on his way up the street, but he has an ex-

* The Australians have invented a far more sinister term. For them John Bull-Cohen is now the impersonation of British Imperial policy.

pression of opinion ready on his lips, which is none the less confident, because all the grounds on which it is founded may be swept away by the next report that he hears. The man-in-the-street is the man in a hurry; the man who has not time to think and will not take the trouble to do so if he has the time. He is the faithful reflex of the popular sheet and the shouting newsboy. His character and the tone which he gives to our public discussions resemble more the character and tone which the proud and slow-going John Bull of old days was wont to attribute to his volatile and emotional neighbours who made revolutions and cut off the heads of kings, while he at home was priding himself on the slow and orderly march of reform. To this new public opinion of the streets and the tramcars it is useless to appeal in terms of reason; it has not time to put the two ends of an argument together; it has hardly patience to receive a single idea, much less to hold two in the mind and compare them. Equally futile is it to come before this tribunal with any plea for those higher considerations which men recognise in their

such as will flock to the Yorkshire match, or to imagine any public boon which would stir emotions so wide and deep as would be raised by the news of another "century" by Tyldesley. No social revolution will come from a people so absorbed in cricket and football. Should the beginnings of a movement appear, society has an easy way of dealing with it. In old days they hanged the leaders of popular movements. Now they ask them to dinner—a method of painless extinction which has proved far more effective.

The mention of religion leads us naturally to the consideration of the causes of this change in the national temper; among these, the decay in vivid and profound religious beliefs must certainly hold a place. This decay was in process a generation ago, but its effects at that time were off-set by the rise of a humanitarian feeling which, partly in alliance with the recognised Churches, and partly outside them, took in a measure the place of the old convictions, supplying a stimulus and a guidance to effort and yielding a basis for a serious and rational

public life. But the promises of that time have not been fulfilled. Humanitarianism, as we have seen, has lost its hold, and the resulting temper is a good-natured scepticism, not only about the other world, but also about the deeper problems and higher interests of this world.

The prevailing temper has, as is its wont, fashioned for itself a theory. Indeed it has found more than one theory ready to serve it. It can found itself on the current philosophy, on recent political history, and on the supposed verdict of physical science.

The most popular philosophy of our time has had a reactionary influence, the extent of which is perhaps not generally appreciated. For thirty years and more English thought has been subject, not for the first time in its modern history, to powerful influences from abroad. The Rhine has flowed into the Thames, at any rate into those upper reaches of the Thames, known locally as the Isis, and from the Isis the stream of German idealism has been diffused over the academical world of Great Britain. It would be natural to look to an idealistic

philosophy for a counterpoise to those crude doctrines of physical force which we shall find associated with the philosophy of science. Yet, in the main, the idealistic movement has swelled the current of retrogression. It is itself, in fact, one expression of the general reaction against the plain, human, rationalistic way of looking at life and its problems. Every institution and every belief is for it alike a manifestation of a spiritual principle, and thus for everything there is an inner and more spiritual interpretation. Hence, vulgar and stupid beliefs can be held with a refined and enlightened meaning, known only to him who so holds them, a convenient doctrine for men of a highly-rarefied understanding, but for those of coarser texture who learn from them apt to degenerate into charlatanism. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that the effect of idealism on the world in general has been mainly to sap intellectual and moral sincerity, to excuse men in their consciences for professing beliefs which on the meaning ordinarily attached to them they do not hold, to soften the edges of all

progress and is lusting after the delights of barbarism.

The trend of events has appeared on the surface to justify these philosophic doubts of humanitarian duty. Hegelianism had its political sponsor in Bismarck, and Hegel's teaching, apart from that subtler influence upon thought which I have attempted to characterise, had a distinct bearing upon political questions which was upon the whole reactionary. For him, the ideals of the eighteenth century on which, say what we may, political Liberalism is founded, were merely a phase in the negative movement of thought, a phase which his higher synthesis was definitely to overcome. They belonged to the kind of rationalism with which Hegel had no sympathy, being convinced that he had found out a more excellent way. In place of the rights of the individual Hegel set the State—and for him the State was not to serve humanity, but was an end in itself. It was not to serve the Church, nor even to be separate from the Church; on the contrary, the modern State was to be the fountain of religious as well as secular

intellectual support of the reaction has been neither the idealistic philosophy nor the impression made by contemporary events, but the belief that physical science had given its verdict in favour—for it came to this—of violence and against social justice.

I spoke above of slavery, and how it seemed to our grandfathers a denial of the fundamental rights of humanity. But the question is raised by the current interpretation of biological science whether humanity has any fundamental rights at all. If our grandfathers declared that the black man was a man and a brother, our generation replied that he is but the son of the bond woman, born to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water to the stronger race; and far from seeing any immorality in this arrangement, the prevalent theory is that it is by adding strength to the strong, by giving to them that have, and taking from them that have not, that the fittest survives and the race improves.

The doctrine that human progress depends upon the forces which condition all biological evolution has in fact been the primary intellectual cause of the reaction. Just as the

to preserve them. The best thing that can happen is that they should be utterly cut off, for they are the inferior stock, and their blood must not mix with ours. The justice, the mercy, the chivalry, which would induce the conqueror to forbear from enjoying the full fruits of his victory must be looked on with suspicion. It is better to smite the Amalekite hip and thigh and let the conquering race replenish the earth.

By its most logical exponents, this conception is applied to the relations of individuals in society, but so applied it is readily seen to involve a mere denial of the value of social order, every advance in which involves a further suspension of the struggle for existence. Bagehot, I believe, was the first to point out that it might as readily be applied to nations, and that human progress might be thought of as resting on the struggle not of individuals but of communities. Thus conceived the theory has somewhat anomalous results. Internal peace, harmony, and justice, with all the moral qualities which they imply, are readily recognised as necessary to national efficiency, but as between nations

these principles cease to apply. If it is the business of the individual to be a loyal and law-abiding subject of the State, it is the business of the State merely to advance itself and trample down all who cross its path. The rule of right, it appears, stops short at the frontier. It hardly seems to need arguing that this is not in the end a tenable view. It is safe to say that the conduct of a State and its external relations must react upon its internal character, and the negation of a principle in one relation must affect its authority in others. If the morality which applies to individuals does not apply to the State, why does it apply to any other association—a family, a church, a trade union? But if it does not apply to such associations, and if those who act for them are not to be held morally accountable, there is an end to the ethical basis of that very social order which was admitted to be necessary.*

Not only the central conception of the biological theory of society, but its secondary and consequential doctrines, have militated

* I recur to this particular aspect of the question below, Chap. viii.

the biological conditions of society has naturally been associated with a bias towards conservatism.

Conversely the doctrine of equality is a natural basis for social and political reform. As a matter of fact this doctrine is not touched by biological theory. No doubt it is capable of being stated in a form which ignores differences in the capacities of mankind—though, to be perfectly just, it must be admitted that such statements have more often been put into the mouths of the upholders of equality by their opponents, who have wished to put the theory in a form which it was easy to confute—but, however perverted, the doctrine of equality lends itself naturally to doctrines of social, national, sexual and racial justice. In such doctrines the fundamental fact about the human being is that he is a human being and enjoys accordingly certain fundamental rights. The announcement of this view in the modern world amounted to a revolution, because it found society based on distinctions of class, of sex and of colour, which implied a denial of these fundamental rights. Now the bio-

that the institutions for which the white man has fitted himself, being the result of a special evolution, are not fitted for the black, and that we should accordingly in dealing with him adapt our own institutions to his accustomed environment. Scientific as this sounds, it means in practice that when the white man comes into contact with lower civilisations, he should lower himself to their level. The black man, for example, is accustomed to slavery, and the only conclusion of the argument is that the white man may justly preserve this institution for the common benefit. The flaw in this argument is first that it lays down an inequality of endowments and proceeds therefrom to a denial of equal rights. Secondly, those who use it do not carry their inquiries far enough. Content to establish the general fact of inequality, they do not stay to inquire into its nature and degree, still less to prove that it justifies the arbitrary treatment which they uphold. Thus, to keep to the question of slavery as a test, the Kaffir is after all a human being, if an inferior, and when his case is enquired into dispassionately, it seems that in relation to labour he is after

force to the Kaffir, and it requires a much more thorough investigation of the subject at the hands of much less prejudiced observers than those who wish to exploit his labour, to convince the onlooker that any departure from equality of treatment is justified under this head. A just application of evolutionary principles to the governing of less civilised races will doubtless entail certain differences in the treatment accorded to them, but unfortunately it is precisely this just application which, in the present temper of the governing race, whose material interests are so much involved, we can hardly hope to see.

Lastly, in a more general sense, the theory of evolution has led to a kind of fatalism, which consorts well with the materialist principles which have become popular. Evolution is conceived as a vast world process in which human will and human intelligence play a subordinate, and, in a sense, blind and unconscious part. The great biological forces work themselves out without any conscious contribution from the organisms with which they sport. Humanity is a product of forces similar in character to those which made the

surrender ourselves, they say, to the forces which urge us on, and which in the past made our fathers build better than they knew. Great empires advance, they say, not so much by express intention and through the designing policy of individuals, as by a kind of blind impulse, urging them on, they know not how or why, forcing them from step to step till they find themselves in a position quite remote from anything they set out to attain. Against this stony fatalism the sense of justice cries out in vain.

Thus in diverse forms and sundry manners the belief that success is its own justification has penetrated the thought of our time. At one time the appeal is to destiny, at another to natural selection, at a third to the inequalities implanted by heredity, at yet another to the demonstrated efficiency of blood and iron. The current of thought has joined that of class interest, and the united stream sweeps onward in full flood to the destruction of the distinctive landmarks of modern civilised progress.

which the mere student of society must yield.

That the biologist should have no standard of value is perfectly natural. He is concerned with life, with structure and function, with organisation in all its forms. He traces the evolution of the simpler into the more complex, of the general into the special, without asking or needing to ask whether one form is higher or lower than another. But he does make one general assumption. If one form supersedes another it is because it is better adapted to the conditions of existence. The ichthyosaurus or the dodo have died out because they were comparatively ill-adapted to maintain themselves. They made room for creatures better organised for that supreme purpose. And the same process it is assumed goes on in human society. The ill-adapted perish while the fitter survive.

So far we are on firm ground, but a danger arises when fitness to survive is taken as evidence of superiority in other respects. As long as we think of life only as an end there can be no question of any other kind of fitness, and this is precisely the biological view. But

organic evolution has sometimes been compared to a tree. From the parent stock—the lowest organic type—branches spring out in all directions, and form the different classes and orders of the animal and vegetable kingdom. We may for our purposes treat one of these branches—that which leads to the sub-kingdom of Vertebrates, and thereby to the Mammals, the Primates, and finally to Man—as the main ascending trunk, and speak of organisms as higher or lower according to the position they occupy on this line of development. We can justify this use of terms if we agree that mind is higher than matter, and the more developed mind than the less developed. We have then a distinct criterion of higher and lower, and shall know what we mean when we say that the higher type comes into being or survives. We shall recognise also that it is only evolution along the main or ascending line that we need care about, evolution in other directions being indifferent or worse. To this evolution of the main stem the name of orthogeny or orthogenic evolution has been given, and this being understood, we may say that on a scientific

not guided by the teachings of its own experience, but by the most elementary forms of "instinct." Instinct comparative psychology teaches us to regard as behaviour based on the structure which the organism inherits from its ancestors, and which acts in a sense mechanically when the appropriate touch or stimulus is supplied by some outer object.

Half or wholly mechanical reactions uninformed by intelligence are probably all that the lowest organisms * have for the guidance of their behaviour. But far down in the animal kingdom a new factor appears in the capacity of the animal to modify its behaviour in accordance with the results of its experience. This capacity appears at first to be

* Their character is best understood by thinking of one of the many instances of mechanical reaction which remain among men. A familiar one is the act of blinking when something appears to threaten the eyes. The closing of the eyelids serves to protect the eye, but we do not close them deliberately with that object. They close themselves in a mechanical fashion, which, as every one knows, we find it hard to prevent if we try. Our inherited physical structure provides this mechanism for the protection of the eye, operating without the aid of intelligence. The "instinctive" behaviour of a lower animal is of the same general character.

limited to very simple cases, the range of intelligence not extending beyond the immediate consequences of the act or impulse.* But, still within the animal world, there comes a stage at which remoter consequences may be anticipated and steps taken to provide for them, as when a dog checks the impulse of the moment in fear of subsequent punishment. But throughout the animal world the main lines of behaviour are laid down by the blindly-acting inherited structure which we call instinct, and intelligence is applied mainly in rendering the plan of instinct more elastic, and adapting it to cases for which a fixed mechanical structure could not provide. In the human world this is changed. Each child is born not only with its own inherited faculties and impulses which correspond to animal instinct, but into a society with rules of life inherited in a different sense, handed on by tradition. The individual has neither to puzzle out his own rule of life, nor yet is it fixed for

* A chick which has pecked at a piece of orange peel and apparently, as its gestures indicate, found it disagreeable, will avoid orange peel thereafter, while it will peck with increased avidity at the yolk of egg which suits its cannibal tastes.

of social justice with reference to which personal duty is principally determined. In these and other ways, too numerous even for brief reference in this place, there arises by degrees the ideal of collective humanity, self-determining in its progress, as the supreme object of human activity, and the final standard by which the laws of conduct should be judged. The establishment of such an ideal, to which as a fact the historical development of the moral consciousness points, is the goal to which the mind, in its effort to master the conditions of existence, necessarily strives, and all the previous stages of mental evolution may be regarded as marking steps in the movement to this end.

Orthogenic evolution then is conceived as a process in which the control of the conditions of life gradually passes to that intelligence which in its lowest stages is the merest fleck of foam upon the waters which roll the life of the organic creation hither and thither as they list. This change, infinitely slow as it may be, constitutes the onward movement of humanity. Two of its results call for our attention here, one positive and one negative.

which enable us best to see life as a whole, reveal it as a "dome of many-coloured glass," not "staining" but rather reflecting, in the richness of human individuality and with the warmth of free, spontaneous, original impulse, the "white radiance" of eternal truth.

These commonplaces may suffice to illustrate what is meant by "higher" and "lower" organisation, and how the higher, whether physically, mentally, or sociologically considered, is always that in which a richer, fuller, more differentiated structure is knitted together in a deeper, more thoroughgoing unity. So far for the positive quality of "higher" organisation. The negative aspect is not less important for our purpose. The advance of organisation diminishes the opportunities for conflict. In proportion as life is well ordered the struggle for existence is suppressed. Biologists have seen in this a ground for apprehending that efforts towards social reform must necessarily defeat themselves, because the milder manners of civilised society and the multiplication of beneficent institutions preserve individuals who in a ruder age would have succumbed. Thus

inferior stocks, which natural selection would weed out, are allowed to perpetuate themselves, and the race deteriorates. But the truth is that all orthogenic evolution, from the lowest organisms upwards, involve the progressive curtailment of the struggle for existence. The lowest organisms have an extraordinarily high rate of multiplication. A single pair—or rather, as generation is here a-sexual, a single organism—would have many million, even in some cases many billion, of descendants in a few months if these were allowed to multiply unchecked. But as under normal circumstances no such rapid increase takes place, it follows that the vast majority of the young are extirpated before they reach maturity. That is to say, that in the lowest grades of life there is on the average only one survivor out of potential millions. So intense is this struggle for existence, and so vast the field within which "natural selection" can be exercised. As we ascend the animal kingdom we find that, notwithstanding fluctuations due to other causes, in the main the rate of multiplication gradually declines. The highest mammals are the slowest breeders,

themselves to reconstruct it from the foundation in accordance with their views. The tendency was to accept existing social conditions and show the individual how, taking them as he found them, he could so pick his way among the shoals as to reach his own salvation. But in the modern world this attitude has gradually been abandoned. The pressure of events and its own development impelled the spirit of progress to turn upon social institutions as the immediate and most important object of attack. Collective rather than individual humanity became the supreme object, and accordingly the conditions of social life were found to be the prime means of accelerating or retarding development. Hence the endeavour which came to a head in the eighteenth century to form distinct conceptions of social justice by which the actual constitution of society might be tested. Hence the doctrine that the government should be the servant rather than the lord of the people, which meant that political interests must yield to the common good; that all classes were entitled to equal treatment, which subordinated political privilege

to moral justice; that restraints on liberty should be limited by the demonstrable needs of social welfare, which recognised the moral claim of the human personality to make the utmost of its powers. Amid all differences and conflicts one idea is common to the modern democratic movement, whether it takes the shape of revolution or reform, of Liberalism or Socialism. The political order must conform to the ethical ideal of what is just. The State must be founded on Right—a conception which in the ancient world could only give rise to Utopias, but in the modern period has been the practical cause and canon of many a change. The biological view of evolution opposes this ideal as unscientific and in the end self-defeating. It is for this reason that the biological teaching is so profoundly reactionary and lends itself so handily to the popular cynicism of the day. A truer view of evolution, on the other hand, exhibits the attempt to remodel society by a reasoned conception of social justice as precisely the movement required at the present stage of the growth of mind.

NOTE.—The questions raised in this chapter are more fully discussed in the writer's "Mind in Evolution."

ceived as organised in a number of departments under a hierarchy of officials, each of whom is an expert in the branch immediately under his supervision. How the departments are to be correlated and the supreme experts controlled is not always so clear. Indeed, who precisely the expert is, how he is known and appointed, whether he is qualified by his own pronouncement to be regarded of all men as "expert," or owes his position to some one still more highly qualified than himself; whether, again (as sometimes seems to be assumed), the "man on the spot" is always an expert, or whether it is possible that inexpert people should sometimes be highly placed—all these are questions which might be put to those who throw about the word so lightly. Sometimes it seems to be thought that the art of governing men is as mechanical a matter as that of laying drain-pipes, to be acquired through a similar routine of instruction and apprenticeship. Having mastered this routine the expert, it would almost seem, is qualified to direct society as its natural governor. At other times the argument is pitched in a lower key and we

this point let us take the verdict of no English Liberal or French idealist, but of the great German historian for whom Cæsar represents the highest type of statesman and the wonderful bureaucratic system founded by him one of the great achievements of history.

"The history of Cæsar and of Roman Imperialism, with all the unsurpassed greatness of the master-worker, with all the historical necessity of the work, is in truth a more bitter censure of modern autocracy than could be written by the hand of man. According to the same law of nature in virtue of which the smallest organism infinitely surpasses the most artistic machine, every constitution, however defective, which gives play to the free self-determination of a majority of citizens infinitely surpasses the most brilliant and humane absolutism; for the former is capable of development and therefore living, the latter is what it is and therefore dead." *

What is spontaneous in a people, be it in the movement of an individual, a class, or a nation, is always the source of life, the well-spring of the fresh forces which recruit jaded civilisation. In proportion as the weight of government succeeds in crushing this spon-

* Mommsen's "History of Rome," E. T., vol. iv. p. 466.

sation. People are fond of insisting that government should adapt itself to circumstances, but they forget the converse truth that it should endeavour to avoid being placed in circumstances which compel it to action incompatible with its better principles.

The denial by a society of a right which it has once admitted carries with it its own retribution. For the nation as for the individual, the automatically working punishment of transgression is the dissolution of those bonds of duty, those ties of fixed principle, which are woven with such effort and loosed with such ease. For the nation the fatal consequences, if not swifter, are more certain and more extensive. The denial of right becomes a precedent, and a precedent is elastic. Indeed, it may be said that questions of right run up into questions of fact, since the question whether a given right should be recognised by society is ultimately settled by the question whether its refusal is in the long run compatible with the principles on which that society is based and which it desires to maintain. If

be just." What is not consistent is the argument which admits considerations of justice and refuses to apply them. "We ought never to have started, but having started we cannot go back. Our prestige is involved. The first step was foolishness, but the consequences are inevitable." In this familiar strain, what generally strikes us is that at every point the arguments employed to prove the absolute necessity for going a step further are substantially the same, and at each stage there is a party of "moderate men" who tell us that it was great folly to have listened to such arguments before, but a regrettable necessity to accept them now. "Having gone to A, we must go on to B. It is true we ought never to have been at A, but since we are there——." The same argument will take us from B to C and from C to D, or, in fact, as far as the original instigators of the move desire. They at least are consistent; they will gain their ends irrespectively of all other considerations, and from their consistency those who hold by national right may learn a lesson. Those who cry "Inevitable" and "Too late" will always

contradiction lay, for morally speaking a right can be nothing except what the moral consciousness makes it, nor can it have any effect except in so far as it is recognised by others than the individual who lays claim to it. However, the individual, being conceived by all upholders of the social contract theory to be clothed with certain original rights, was held to part with certain of these rights in order to make a contract with other individuals similarly situated, and form together with them a political society for common defence and mutual help.

The Tory, the Whig, and the Revolutionist naturally differed greatly in their views as to the nature of this contract and the kind of rights which the individual was held to reserve in making it, but the fundamental point of view is common to them all. The rights of man are something absolute and fixed, a remainder that is left out of the original stock of human nature after the deductions necessary for concluding the social contract.

According to this conception, then, the welfare of society must be made to accom-

generally acknowledged rights follow from that condition, and to decide whether they are to be allowed any secondary or derivative value, or whether they are to be dismissed as the superstitions of an exploded metaphysics. Utilitarianism thus paved the way for the biological theory of society in which, as we have seen, the notion of right gives place altogether to that of force. In the struggle for existence men make claims, but have no rights except the claims that they by their own power can make good. There is no test of desert except success, and no distinction between the good man, the good community, the good religion and the bad man, the bad community, and the bad religion, except that the one drives out and exterminates the other. The rights of man are, in short, the rights of the highwayman. Faced by this conclusion the sociologist is forced to reconsider the whole theory of evolution, and he finds at the outset a distinction which the biologist ignores. The evolution which has created man, which has engendered human society and developed civilisation out of barbarism, is, he finds,

the broad conditions upon which that welfare depends, he finds it precisely in the maintenance of these rights, which the latter school hold to be the gift of nature to man, but which are in reality the late acquisitions of a slow and painful development. Treating the full development of humanity, the unfolding of the powers of mind, the coming to itself of the human spirit, as the final cause of life, the ultimate aim of action, and the canon by which right and wrong are to be judged, the evolutionist estimates institutions by their bearing on this supreme end. For him, though no rights or duties are "natural" in the old sense, yet some are fundamental—those, namely, which he finds to be permanent and necessary conditions of the free, onward movement of the human spirit.

CHAPTER VI

THE IDEAS OF LIBERALISM

WE have seen that a scientific theory of evolution justifies, as against the creed of force, the fundamental idea of the modern democratic movement — the application of ethical principles to political relations. It remains, however, to ask how the political ideas thus engendered have fared in the light of experience, particularly of our recent British experience. We may begin with the distinctive ideas of Liberalism. These ideas have passed through the ordeal of a reactionary period. Have they come out of it unscathed? Popular sovereignty for instance was an article of the Liberal creed. Put into practice, popular sovereignty has not been very kind to Liberals, nor — which is more to the point for us — has it

of truth in these contentions; but the conclusion that democracies would not be warlike—if stated as a universal rule—must certainly rank among the shattered illusions. Here again we must distinguish. Few people are fond of war when the reality of war comes home to them. But what those who know war hate most in it is not the fighting, which appeals to every male animal, but the attendant circumstances and consequences of the fighting—the pestilence and famine, the blackened ruins and starving children. The popular parties of the Continent are opposed not only to war but to militarism, because militarism comes home to them in their own persons and their own homes. But suppose a population removed from all prospect of compulsory personal service, and from all danger of invasion, and the natural love of fighting will remain, with no salutary grounds of caution to hold it in check. Many people in this country are now under the impression that they know what war means because they have seen their friends and relations, young men of the appropriate age for military service,

go to the front. They do not yet understand that this is only the soft side of war. It is a different matter when fathers are torn from their families and business men from the conduct of affairs, when industry is paralysed, property wrecked, and the non-combatant population ruined. This is the side of war seen by those within the field of operations. I remember, during the war in South Africa, hearing of a small tradesman who said: "I was very keen about this war. It has cost me ten pounds"—and he briefly, but with emphasis, reviewed the incidence of certain duties—"I'll never shout for another war." This man was under the impression that he had realised what war means. Suppose he had seen his business ruined and his children beggars? By memory and tradition the continental democracies have some knowledge of the realities of war, and it is no matter for wonder if they are less eager for war than the English democracy, which has no such tradition and feels itself secured from all real danger by the overwhelming strength of its fleet.

does it follow that democracy can only be applied with success to small States? Must greater aggregations inevitably tend, under whatever outward form, to the reality of oligarchy or despotism? Some democrats, Rousseau, for example, have thought so. But Rousseau wrote about a democracy that was to be but was not. He had little to go upon except the somewhat misleading experience of the ancient world and the civic republics of Italy and Switzerland. Since his time the world has seen the actual experiment of democracy tried upon the large scale, and the question raised by Rousseau, though not perhaps decisively answered, wears a different shape. To restate it in the form suggested by this experience, we should begin by recognising that democracy means or may mean two things which, though allied in idea, are not necessarily found together in practice. In its most obvious meaning, democracy implies a direct participation of the mass of ordinary citizens in the public life of the commonwealth, an idea most nearly realised, perhaps, in the great assemblies and large popular

of the whole body are alike threatened, law being the organ of true liberty. It has sometimes been held that democracy would be no less hostile to personal liberty than other forms of government. It is true, and we have seen it, that the masses may be as antagonistic to personal independence as the classes. A mob may disperse a public meeting as well as the police, and may be an equally effective instrument of the executive Government. But if it is argued that the democratic principle can be hostile to liberty this is a fallacy, for it is full publicity and free discussion that are the organs of democratic government, and if it suppresses them democracy deprives itself of the means of forming a judgment on its own affairs.

Given these conditions, on the one hand the recognised supremacy of the law which it makes, on the other hand perfect freedom to inform itself and make itself heard, democracy, in the sense of ultimate popular sovereignty, is not necessarily incompatible with vastness of territory or complexity of interests. But here there is another point to be noted. With increased size and complexity local differences

come into play which threaten, if not to disrupt the democratic State, at least to destroy its democratic character. Within one great State there may be well-marked communities each with a public opinion of its own based on it own traditions, beliefs, and requirements which is no more free to express itself under the government of majorities of a different way of thinking than it would be under the rule of an absolute monarch. Thus Ireland is governed by a democracy, but it is not so easy to say that it is democratically governed. On the contrary, the natural tendency of such a relationship is towards a state of things in which the several conditions of democracy are successively destroyed. In proportion as the subordinate community is strong and determined—in proportion, in fact, as it forms a nation—it will use all the liberty and all the constitutional safeguards which democracy provides as weapons against the dominant majority, and that majority is faced with the dilemma of seeing its power sapped or of contravening the very principles of its own constitution.

From these difficulties democracy has found

features of government by no means less essential to the democratic idea, and to these conditions the power of the majority pushed to an extreme may be fatal. It is not a question of the abstract rights of nationality. There are no abstract rights whatever of nationality, or of empire, of liberty, or of property. The rights of an individual are what he may expect from a social organisation based on certain principles, and the test of his rights is this, that their persistent violation is in the end fatal to the principles of the organisation. For instance, the denial of "constitutional liberty" involves the dissolution of democracy. As was shown in the last chapter, every question of right runs up in the end into a question of fact, for the sanction of a right is the penalty which befalls the society that breaks it. If we attempt to lay down a general definition of national rights and apply it—on the old "geometrical method"—with rigid uniformity in all cases, we shall find ourselves speedily involved in a network of contradictory claims, and in the futile effort to escape by means of verbal distinctions that do not correspond

world at large, has always had the sympathy of liberally-minded men. Nationalism of this kind has stood for liberty, not only in the sense that it has resisted tyrannous encroachment, but also in the sense that it has maintained the right of a community to work out its own salvation in its own way. A nation has an individuality, and the doctrine that individuality is an element in well-being is rightly applied to it. The world advances by the free, vigorous growth of divergent types, and is stunted when all the fresh bursting shoots are planed off close to the heavy, solid stem. Good government is worth much, but, so far as imposed from above, more for the life that it makes possible within it, which will probably sooner or later conflict with it, than for the material comfort of which it is the direct cause. Organisation is worth much, but the most perfect mechanical organisation is something far inferior to organic life resting on the spontaneous co-operation of parts which preserve their independent vitality.

Thus the teaching of our recent history appears to be not that the older Liberalism is "played out," but that the several elements of

or against them, then, we may fairly conclude that the ideas of democratic government, personal liberty, the supremacy of law as against arbitrary rule, national rights, the wrongfulness of aggression, racial and class equality are in principle and in practice closely interwoven. They form an ethical whole, and by their application to social and political affairs humanity made the great stride which separates the nineteenth century from the eighteenth. No part of this whole can be abandoned in principle without injury to the remainder, and the attempt to do so has led to the reaction of the last twenty years, by which the winnings of our civilisation are threatened.

for thinking that it would be corrected by a government of select Balliol men. The corruption has, in fact, spread from above downwards. All classes alike give way to Jingoism, and shut their ears to reason and humanity; but the initiative comes from the world of high finance or of high officialdom. In "society" and among the educated middle class the applause is universal. Among the working classes it is less so. The artizans and labourers have failed to check the great interests which are for ever dragging a nation into schemes of aggression. That is a disappointment, but it would be a mistake to attribute to their entry into public life the positive debasement of the moral standard which has coincided with it. There is no reason to think that we should get a better standard from a more restricted suffrage.

Thus, first, it is not democratic self-government but democratic Imperialism that "contradicts itself," and secondly it is not the popular element in our constitution that is primarily responsible for Imperialism. The only illusion that is destroyed is the belief, if it ever was definitely held, that a people

enjoying self-government could never be Imperialist. That was, indeed, a hasty belief, for it implied an expectation that self-government would change human nature. The love of ascendency is not peculiar to any one class or race, nor does it arise from any special form of government. All men, as Mill long ago remarked, love power more than liberty. All nations are, with opportunity, more or less aggressive. All are firmly persuaded that in their most inexcusable aggressions they are acting purely on the defensive. All believe that in conquering others they are acting for the good of the conquered; that the only charge that can be laid at their door is that of undue forbearance; that they are ready to be just and even generous if the others will only submit. All nations believe implicitly in their own entire rectitude and place the worst construction on the motives of others.* All approve of their own civilisation and are inclined to think

* "This dread of being duped by other nations—the notion that foreign heads are more able, though at the same time foreign hearts are less honest than our own, has always been one of our prevailing weaknesses." (Bentham, "Essay on Universal and Perpetual Peace," Works, ii. p. 553.)

favourite explanation was that unless a policy of "never again" were "seen through," the opposing State, even if at present impotent, might some day be in a position to injure them. In the same conversation Confucius goes on to show, in true Shakespearian spirit, that domestic misgovernment is the true occasion of these foreign adventures. These are matters in which the world changes very little.

"There are instances," wrote Bentham,* "in which ministers have been punished for making peace—there are none where they have been so much as questioned for bringing the nation into war, and if punishment had been ever applied on such an occasion it would be not for the mischief done to the foreign nation but purely for the mischief brought upon their own; not for the injustice, but purely for the imprudence."

The general conditions of the pseudo-patriotism which consists in hostility to other nations are permanent and universal. The form in which it appears varies in accordance with varying conditions of national life.

We in England, through long immunity, had become wholly ignorant of the nature of the passions raised by war. History does not

* Plan for Universal Peace, "Works," ii. p. 555.

uselessness of raising one's voice in opposition to war when it has once begun, that I made up my mind that so long as I was in political life, should a war again break out between England and a Great Power, I would never open my mouth upon the subject from the time the first gun was fired until the peace was made." *

To go back further than Cobden, here is Bentham's description of popular patriotism, and let the reader judge whether it needs to be modified for use in the present day :—

"The voice of the nation on these subjects can only be looked for in the newspapers. But on these subjects the language of all newspapers is uniform : 'It is we that are always in the right, without a possibility of being otherwise. Against us other nations have no rights. If, according to the rules of judging between individual and individual, we are right—we are right by the rules of justice : if not, we are right by the laws of patriotism, which is a virtue more respectable than justice.' Injustice, oppression, fraud, lying, whatever acts would be crimes, whatever habits would be vices, if manifested in the pursuit of individual interests, when manifested in the pursuit of national interests become sublimated into virtues. Let any man declare, who has ever heard or read an English newspaper, whether this be not the constant tenor of the notions they convey. Party on this one point makes no difference. However hostile to one another on all other points, on this they

* Morley's "Life," ii. p. 159.

have never but one voice—they unite with the utmost harmony. Such are the opinions, and to these opinions the facts are accommodated as of course. Who would blush to misrepresent, when misrepresentation is a virtue?" *

Some of us have been inclined to look back on the time of Cobden as the halcyon days of peace and sobriety and justice between nations. We have been led to think the orgy of barbarism which we have witnessed something wholly peculiar to our time, something that points to a real retrogression towards savagery. There is, in fact, as I have pointed out, a real intellectual reaction. The humanitarianism of Cobden's day is no longer popular. But let us not exaggerate. Human nature has not changed in fifty years. Cobden was a peculiarly able and resourceful apostle of peace, with a peculiarly noble and eloquent brother in arms. He had behind him all the prestige of his great success in the Free Trade movement, and the economic conditions were more favourable to his protest than to that of Mr. Morley and Mr. Courtney. But Cobden had precisely the same forces to fight. There was precisely the same pugnacity, the same

* Works, vol. ii. p. 556.

callousness to outrageous acts done in the British name, the same ferocity of vindictiveness fed by the same agencies. "You must not disguise from yourself," he writes in 1847, "that the evil has its roots in the pugnacious, energetic, self-sufficient, foreigner-despising and pitying character of that noble insular creature John Bull."

Clearly John Bull was no less warlike in the forties than he is now, no less convinced of the necessary justice of his own cause, or of the service which he rendered humanity by condescending to conquer and to rule it. Nor when incidents occurred to throw a very ugly light on those civilising influences of which he was wont to boast was he a whit the more inclined to listen to the truth about himself and his agents. He received the account of the things done in his name with the same callous indifference which is familiar to us. Cobden writes in 1849 precisely as any man of his views might have written on twenty different occasions in the last dozen years :—

"It shocks me to think what fiendish atrocities may be committed by English arms without rousing any conscientious resistance at home, provided they be only far

enough off and the victims too feeble to trouble us with their remonstrances or groans." *

Nor is the howl for vengeance anything new. Cobden was terribly impressed by the savagery of the Sepoys in the Mutiny, "but," he adds—

"We seem in danger of forgetting our own Christianity and descending to a level with these monsters who have startled the world with their deeds. It is terrible to see our middle-class journals and speakers calling for the destruction of Delhi and the indiscriminate massacre of prisoners." †

Then, as in our own time, the non-combatants were the most furious for blood.‡

* "Life," ii. p. 56.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 212. Disraeli in the same connection declared that if such a temper were encouraged, we ought to take down from our altars the image of Christ and raise the statue of Moloch there.

‡ Continuous contact with savages must be reckoned among the causes of deterioration in the practices of war. Generally speaking—though there are interesting exceptions—the savage gives no quarter unless he enslaves his captives, and regards the person and property of the conquered enemy as entirely at his disposal. The civilised man who has gradually put away these methods of warfare in dealing with other civilised men, gradually resumes them when he comes to deal with the savage. Quarter is at times denied, the land and possibly the cattle of a conquered tribe are appropriated. On occa-

In a word, the moral conditions of the controversy were the same in Cobden's day as now. Jingoism and Imperialism were not then known by name, but the same pseudo-

sion they are subjected to forced labour. Even torture, as in the case of the Philippinos, is applied to prisoners. It is inevitable that the demoralisation should spread. The following passage from Hansard for April 17, 1896, is instructive in the light of later events:—

"Mr. Henry Labouchere: I beg to ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether his attention has been called to the fact that the villages of the natives of Matabeleland are being burnt by the forces of the Chartered Company, and that a farmer on quitting his homestead left a considerable amount of dynamite, with fuses attached, which exploded when his homestead was filled with natives, killing about one hundred; whether such proceedings are in accordance with the usages of war, and if not, whether he will take steps to prevent their occurrence.

"Mr. Chamberlain: The burning of the kraals of a native enemy is in accordance with the usages of South African warfare. I have no information of the reported explosion of dynamite in a farmhouse, but if true it does not differ materially from mining operations in a siege or the use of a torpedo in naval warfare."

It will be seen that the burning of farms is here justified as a practice of native warfare. What natives may do the white man apparently may do in fighting with natives, and four years later it is discovered that he may do the same thing in fighting with other white men

degree, worse—in this relation. This change must be attributed to the coincidence of those intellectual and political causes which since Cobden's time have fostered the growth of materialism—that is to say, the tendency to overvalue physical force and to ignore the subtler and less obvious conditions on which the public welfare rests. But this disease affects the public as a whole, and does not fasten especially on the classes more recently admitted to the suffrage. What is needed is a better public opinion, and this we shall not find by restricting the class to whose judgment we appeal. For improvement we can only trust to the teaching of experience and the re-awakening of those better elements which in our past history have often slumbered but have never died.

On the other hand it is well to be under no illusions about democracy. Free government has not produced general demoralisation, but neither has it, as was hoped, prevented it. The main reason of this failure was pointed out at the beginning of the discussion. In relation to dependencies and weaker races an imperial democracy is a governing class, and

some questions is known to him, and if he agrees with them on one point while disagreeing on another he must choose between his opinions as best he can. But nothing prevents the men he has put into power from raising quite fresh questions which were not before him at all. If there was at one time an honourable understanding that there was a limit beyond which this could not be done, any such barrier has been swept away in the general overturn. No doubt the voter can in theory punish his Government when their term of power is at an end, but by that time they may have succeeded in raising a new issue, and if the old matter is not wholly forgotten it is subordinated, it may be to some cry of patriotism—it may be to some more absorbing class or sectarian interest.* All that the ordinary voter feels about a given act of government, then, is that it is an act of men to whose return to power he contributed

* The absence of any power outside the Cabinet which, by dissolving Parliament, can compel an appeal from the Cabinet to the nation is the greatest flaw in our constitution, and if not made good will some day lead to serious disaster.

one vote out of some two million or more it may be three or four years ago, when probably quite other questions were under discussion, and whom he will not be able to dislodge until perhaps two or three years more have passed, by which time again other questions have come up. Thus instead of the clear-cut and concentrated responsibility which stimulates and awakens conscience, the responsibility of the voter is as diluted and confused as it well can be. This is one reason why public opinion is often numb and cold to issues of justice and humanity, especially if the right understanding of those issues involves careful study of details and perhaps the sifting of contradictory reports. Men will not be at the pains of such investigation unless they feel their own responsibility to be clear and direct. The work should, of course, be done for them by the Press, but the bulk of the Press will lay before the public nothing that will not be popular. Its business is to tickle its master's vanity, to tell him solemnly that his duty lies there whither his prejudices already lead him, and to cover up and hide away all things done in his name which might be hurtful to his self-

CHAPTER VIII

INTERNATIONAL RIGHT

WE have argued that the denial of right is the destruction of democracy. Yet we were forced from the first to admit that government being a practical business, dealing with a thousand diverse considerations and conflicting claims, can never treat any single right as absolute. It may be asked whether these two positions are consistent. The distinction of right and wrong, it may be said, is absolute, and to admit that a right may not be absolute is to abandon the ethical view. Let us consider whether this is so, and let us take the conception of national right as a test. Can we, rejecting alike the rule of force, or bare expediency, and the doctrine of the abstract rights of peoples, find a concrete principle adaptable to the variation of circum-

communities without the aid of any sovereign or it may be of any courts, yet under such conditions it is far from being destitute of force and authority. Rather it is the expression of custom hallowed by tradition, backed by supernatural sanction, and enforceable when plainly understood by the bulk of the community. Good authorities hold that the primitive function of the law court was, in many instance, not to enforce, but simply to declare the law, the assumption being that, a judgment once having been given, the law was rooted firmly enough in the minds of the community to enforce itself. Now the nations of Western Europe resemble a primitive society in two respects. They have no common sovereign, but they have certain moral and religious traditions. International law in point of fact took its rise at the time when the spiritual power which had conferred a certain unity on mediæval Europe and acted, however imperfectly, as an arbiter between kings, had lost its authority. It was bitter experience of the evils of international anarchy that inspired the work of men like Grotius, and it was the practical need of

primitive society. Few nations could repudiate the distinct finding of an international tribunal, nor in the presence of such a finding have they the temptation to assert themselves, which they have without it, for as long as a dispute is maintained between two rival Powers, the one which yields can always be taunted by foreigners and is certain to be taunted by many of its own journalists with yielding to force rather than to justice, and it is this spurious sense of honour rooted in dishonour which is the standing menace to the world's peace and threatens to make of every trivial incident the occasion for a great war. Nothing is more promising for the future than the manner in which, of late years, nations have shown their willingness to remit secondary disputes to arbitration, and there is every hope that, the precedent being once established, the same principle will be applied to the greater controversies.

However this may be, experience shows a more excellent way towards universal peace than the establishment of a world-sovereignty. Those must have a very poor opinion of the

intellects of the friends of peace who bid them seek it by such means. The dream of universal dominion is no new notion. Its realisation has been the object of repeated attempts, the earlier history of which is written in letters of blood and the later history told in accents of disillusionment and despair. The peace advocate who is invited to support such a project may well reply that the wars incidental to the process of conquest are certain, and the prospect of resulting peace dim and visionary. Universal and permanent peace may also be a vision only, but the gradual change whereby war, as a normal state of international relations, has given place to peace as the normal state, is no vision but an actual process of history palpably forwarded in our own day by the development of the international law and morals, and the voluntary arbitration based thereon, which the party of physical force deride.

Even if it be true that law cannot exist without a sovereign to enforce it, the argument would not affect morals. Moral rights and duties are founded on relations between man

and man, and therefore applicable to all humanity. To deny this applicability is merely to throw back civilised ethics to the savage state. If there is one thing which differentiates the ethics of primitive man from the ethics of civilised man, it is precisely this. The primitive man recognises duties to the members of his family and to the members of his tribe which are often exacting enough, but to the stranger he recognises no duties excepting in so far as he has entered into certain special relations with him which are guaranteed by supernatural sanctions. Thus, if the stranger within the gates has no host to protect him, he is "rightless." There is no punishment for taking his property or his life; it is only when he has bound a member of the community to him by ties of hospitality that he can obtain the protection of the law. Similarly the foreign State, unless bound by certain reciprocal obligations, is regarded as an enemy. A common feature of all higher ethical and religious teaching is to repudiate in principle these distinctions, to afford the protection of law and morality to all human beings merely as human beings, and to teach that peace and

not war is the normal relation between independent communities. To deny the validity of international ethics in principle is therefore impossible without denying the basis of civilised ethics *in toto*. In our dealings with the foreigner, though we are a State dealing with a State, we are also men dealing with men. If we break our compacts with them we are false, and none the less false because they are foreigners. If we deceive them the lie is no less a lie because uttered in the interests of State. If we bring fire and famine into their land, the suffering which we cause is no less real because felt by men and women of different speech or even different colour. The foreigner bleeds when you prick him just as your compatriot does. Nor is it possible to conceive that we can put off our humanity or any other of the virtues of civilisation in our dealings beyond the frontier, without impairing their sanctity and weakening the force with which they bind us in our dealings with one another. There is no evil power more deadly in public affairs than that of the bad precedent. We cannot deny the validity of a moral prin-

ciple in one relation without sapping its strength in all.

Critics of the Gladstonian theory raise puzzles as to the precise delimitation of national and international rights. They ask whether every nation is inviolable in its autonomy, and if so whether we should repudiate for ever all interference, say, with the Turkish Empire. They suggest that if all conquest is immoral, we ought logically to undo the wrongs of the past. The European, for example, should cede North America to the remnants of the Red Indians. They urge that, if government must be founded on the free consent of the people, every fragment of any country that chose to do so could claim independence, so that if Ireland is a nation, then Ulster is a nation, and if Ulster could claim independence so might Donegal and Antrim. This method of argumentation is merely an instance of the familiar application of casuistry to ethics.*

* Some of the actual cases of difficulty mentioned, which have in fact been urged by one of the most thoughtful opponents of international justice, seem in reality somewhat trivial. As to the ceding of past con-

overridden by other considerations. There may be a conflict of rights in national and international affairs just as there is often a conflict of duties in private life. Such conflicts necessarily make it harder to lay down with precision the rule of duty applicable to any particular case. But they do not affect the principle that the rule, once ascertained, is binding. On this point, private and public ethics stand or fall together.

A more serious criticism is to urge that, as a matter of practical possibility, the code of private ethics could not be applied in international relations without destruction to the State which should make the attempt. Private ethics, for example, carry the duty of self-sacrifice upon occasion to the point of requiring a man to lay down his life for another. But who would teach that such a principle could be applied to a nation? Apart from this extreme case, it may be said that the nation which should endeavour to follow a lofty standard of duty and honour would, in the present state of international morality, be in the position of a man who should carry

Christian principles into effect upon the Stock Exchange, or of a Quaker who should adhere to the strict tenets of his religion in the company of highwaymen. The statement of the argument suggests the reply. Private ethics do not require a man to let himself be led as a sheep to the slaughter. They inculcate rather a quiet and dignified but perfectly resolute maintenance of his own rights combined with scrupulous care not to exceed them, and if any one of the Great Powers were to set itself consistently to maintain such an attitude, it might find its neighbours a little less like highwaymen in their behaviour. Again, private ethics bid a man be prepared on due occasion to yield up his own advantage for the sake of others. But they do not bid him be so yielding as merely to minister to the selfishness of others. So among States there should be a readiness to yield a point for the common good, but none is bound to let others take selfish advantage of its generosity. Further in questions of self-sacrifice, private ethics differentiate between the position of a man who has only to think of himself and of one whose interests are closely bound up with

those of other people. Circumstances which would justify me in sacrificing myself would not necessarily justify me in sacrificing my family along with me. Still rarer are the circumstances in which a sacrifice can be reasonably demanded of a nation. Yet material interests are too often sacrificed to prestige, a false form of honour.* They might far more legitimately be sacrificed to some great and enduring interest of humanity. Unfortunately people have not imagination enough to realise that when former Governments have made sacrifices of territorial interests (as in the cession of the Ionian Islands) or of petty pride (as in the Alabama arbitration, or I will venture to add the Pretoria Convention) they have won for their country a higher repute among the nations, a truer prestige as the friend of justice and the protector of the

* Thus the present enterprise in Thibet is apparently moving by the accustomed path to the permanent annexation of the country. Many who recognised that this annexation, besides being immoral in itself, will be disastrous to our military position in Asia, yet acquiesced in each step as it was taken, because "prestige" forbade us to retire.

CHAPTER IX

LIBERALISM AND SOCIALISM

PERSONAL freedom, Colonial self-government, national rights, international peace, Free Trade, reduced expenditure—these were the watchwords of the old Liberalism. To many of us a few years ago they seemed worn-out phrases which would never again kindle fire. Some of them, indeed, we found not seldom used for obstructive purposes, urged in bar of many a plea for measures of social reform denounced in their name as socialistic. We began to hear them with a certain impatience. The old Liberalism, we thought, had done its work. It had been all very well in its time, but political democracy and the rest were now well-established facts. What was needed was to build a social democracy on the basis so

in part it was a crusade against weaknesses and follies of the natural man, in which final victory is never won, but success is to be measured only by the determination with which the war is waged.

The unfolding of the true meaning of Imperialism gradually, as we have seen, rallied men round the old standard, and it is one of the paradoxes of the reaction that the doctrines of the old Liberalism have found some of their staunchest defenders among men who had been wont to look upon most of those doctrines as at best worn-out platitudes and at worst texts useful for the obstruction of further progress. The fight made by the Labour party and the Socialists generally against the South African War will not readily be forgotten, and here, as in the defence of Free Trade, the Socialist leaders and the most notable spiritual descendants of Cobden and Mill stood upon the same platform. Was this alliance an accident, or did it arise out of the nature of things, the logical working out of principles in political practice? We touch here an important question of principle, which we shall best approach by reverting for a

doing the State had this further justification, that even if hardships were inflicted upon some individuals by the prohibition, the community as a whole could not tolerate a form of labour calculated to undermine the health of the rising generation. That is to say, in prohibiting the labour of children two principles were recognised which carry us a long way. On the one hand it was admitted that apparent freedom of contract was not necessarily real freedom; on the other hand it was insisted that the State has an interest in, and a responsibility for conditions, which, operating upon a large scale, determine the health and welfare of its own members. But these two principles, admitted in a leading concrete case by Cobden, are precisely the principles on which the advocates of much of what is called "socialistic" legislation habitually rely. That legislation falls into two main departments. On the one hand, it is directed to the redressing of inequality in bargaining. This was the avowed object, for example, of Irish land legislation. The position taken up by Mr. Gladstone and all who have followed in his

clause specifically forbids "contracting out" of the benefits of an Act. These restrictions are imposed in the belief that, if unprotected by law, the operative is often constrained by the pressure of immediate necessity to accept work under conditions injurious to himself or to his family. He is not free in making his bargain because he is not equal to the other party, and the object of the law is to obtain for him conditions on which, if he were free and equal, he would, it is held, insist.

Rightly understood, therefore, this kind of socialistic legislation appears not as an infringement of the two distinctive ideals of the older Liberalism, "Liberty and Equality." It appears rather as a necessary means to their fulfilment. It comes not to destroy but to fulfil. Similar reasoning explains the changed attitude of Liberals to trade unionism. Cobden, as we know, was impressed with the dangers of trade unionism rather than with the benefits which it promised to the working classes. It must be admitted that trade unionism involves coercion and is, so far, opposed to the liberty of the individual in certain relations, but experience and reflection

have convinced most men of popular sympathies that the liberty which trade unionism sacrifices is less important than the liberty which it gains. For here again the justification lies in the economic inequality between the workman and employer, inequality which results in unfreedom. Before the law, workman and employer may be in every respect free and equal, but in so far as the one is normally hampered by the overwhelming pressure of immediate needs, while the other, if he loses one workman, can find another, and is threatened at worst with the loss, not of his subsistence, but of a fraction of profit, the bargain between them is not a bargain between equals nor a bargain which both alike are free to take or leave. To redress the balance, workmen have combined, since by acting in concert they can put upon the employer a constraint equal to that which he can bring to bear upon them. In some instances they have succeeded so well that the balance of power is on the other side, and no doubt there have been occasions on which, like all other people who have newly come into power, they have used their power

day was due to the habit of looking upon the Government as an alien power, intruding itself from without upon the lives of the governed. We, on the contrary, habituated by the experience of a generation to looking upon the Government as the organ of the governed, begin to find even the phrases of Cobden's time unfamiliar and inexact expressions of the facts. Here fundamentally the difference is rather in the facts themselves than in our attitude to them. In Cobden's day the Government was the organ of the aristocracy, tempered by middle-class influence. In our own time it is, very imperfectly, the organ of the community as a whole, and the conception of popular sovereignty—the principle that the Government should carry out the popular will and be responsible to the people for the manner of its action—would not be openly denied by any party. Before popular government was established the leaders of democratic thought were men opposed by their very position to the powers that were. They were in permanent opposition, their work was associated with criticism of Government; they were concerned to point

well-being. It is better that men should differ than that they should all be cast in one mould. It is better that each should lead his own life, developing his faculties in his own way, and make the most of himself by his own efforts, than that all should be drilled into a mechanical perfection.* All that Mill has to say on this point is a commentary on the Aristotelian view, that to unify overmuch is not good. Lastly, and in close connection with both of the above points, Mill pleads for character and conviction as against a dull assent and a slavish subservience. These are principles of permanent value. It is hardly too much to say that they underlie the whole structure of

* It should be noted that Mill's argument cuts deeper than that of Green (his true successor in the line of political thinkers). Green conceives liberty as the right of a man to make the best of himself—a noble conception, but one that does not meet the vital question, whether a man is to judge for himself what is best for himself. Mill's argument implies that a man has the right to make his own mistakes, or, to put it more fully, that that society is best ordered and contains within it the most seeds of progress which allows men most scope to gain their own education from their own experience.

the modern State and sum up that which differentiates it from older and lower forms of political society, but it is clear that they in no way run counter to the principles laid down above as the ground thoughts of modern social legislation.

It is therefore not so very surprising that Mill—one of those rare minds capable of life-long growth—gravitated in later life towards opinions which in his own words would class him and his friends "decidedly under the general designation of Socialists." Mill's statement of the socialistic ideal remains one of the best attainable:—

"While we repudiated with the greatest energy that tyranny of society over the individual which most socialistic systems are supposed to involve, we yet looked forward to a time when society will no longer be divided into the idle and the industrious; when the rule that they who do not work shall not eat will be applied not to paupers only, but impartially to all; when the division of the produce of labour, instead of depending, as in so great a degree it now does, on the accident of birth, will be made by concert on an acknowledged principle of justice; and when it will no longer either be, or be thought to be, impossible for human beings to exert themselves strenuously in procuring benefits which are not to be exclusively

their own, but to be shared with the society they belong to. The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour.

. . . . .

"Education, habit, and the cultivation of the sentiments will make a common man dig or weave for his country as readily as fight for his country." *

The Liberal and the Socialist have attacked the problem of progress, or what is the same thing, of social justice, at different sides. The Liberal stands for emancipation and is the inheritor of a long tradition of men who have fought for liberty, who have found law or government or society crushing human development, repressing originality, searing conscience. Against this repression the Liberal is for the unimpeded development of human faculty as the mainspring of progress. The Socialist, or if the vaguer term be preferred, the Collectivist, is for the solidarity of society. He emphasises mutual responsibility, the duty of the strong to the weak. His watchwords are co-operation and organisa-

* "Autobiography," p. 232

tion. The two ideals as ideals are not conflicting, but complementary. For after all it is not every development of every faculty that can reasonably be desired for the sake of progress. There are mischievous as well as benevolent talents capable of cultivation, and if we are asked for a test to distinguish the two, we can give none more simple than that of the capacity of harmonious working in an ordered society.

Both creeds are readily perverted, and it is then natural that they should conflict. The principle of liberty may be converted into an unlovely gospel of commercial competition, in which mutual help is decried as a means of saving the feckless and inefficient from the consequences of their character, the impulses of pity and benevolence are repressed, and the promptings of self-interest invested with the sanctity of a stern duty. Merit is measured by success, and the standard of success is the money-making capacity. Collectivism is liable to a corresponding distortion, which appears in particular to have befallen certain forms of Socialism in England. The Liberal and democratic

elements are gradually shed, and all the interest is concentrated on the machinery by which life is to be organised. Everything is to fall into the hands of an "expert," who will sit in an office and direct the course of the world, prescribing to men and women precisely how they are to be virtuous and happy. We have seen above that there are some difficulties about the character of the expert. In the socialistic presentment he sometimes looks strangely like the powers that be—in education, for instance, a clergyman under a new title, in business that very captain of industry who at the outset was the Socialist's chief enemy. Be that as it may, as the "expert" comes to the front, and "efficiency" becomes the watchword of administration, all that was human in Socialism vanishes out of it. Its tenderness for the losers in the race, its protests against class tyranny, its revolt against commercial materialism, all the sources of the inspiration under which Socialist leaders have faced poverty and prison are gone like a dream, and instead of them we have the conception of society as a perfect piece of machinery pulled

property, and the transformation of the production of wages into socialistic production, carried on for and through society,"

are necessary for the welfare of the workers.

This is a wide and far-reaching principle. It may fairly be called a revolutionary principle. But it is so wide and far-reaching that its real meaning is hardly intelligible apart from the practical measures in which it is to be embodied. What, then, are the actual measures which the Social Democrats would initiate if they came into power.

"Proceeding from these principles, the Social Democratic party of Germany now demands:—

1. "Universal, equal, and direct suffrage with vote by ballot for all men and women of the Empire over twenty years of age."

(Other constitutional reforms follow.)

2. "Direct legislation through the people, by means of the right of proposal and rejection."

(Local self-government and election of officials are added)

3. "Training in universal military duty . . . Settlement of all international differences by arbitration."

4. "Abolition of all laws which restrict or suppress the free expression of opinion, and the right of union and meeting."

5. "Abolition of all laws which, in public or private matters, place women at a disadvantage as compared with men."

6. "Religion declared to be a private matter. No public funds to be applied to ecclesiastical and religious purposes."

7. "Secularisation of the schools. Obligatory attendance at the public people's schools."

(With further provisions for free education.)

8. "Administration of justice and legal advice to be free."

(Elective judges, criminal appeal, abolition of death penalty, &c.)

9. "Medical treatment, including midwifery and the means of healing, to be free. Free burial."

10. "Progressive Income and Property Taxes," graduated succession duty; "Abolition of all indirect taxes, customs, and other financial measures which sacrifice the collective interest to the interest of a privileged minority."

There follow demands for—

(1) "National and international protective legislation for workmen" on the following basis:—

(a) An eight-hour day.

(b) "Prohibition of money-making labour of children under fourteen years."

(c) "Prohibition of night-work, *exceptis excipiendis*."

(d) "Thirty-six hours' unbroken rest in every week."

(e) "Prohibition of the truck system."

2. "Supervision of all industrial establishments . . . by an Imperial labour department."

3. "Agricultural labourers and servants to be placed on the same footing as industrial workers; abolition of servants' regulations."

4. "The right of combination to be placed on a sure footing."

5. "Undertaking of the entire working-men's insurance by the Empire, with effective co-operation of the workmen in its administration." *

The candid Liberal, imbued with the current conception of Socialism, will, I think, observe with surprise that out of the first ten heads, seven are expressions of views not perhaps held by all Liberals, but certainly as closely associated with the older generation of Liberals as with those supposed to be tainted with Socialism.

The next two contain proposals which may, or may not, be practicable, but certainly imply no revolutionary attack on property. The tenth consists partly of proposals realised in the Budget of 1894, partly of ideas shared by many English Liberals as possibilities for a future Budget, and partly of a defence of Free Trade. There follow five heads of proposals for industrial legisla-

* I have taken the above from Mr. Thomas Kirkup's "History of Socialism"—a judicious account in which the better meaning of Socialism is sifted out from its extravagances, with the kind of sympathetic criticism so eminently needed, and so rare.

it is our good name for national fair dealing that is smirched; at another it is the principle of religious equality that is infringed; at another it is Free Trade which is menaced; at another freedom of combination. Such successive onslaughts cause searchings of heart, and shake the sense of security in the enjoyment, without effort, of the good things which past reformers won with the sweat of their brow—that fatal temper of easy optimism which prepared the way for reaction. Roused from this mood, even those who hesitated about further progress begin to see that the question is rather how much of the ground already won is to be held. They have learnt that in public affairs there is a current which sweeps us backward when we think to rest upon our oars. They begin to understand that, in presence of a general and far-reaching reaction, threatening as it does the whole basis of the political freedom, so painfully achieved, it is time to sink minor divergencies of interest and predilection, and learn, even from opponents, the secret of united action.

To sum up in the fewest possible words the main points of the discussion, we have found that the causes of the reaction may be classed under two main heads. As in all far-reaching movements of opinion, sociological and moral or intellectual factors have been at work together. Sociologically, we find the cause of reaction in the growing concentration of material interests. The power of wealth has increased, and the different interests, for which wealth is a higher consideration than life, have learnt the secret of co-operation. On the moral or intellectual side, we have found that the humanitarian philosophy of a past generation has given place to various schools of thought, which from different points of view have tended to discredit the conception of right, and in one form or another to justify the sway of expediency, or even of brute force. Thus the dominant social forces find for themselves that justification which they need in the prevalent popular philosophy. Yet, when we look again into the old humanitarian ideals and ask how they fare in the light of the reaction which has temporarily de-

throned them, we do not find their moral force impaired. On the contrary, we are enabled by a partial experience to judge better how much we should lose by discarding them for ever. We have seen that these ideals are popularly regarded as having been exploded by evolutionary science, but we have seen also upon deeper examination that that theory of evolution which was supposed to undermine them proves to be their most effective philosophical support. The humanitarian ideal is no mere sentimentality, which a just conception of the forces which mould society is bound to destroy. On the contrary, it is the legitimate product, and the highest product, of healthy evolutionary growth. A truer, because more complete, science of evolution, justifies the rule of right no less certainly than an inadequate science of evolution appears to justify the rule of force.

Nor, upon examination, have we found any deep or abiding conflict between those two branches of the humanitarian movement which are frequently contrasted under the names of Liberalism and Socialism. On

the contrary, we find reason for thinking that in ultimate principle both these ideals are at one, and that they have come into conflict only in so far as there has been exaggeration or omission upon one side or upon the other in the way in which the permanent and fundamental conditions of human progress have been conceived. The success of future resistance to the reaction, the possibility of a return to the paths of progress, must depend upon a complete understanding of these two sides of the humanitarian movement. For if our analysis has shown that the ideal of the democratic State is intrinsically sound and necessary to the onward movement of western civilisation—upon the other hand, the bare facts prove that that ideal will not, so to say, act automatically or maintain its supremacy without the most jealous watchfulness on the part of its supporters. Self-government is not in itself a solution of all political and social difficulties. It is at best an instrument with which men who hold by the ideal of social justice and human progress can work, but when those ideals grow

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