

SPILLIKINS

GEORGE A.
BIRMINGHAM

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SPILLIKINS

A BOOK OF ESSAYS

BY

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

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Preface

Spillikins is out of fashion, superseded by what are no doubt better and more amusing games. It had its period of popularity in the distant days when I was a small boy. I remember it as a drawing-room game, produced by an aunt who hoped it would keep me quiet. Hers was a fine set, delicately carved in ivory and stored in the drawer of a cabinet with a bowed front. In the nursery and schoolroom we had other sets, of commoner material and roughly carved, with which we had exciting games. With the drawing-room set only the legitimate game might be played.

Now, I dare say, boys and girls do not know what spillikins are or how we played with them, and my equals in age must make an effort of memory to recall the game. Yet it is worth remembering if only for the sake of the toys with which it was played. The ivory, or bone, was cut into all sorts of shapes. Here, episcopal and reverend, was a pastoral staff. Here was a duellist's rapier. Beside them was a carpenter's saw, or a cavalry sabre, or a smith's tongs, a housewife's darning-needle, a monarch's sceptre, a cripple's crutch, a woodman's axe, the lancet of a surgeon perhaps, a walking-stick with a crooked handle, a reaper's sickle, and many things of which I did not know the names, about whose uses I could only guess. All of these were of the same size, or nearly the same size, the darning-needle as big as the sabre or the pastoral staff. This, I remember, seemed to me then to spoil the realism of the imagery. Now I am inclined to think that a deeper realism was achieved. Perhaps the sickle is as important as the rapier and the hand-saw as great as the sceptre in the eyes of angels and others who dwell beyond our sphere. I am inclined now to think it possible that the first deviser of the game meant to teach a great truth when he ordained that the spillikins should all be flung down in a single disorderly heap. It is thus that life treats those who use the tools. Knight and churl—but there are no churls nowadays. If there were we should probably knight them. Monarchs and woodmen have much the same sensations when they are hungry. Bishops and harvest reapers are alike liable to toothache. To all comes the same inevitable end.

The makers of spillikins aimed at no unity and had no philosophy in their work, for this trite levelling and deliberate confusion can scarcely be called philosophy. They worked in fashioning the toys as fancy and mood impelled them. "I will carve a sceptre," said the craftsman, with his ivory in front of him and his knife in his hand. "A sceptre; for a king is august, and I find a flavour in his pomp." Or, "I will make a darning-needle, for my toe

has pushed a hole in my sock.” At the moment it was that hole, or another at his heel, that held his thoughts, and he cared little about Courts and royalties. Or, again, an hour later, so swiftly do moods change: “I am a fighter and must make a sword.” Or, “After all, it is upon the harvest that all our civilization is built up. A sickle is the fittest subject for my skill.”

I am no artist. I am not even a skilled craftsman. I work in common stuff, not the delicate ivory of beautiful, or precious, prose. I claim kinship with the makers of spillikins only in this, that I have worked as fancy directed, writing in various moods, in different places, and at different times. The results, the toys of my fashioning, have been flung down without order in a heap, as the spillikins were. I shall count myself fortunate if anyone finds it amusing to pick out one or two of the things that I have made. I shall not be much aggrieved—knowing that the judgment is quite just, I cannot be aggrieved—if my spillikins are condemned for what they are, little toys without purpose or meaning, not even well carved. That, for the most part, is what the spillikins of my childhood were, so I claim, though I claim nothing else, a certain fitness for the title of my book.

G. A. B.

April 1926

SPILLIKINS

1. Asking Questions

There is nothing easier, few things pleasanter, than denouncing other people's vices; and there is always a feeling in our minds that we sometimes manage to

Compound for sins we are inclined to
By damning those we have no mind to.

We ought, if we damn sins at all, to damn our own, if only for this reason, that we cannot properly understand the fall of those whose temptations we have never felt. The man who does not enjoy the captivating stimulant of a glass of port should be the very last to denounce the poor dipsomaniac. Burns is perfectly right in saying that "High exalted godly dames" who are "nae temptation" should refrain from giving bad names to their sisters who are. I try, even in the pulpit, where such reticence is particularly difficult, to avoid the fault condemned by the poets I have quoted. I think I may claim to be fairly successful, not because I am singularly virtuous but because I am not. There is hardly a sin which I need refrain from denouncing, for there are very few—at the moment I can only think of one—that "I have no mind to."

Yet there is one. I have never in my life been tempted to issue a *questionnaire*. The fact that I am forced to use this word—there being no English equivalent—proves that the thing itself is of foreign origin and that the vice is not native with us. That the word has a secondary meaning among the French, "torturer," shows what they think of it.

I do not, I can say honestly, understand the lure of this kind of wickedness. I trust that I shall not be accused of pharisaical self-righteousness when I say that if the devil came to me to-morrow and offered me the opportunity of asking my neighbours for written answers to lists of questions, I should not have the slightest difficulty in saying, "*Retro, Satanus!*" and should find a positive pleasure in flinging his sheets of foolscap back in his face. I do not want to torment other people in this particular way. But many men do; and the vice is becoming more prevalent. Every year, so it seems to me, more men fall victims to it, and once a man begins he cannot stop. As in the case of opium eaters, each indulgence results in increased craving, and the habit becomes confirmed perhaps beyond the hope of remedy.

If, like drink and dope, this vice were a private one, affecting only the victim, or at most his family and friends, I should have nothing to say about it. But the question-asker brings suffering into the lives of thousands of innocent and defenceless people while he himself thrives, often indeed being paid a salary for doing the thing that he ought to be sent to jail for. In a really well-regulated society he would be hanged. It seems to me a duty—I have no doubt at all that it is a pleasure—to utter a mild protest against this vice.

Often the sin is disguised, covered up with an excuse of some sort, so that it may not appear to be the hideous thing it is. The Income Tax collector, for instance, who issues annually one of the most puzzling of all lists of questions, pretends that he is simply engaged in collecting money. He does collect money, of course, and no doubt when he first began his work the collection of money was his sole object. He may even have wanted to collect it with the smallest amount of trouble and worry possible. But of late years he has fallen a victim to the question-asking habit and has taken to asking for information in a peremptory way. Nobody likes paying, of course, but I think that almost every man would rather pay a little more—say an extra five per cent on his assessment—than fill up the preliminary forms and answer all the questions which follow the return of these documents. The ingenuity displayed by the Inland Revenue officers in devising supplementary questions is a proof, if proof were needed, that these men are the victims of a morbid craving.

I once held possession of two small fields and therefore became, in the eyes of the Inland Revenue authorities, a farmer. As a farmer I made a careful return of my profits, which as a matter of fact were losses. I set down every quart of milk given by the cows which lived in the fields, every egg laid by the few hens which wandered about, and everything else, down to the smallest details, about those fields. I congratulated myself that my return was absolutely complete and question proof. I was over-confident. After a couple of days of meditation the collector asked me to state how many tons of coal I had dug up. He knew, and he knew that I knew, that no coal ever had been or ever could be dug up within a hundred miles of my two fields. He had no hope, cannot have had any hope, of making me pay a single penny on the profits of a private coal mine. He asked the question simply in order to tease; or, if that seems a harsh thing to say of any man, because he was the victim of a morbid craving.

I am not a highly paid worker, nor am I particularly diligent, but I am convinced that I could earn enough to pay an extra pound or so of Income Tax in the hours which I now spend solving the puzzles set me and answering the questions, like that about coal, which are put to me. There

must be thousands of others in the same position. It is—it can only be—because the collection of revenue is a secondary consideration that the thing is done as it is. The fact is that many otherwise worthy civil servants have acquired the habit of asking questions simply for the pleasure of asking them and are the victims of an anti-social vice.

Generally the question-asker tries to excuse himself by saying that he is collecting statistics.

I do not know that the clergy suffer more than other people from being treated as the raw material of statistics. Doctors, I fancy, are in a worse case. Schoolmasters, and all who are connected with the management of schools, suffer severely. I have heard complaints from business men. Hardly anyone escapes. I only use the sufferings of the clergy because I know more about them than I do of any others.

There is a paper, of enormous size, sent annually to the clergy by the National Assembly of the Church of England. I have never actually counted the questions on it, but there must be many hundreds. Among them are nineteen concerned with the contributions made by each parish to a number of religious and charitable societies—nineteen societies with a question for each. Such information is of interest, and perhaps some value, to the parishes and societies concerned. It is of no value whatever to the National Church Assembly. But even if we suppose that the Assembly, out of idle curiosity, desires the information, or thinks it does, how easy it would be to take the reports of the nineteen societies and extract from them the figures that are wanted. Every contribution from every parish is acknowledged by these societies and could be taken from their reports with very little trouble, with perhaps one-fiftieth part of the labour involved by the thousands of separate forms sent in by the clergy. The figures so arrived at would have the further advantage of being correct, which under the present system—I judge by my own returns—they certainly are not.

If the Church Assembly simply wanted information that is the way it would get it. But it does not want information: it wants to indulge the craving for asking questions on sheets of paper and forcing innocent people to answer them. There is no other conceivable explanation of its action.

Of course, a pretence is made that the returns are required for the compilation of statistics. That is what is said to me and doubtless to hundreds of others when we do not fill up the forms. We are told that our negligent indolence is interfering with the compiling of a whole book of statistics. If we really prevented the compiling of statistics we ought to be given medals, or titles (ecclesiastical, of course), or otherwise suitably rewarded. For statistics are not merely useless—they are misleading, far

more dangerously misleading even than the speeches of politicians or the advertisements of moneylenders.

This, I think, is indisputable. It has become a proverb that anything can be proved from statistics. A man of ordinary intelligence can, without the slightest difficulty, prove four or five pairs of contradictory propositions from any collection of statistics. When he has finished, another man, also of no more than ordinary intelligence, will easily prove that every one of the first man's conclusions is wrong. It is far better, because less irritating and therefore less conducive to blasphemy, for a man to lose himself on a road with no sign-posts on it than on one beflagged with hundreds of sign-posts which all tell lies.

But the statistics excuse is no more than a pretence. Probably in the early stages of their disease those who issue *questionnaires* really believe that they are seeking information for statistical purposes. Later on they abandon the pretence and ask their questions merely for the sake of asking them, quite unashamed.

I was for twenty-one years subject to a bishop who asked me my name, on a printed form, every May. There was some excuse for him the first time, though even then he could have found out what he wanted to know, if he really did want to know it, in any clerical directory. The second and even the third time I tried, being a charitable man, to believe that he had forgotten my name, was too poor to buy a directory, and too friendless to be able to borrow one. But as years went on he and I came to know each other well. I often enjoyed his hospitality, dining agreeably in his house. He often dined in mine. We corresponded, and I signed every letter I ever wrote to him. He was a genial and friendly man, in many things quite sensible. Yet for nearly a quarter of a century he went on asking me to write my name down for him once every year. He did not want to know it. He made no pretence that he was going to embody it in a volume of statistics. He was simply an unfortunate victim of the habit of asking questions.

I used to wonder sometimes what would happen if I wrote down that my name was Sanders Sanderson or John Smith. Would he be surprised? Would he, with mild remonstrance, call my attention to an inaccuracy in my return? I fancy not. In all probability he never read a word I wrote for him, my name or anything else.

One does not, of course, play tricks of that kind on bishops. For the sake of their high office and estimable characters we respect them too much to be flippant with them. But I did try a similar experiment once on an Education Office.

It wanted to know the measurements of a schoolroom. The proper way of finding that out was to ask one of its own inspectors, who constantly

visited the school and always wrote down its dimensions in a notebook. That, I suppose, did not occur to the clerk who issued the form of inquiry. He sent his question to me. I answered it. The next year he asked it again, and again I answered it. The third year the same question came to me. I was annoyed, and said that the room was the same size as before. This was a perfectly reasonable answer. Schoolrooms are not trees. They do not grow and nobody could have added a foot or cut a yard off that room without an inspector discovering the fact immediately. That answer was no use. The clerk, who kept his temper all the time, took no notice of it, and went on sending me copies of the question until at last I gave him figures.

But I did not give him the figures I had given him before. I doubled the dimensions of the schoolroom. He appeared to be perfectly satisfied. The next year I doubled them again. He expressed neither surprise nor misgiving. In the course of five or six years that schoolroom became a great deal larger than St. Paul's. It was really, according to the figures I gave, an immense building, perhaps the largest in the world. Even a fourteen-year old office boy would, I thought, be struck by the existence of such a structure in a small village. But the education authority remained placidly indifferent. Then I suddenly reduced the size of the room, giving measurements which would have been small for a sentry-box. It would have been impossible to get three children, without a teacher, into that schoolroom. The education authority made no comment at all.

Why was that question asked? Why was an answer insisted upon? Clearly no use was ever made of the figures I returned. If statistics had been compiled from them and plotted into a graph the result would have been grotesque. The least intelligent official could not have failed to notice the existence of a schoolroom far bigger than the Albert Hall which shrank in the course of a year to the size of an American tourist's trunk, if he had ever read my returns. There is no explanation of the asking of such questions except the one I have suggested. The men who ask them are "mentally deficient." (The mention of educational authorities suggests this phrase, which is a favourite one of theirs.) They have reached this unhappy state by long indulgence in a seductive vice.

It is, I suppose, hopeless to appeal to the law for protection from the persecutions which quiet and peaceable people endure at the hands of question-askers. But something, if life is not to become intolerable, must be done. Year by year the number of these papers of questions increases. Year by year more of our time is wasted in writing answers. Year by year the nervous irritation consequent on wrestling with returns gets worse. Yet it is difficult to see what can be done. I have, as I have already confessed, tried the plan of giving totally incorrect and even grotesque answers. That is no

use, for the questioner would just as soon have a wrong answer as a right one. I have tried the plan of saying, "See last year's return," when asked, for instance, for the inscription on a church bell which has remained unaltered for several centuries. That is no use. The questioner could get at the inscription in that way. But it is not the inscription he wants. I have tried putting the foolscap sheets of questions straight into the waste-paper basket and giving no answers at all. That is no use. The questioner pelts me with fresh sheets of foolscap, which is exhausting for the postman; takes to threatening me, which I do not in the least mind; he changes his tone and says he is sorry for troubling me, which I do not believe; finally defeats me by getting a bishop or an archdeacon to appeal to my better nature. Then I give in, wishing very much that I had not got a better nature.

The only remedy I can think of is to kill a few of the people who issue these forms. It would not, I think, be necessary to kill many. Perhaps five or six would be enough. The others, fearing the fate of their fellows, would be cowed into quiescence. Morally I think these executions would be as justifiable as the hanging of murderers, for we should be ridding society of pestilent nuisances.

The difficulty is that we cannot get at the right men to kill. To shoot the local Income Tax collector, for instance, would be unjust, and no good cause is ever helped by injustice. The poor fellow, whom we are greatly tempted to slay, is not responsible for the forms he issues. They come from someone who certainly ought to be killed, but cannot be found. It would, for the same reason, be wrong to plunge a dagger into the heart of a Rural Dean. I have often stood with a long carving-knife in my hand close behind the chair in which an unsuspecting Rural Dean was sitting, a man who, regardless of the laws of hospitality, had handed me a list of questions—handed it to me in my own house just before luncheon. A sense of public duty, rendered acute by a consciousness of private wrong, has prompted me to make an end of him then and there.

I have never done the deed yet, and do not think I ever shall. It is not the fear of consequences that holds me back. If I were hanged afterwards I should become one of the noble army of martyrs and win that posthumous glory inherited by those who die for the Church and humanity. I should like that. A feeling of pity for the Rural Dean, often an amiable and charming man with a wife and children depending on him, makes me hesitate. While I hesitate my resolution is "sicklied o'er" with the thought that, after all, it is not the Rural Dean's fault. He may even hate the questions as much as I do. There is someone else, some anonymous criminal, who issues the questions to the Rural Dean. If I could get at that man I should—— But perhaps it would be better to try to cure him. That might be done if he were shut up in

an asylum, like those provided for inebriates, and compelled to work for eight hours every day at a typewriter which had no note of interrogation on any of its keys.

2. Hauntings

Ghost stories have always been popular. We like to be thrilled, and in certain moods detest the sceptical rationalist who would deprive us of our pleasurable terrors. It is, for some reason very difficult to guess, agreeable to go to bed with a feeling that we may possibly be awakened shortly after midnight—as someone told us that a friend of his was in the same bedroom—by clammy hands upon our faces. Unfortunately, the rationalist has had the better of it in his long struggle with the man who wants to believe. The fine, full-flavoured ghost story with its clanking chains and headless lady has almost passed away even from the pages of Christmas Numbers. But the ghost-lover is not altogether beaten out of the field. He has devised new kinds of ghost story, or rather—I must not assume that he devises anything—has taken to narrating experiences of a new kind. Like a wise man he has summoned allies to his side and no longer faces the blatant sceptic all alone. Psychology came to his aid—if psychology is the proper name for the science studied by those interested in the study of psychical research and spiritualism. Religion has come to his aid, countenancing beliefs which it once heartily anathematized. Even art, very properly and naturally, sometimes lends its aid to make the rationalism of the rationalists incredible.

I once heard, and even attempted to write, the story of a Bohemian Count. I mean a Count who lived in Bohemia, not merely a Count of unconventional manners. Perhaps it would be better to say a Czecho-Slovakian Count, though (how difficult explanations are!) there was no such place as Czecho-Slovakia in his day. To prevent any possible misunderstanding it may be best to say that this Count lived in Prague several hundred years ago in a palace which he built in the Italian Rococo style and furnished exactly as such a palace ought to be furnished, that is to say, in accordance with the best taste of his time. He was not, morally, a very good Count; but he was never bad enough to be condemned to drag ghostly chains about at night. Indeed, he lay quiet in his grave for a very long time. He was, however, a Count of highly developed artistic sensibility, a sincere lover of beautiful things, especially beautiful houses and furniture, one of those rather unfortunate people who suffer pain when they meet with ugliness and bad taste. That was what got him into his post-mortuary troubles. Someone in the middle of the nineteenth century furnished the Count's beautiful Rococo house in the worst possible taste of an era of ugliness. A few years afterwards somebody else installed central heating

with radiators of the usual kind and put in electric light with most expensive fittings. This roused the Count and he took to haunting the house in an unpleasant way. He made noises at night which led people to think that large gilt-framed mirrors were being broken with hammers, that heavy articles of furniture were being thrown downstairs, that radiators were bursting and electric light fittings blowing up. Nothing could be got out of him by automatic writing or any other recognized means of communication except the word “abortions,” and that, though suggestive of horrid crime, was not very helpful.

Then a lady came into possession of the house. She was a lady of excellent taste, and the first thing she did was to set to work to refurnish and redecorate the whole house, using abusive language every day about the chairs and sofas she found in it. She was not very rich, so she had to do the work by degrees—first a room, then a staircase, then another room, and so on. It was noticed almost at once that the Count ceased to haunt the rooms which she refurnished. As her work went on his field of operations narrowed, until at last, when the whole house was refurnished with beautiful things out of the shops of dealers in antiquities, and redecorated according to the very best standards of present-day taste, he went back quietly to his grave, gave up making destructive noises at night, and could not be induced to write, automatically or otherwise. What he meant by his repeated “abortions” became clear to every one with understanding. The word was his description of the Victorian furniture and the later radiators and electric light fittings.

That, I think, is a good ghost story, and quite different from the old-fashioned kind, which has become incredible. Here we have an example of the persistence beyond the grave of that love of beauty which is one of the most elevating passions of the human soul, just the sort of thing which is sure to persist if anything does. We have a man, noble in his artistic perception, if in nothing else, who sacrifices the peace of the life beyond in order to save the palace he had built here on earth from the shame of close association with hideous things. That kind of story is quite easily believable by those who are artistic enough to sympathize with the Count’s love of the Rococo and his hatred of radiators and plate glass.

It adds nothing, I know, to the credibility of the story, but it is a fact that I actually heard, though I did not see, that ghost one night myself.

I suppose that stories which appeal to our knowledge of psychology are equally credible to men of scientific minds. They must be, or eminent scientists would not write whole books about spirits, their deeds, their thoughts, and their hauntings.

But I confess that it is the religious, specifically Christian ghost stories which appeal to me most. I have heard two lately which impressed me. I am not prepared to argue against the sceptic that they are actually true. I do not even say that I believe them myself, for there is a part of my mind—I suppose of every one's mind—which rises in contemptuous protest against narratives of such happenings. All I can say is that the stories were told me by people who believed them to be true, who were certainly not guilty of attempts to pass off picturesque fiction as facts.

The first of the two stories is concerned with an ancient but small and lonely parish church in a wild part of Northumberland. An old clergyman, for many years pastor of the parish and servant of the Church, resigned his office. A new vicar, a young man of sincere piety, was appointed in his place. This man, like many priests of the English Church to-day, thought it good to go every morning very early into his church, in order to bring his soul into communion with God in preparation for his day's work in the parish. One morning—I do not know whether it was the first morning he went there or some time later—he was surprised to see a priest at the altar. This priest was habited in the ancient vestments of the Church, but since the use of these has recently been very generally revived in England there was nothing startling in seeing a priest so dressed. This priest was saying Mass, or, to use the more usual English phraseology, was celebrating the Eucharist according to the English use. After saying the Collect he passed to the south side of the altar, as is the custom, and there read the Epistle. So far, supposing that there was a priest there at all, his actions were quite ordinary. Having finished the Epistle he crossed in front of the altar towards the north side, in order, as the watcher supposed, to read the Gospel. But instead of stopping when he reached the usual place he walked on, passed through the north wall of the chancel, and disappeared. There was neither door nor window. The priest—vision, phantom, whatever he was—passed through a solid stone wall.

The young vicar was astonished and puzzled. He went to the church again next day, and again after that at the same hour. Every day he saw, or thought he saw, the same thing happen. After a while he consulted his predecessor, approaching the subject cautiously, as men do when they fear ridicule, not relating exactly what had happened, but hinting at some curious experience. The old man gave him a piece of advice, emphatically:

“Don't go into the church at that hour. I found it better not to do so.”

For a time the old man would say no more. But the matter could hardly be left there. They talked it out together, and it appeared that the old vicar had in his time seen the same priest celebrating in the same way and always

with the same odd break in the service, when he passed through the wall instead of stopping at the usual place to read the Gospel.

Is there any explanation of such a story?

There is this, which was offered by the old vicar and confirmed afterwards by an examination of the masonry of the building. That church was once, centuries ago, much larger than it is to-day. Perhaps the population of the parish diminished for some reason so that there was no need of such a large church. Perhaps the old building fell into decay and there was not money enough to restore the whole of it. At all events, the church was made narrower and shorter. The south wall of the chancel stood where it had always stood. The original north wall was pulled down and another built nearer to the south wall. A priest of the 13th or of the 14th century, while reading the Epistle on the south side of the altar, would have stood exactly where a priest stands to-day, but the spot on which the priest stood five or six hundred years ago to read the Gospel is now outside the church altogether. And to reach it the ghost of a priest of that time would have to pass round, over, under or through the existing wall.

That is no explanation of the presence in the church of a priest who had been dead for centuries. It is a sort of explanation of his curious conduct supposing he were there. Of his being there, or of his appearing to be there, I have no explanation to offer. Imagination strays widely through misty possibilities. Who was that man? What was his story? Did he love his church so well that he wanted to return to it even from Paradise? Was he guilty of some sin so strange and dark that a penalty of restlessness had driven him for all these centuries back from Sheol, that covered, gloomy place into which the Lord Himself descended, to make continually some act of penance, perhaps—how fascinating to guess!—in the very place where once he sinned.

My other story is not about a little church, lonely and half forsaken, but about one of the great English cathedrals. It is a building which is like a thoroughfare, so many are the visitors who throng to it. Hither come pious men and women seeking to lift up their hearts where thousands of hearts have been lifted up, amid the glory of great pillars and arches, of coloured glass, of long vistas, of deep shadows and splendid shafts of light. Hither come students, seeking to win from column and tracery the secrets of the past. Hither also swarm tourists, sightseers, who climb down the steep sides of the *chars-à-banc*, in which they travel, crowd into the cool aisles, go chattering, whispering, gaping, to view the tombs of martyrs, saints and bishops of other days. Here, day by day, for Mattins and Evensong, the procession of white-robed choristers and priests passes into the choir while

the organ shouts to them, and they sing with moving sweetness anthem, psalm, and prayer.

In that procession there walked every day a young priest, a minor member of the cathedral staff. As he walked his eyes strayed to the figures of the worshippers who stood in their places while the procession passed. For the most part these worshippers stood, but here and there one kneeled. One day the priest noticed among those who kneeled a woman whose face, upturned in supplication, bore a look of deep suffering. She was dressed as a nun is, and the priest supposed that she was a member of one of those sisterhoods which are common in the Church of England to-day. When the service was all sung, and while the choir was returning to the robing room, the priest saw that the woman was still there, still kneeling, still with the expression of suffering on her face. Next day she was there again. Every day, morning and evening, she was there, and always her face was upturned and her clasped hands were stretched out in front of her. The priest fell to wondering who she was and what her great trouble was, for every day he saw the same unspeakable trouble on her face, and it was plain that even prayer brought her no comfort or relief.

At last it came to him that he must try to help her. So one afternoon when Evensong was ended, when the boys had run laughing out into the sunshine and the men had followed them across the green outside, this priest turned back into the church and went very quietly to where the woman kneeled.

“Sister,” he said gently, “can I be of any help to you? Is your trouble one in which human sympathy is any use, or can you open your grief to a priest and find relief in his absolution?”

There was no answer. The face, with its intolerable sorrow, was like the face of some deaf or dead person who does not hear. Embarrassed and troubled, the priest repeated his words and said others, speaking with all kindness and very tenderly. Still there was no answer nor sign of hearing. So the priest, baffled and puzzled, did the only thing he could do. He whispered a brief prayer for the suffering woman before him, and then, raising his hand, gave her the blessing. Even as he spoke the words, and while his hands still hovered above her head, the woman vanished. Where she had kneeled a moment before there was no one. It was not that she rose from her knees, moved, and went away. Simply, his eyes no longer saw what one instant before they had seen. She was gone, nor from that day on has she been seen again.

Who was she and what was she doing there? There is no answer, only the possibility of imagining some story. A nun, a great church, a human heart, God, love, sin, sorrow, repentance, Christ upon the Cross, an

unbearable memory, a long, slow coming of the peace which follows pardon. Here are the materials of a great spiritual romance. But who is to write it? Who is to hear it from the troubled spirit which kneeled there in prayer, which returned from dim, strange regions to a familiar place, driven by a homing instinct into this church of God?

There are my two religious ghost stories, set down very much as they were told to me. It is religion which makes them credible, if they are credible. It is religion which lifts them out of the region of the commonplace, often vulgarly melodramatic tales of haunting which we have learned to treat with ridicule. But do I, or does any other sane man, actually believe them? That is perhaps scarcely a fair question, for it seems to suggest that we must either believe or disbelieve things at all times and in all moods. But there are very few things which any of us believe or disbelieve in that complete and unaltering manner. For the most part we both believe and disbelieve, moving from the one position to the other rapidly and often. Life, to use Bishop Blougram's apt comparison, is a chessboard with alternate squares of black and white. We can call it white if we like and regard the black squares as intrusive spaces of evil disbelief; or we can call it black with troublesome spots of superstition here and there on it. It is, at all events, an affair of alternating faith and scepticism. Our position seems very largely to be a matter of choice. Which is the nobler, greater man in us—the one who believes, reaching out groping hands to the Unseen, or the one who mocks? We may be either. Perhaps we must be both. Which is better—plain sense in the sunlight or moving ecstasies in shadowy places? We are capable of either. We could make our choice of the better part if only—how unfortunate that there should be an if—we knew the answer to the question: Which is best?

3. Catholic

I was brought up in a society in which “Catholic” was a term of reproach and contempt. I have lived long enough and moved far enough from my boyhood’s home to find myself among people who regard “Catholic” as a name of high praise. But, except in their opinion of this word, I am not sure that there is any great difference between my friends of forty-five years ago and my friends to-day.

I grew up in Belfast, with holiday excursions to north Antrim. There and then “Catholic” meant Roman Catholic, and Roman Catholicism was the religion of the mere Irish, whom we regarded as an inferior race. We credited these unfortunate Gibeonites with all the slave vices—untruthfulness, dishonesty, laziness, cowardice, a dislike of progress, and an unwillingness to wash their faces. If they had the slave virtues—which are perhaps also Christian virtues—meekness, humility, gentleness, and patience, they were welcome to them. We did not want them for ourselves, any more than we wanted saints, Masses, Gregorian chants or anything else with a suspicion of Catholicism about it.

We did, indeed, Sunday after Sunday profess, though without fervour, a belief in the Holy Catholic Church, which another creed taught us to call One and Apostolic as well as Catholic. I have no idea now what we meant by the words, nor do I remember troubling myself about the matter at the time. To another phrase which was constantly on the lips of our clergy in church, I did attach a clear meaning. We prayed for “the good estate of the Catholic Church,” and that struck me as a kind and charitable thing to do, though rather useless. The Catholic Church, being what I supposed it to be, was certainly past praying for. Still—I remember feeling this with some pride—it was nice of us to go on trying, just as it was kind of Burns to cherish some hope of the ultimate escape of “Auld Nickie Ben” from the hell in which he was confined. It never occurred to me that I was supposed to be praying for my own Church.

Now I find myself among people who rejoice in the word “Catholic,” and I have to readjust what some German theologian calls my value-judgment of the word. The clergy round about me insist that they are Catholics, and the laity whom they have succeeded in instructing—with how much toil!—are almost over-anxious to secure possession of the title. We deny it only to those whose religion we thoroughly despise. If anyone denies

it to us, as some of the adherents of the Pope sometimes do, we are irritated, and retort by calling them schismatical members of an Italian Mission.

I sometimes wonder whether this change in the esteem of the word has made any real difference at all.

Of course there is the matter of ritual. That has changed. A church service is a very different thing to-day from what it was when I was a boy. The clergyman I “sat under”—the phrase has disappeared, but we used it then—wore a very long surplice without a cassock while reading the prayers, and a black gown when he preached, retiring during a hymn to change the garments. Now he wears a shorter surplice and a cassock while reading Mattins and changes his clothes, more or less, when he ministers at the altar. Then, he faced the congregation as often as he conveniently could. Now, he is inclined to turn his back on the people. But are these changes, and a hundred others which might be listed out, of any great importance? Are they anything more than the changes which have taken place in the ritual of the dinner-table on festal occasions? I can remember when the host sat at the head of a long table, with a friendly smile reaching almost from side-whisker to side-whisker, and a perspiring servant set, perhaps, an immense turkey before him. He whetted a knife and with the skill of a surgeon cut suitable slices off the bird. Now the carving is done in the kitchen, or at a side-table, somewhere out of sight. Then we drank a great deal of wine and never even hoped to be allowed to smoke. Now we can scarcely refrain from tobacco till we have gulped a single glass of port. Yet it will hardly be maintained that our manners are either worse or better than they were, or that one form of ritual is any more civilized than the other.

We went out from one of those old dinners with a comfortable feeling of satiety. We achieve exactly the same agreeable sensation after a feast eaten in a newer way. We returned home on the Sundays of my boyhood, after our Protestant worship, with a soothing feeling that we had paid our respects to God, perhaps heartened a little for our struggle against the world, the flesh, and the devil in the days before us, comforted in our troubles, relieved of the worst of our fears, convinced afresh that the “The Lord is King.” We return home now after the most Catholic of sung Masses, and the results are very much the same. Both then and now, whatever else we got or missed, we felt it due to our self-respect to say that the choir sang out of tune and time. Young men and women in a gallery disgraced themselves over Jackson’s *Te Deum* then. Now surpliced boys and men in the chancel come to grief over Merbecke in B flat, or whatever letter, flat or sharp, Merbecke’s adapters have confined him in. The effect on us is exactly the same. We say that we suffer, so as to convince other people that we are musical.

But of course ritual is not the important thing, and no one, not even the youngest curate or the lady church worker, would say that it is. I suspect that they sometimes think it is, but they do not say so out loud in public places.

Much more important than ritual is “the faith,” the Catholic faith, once for all delivered to the saints. But has this altered in any important way? There are differences of emphasis, no doubt. I notice of late years that our fervent Catholics make as much as possible, by gesture sometimes as well as intonation, out of “and was made man” in the Nicene Creed. When I was a boy my spiritual pastors were more inclined to stress “was crucified under Pontius Pilate.” But then, as now, the whole formula was recited. I cannot suppose that emphasis, even accompanied with genuflections, can make much difference to the faith professed.

One of my very earliest recollections is of an elderly clergyman, white-haired, venerable, and benignant. One day in my father’s study he took me, then a toddling child, and set me on his knee. He taught me, though I could scarcely pronounce the words, to say, “No Pope. No priest. No surrender. Hurrah!” I knew nothing of that old gentleman then except that he was kind. I learned after his death that he was a devoted man who gave his whole powers and all his energies to a huge parish, full of working men, very much as the best of our Catholic priests do now in our great cities. His church, a bare and hideous hall, was crammed Sunday after Sunday by enthusiastic congregations, to whom he preached—“the faith,” I think. At all events he held the faith, even “the Catholic faith whole and undefiled,” for he had a passionate affection for the Athanasian Creed. And surely there is nothing more Catholic and more full of faith than that? The Irish Church had not yet released its priests and people from the duty of saying that creed on certain days, but I feel sure that my old friend would have gone on saying that creed, fiercely, even if he had been forbidden, all the more fiercely, perhaps, because he was forbidden.

He called himself a Protestant with explosive pride. He would be called a Protestant, with contempt, by most of us to-day. Yet even in the matter of devotion to the Church he was scarcely excelled by any Anglo-Catholic. There was a distinction then—it is still sometimes made in Ireland—between Protestants and Dissenters. “Is he a Protestant or a Presbyterian?” we asked; or said “He’s a Methodist, not a Protestant.” Protestant meant churchman, strictly that and nothing else. If the Anglican Church is what she claims to be with ever-growing insistence, then Protestant for us meant Catholic, which seems odd. For political purposes, when inveighing against the policy of Home Rule, we did sometimes talk of our “Fellow Protestants, the Presbyterians and Methodists.” But we did not really mean that there was any religious fellowship. An Anglo-Catholic to-day might, conceivably,

call a Baptist a fellow-Christian, if some political party contemplated an attack upon the institution of marriage; but he would mean no more by it than a temporary association for the purpose of terrifying the offending statesman. Our old distinction between Protestant and Nonconformist was as clear as anything could possibly be.

Certainly the faith of my friend, his conviction of the truth and importance of Nicene belief was as complete as the Church demanded. And that old gentleman was typical of a whole school of clergy, exactly like many whom I knew well in later years when I was a young man.

Even the detestation of "Popery," which they called Catholicism, was not so intense as to prevent their approving of such good as came from Rome. One of them, a belated survival of an almost extinct class, once expressed to me the warmest admiration for a Papal Bull, declaring in most un-Protestant language that its author was the bulwark of Christendom. The Bull was that—*De Pascendi Gregis*, I think—which condemned the poor Modernists. Would even our most advanced Catholics to-day say anything nicer about the Pope than that?

It seems to me, therefore, that "the faith" has not substantially changed, and that so far as it is concerned the Protestant of my youth and the Catholic of to-day are very much alike.

There remains the question of Devotions, not the manner of them, which is ritual, not the belief at the back of them, which is faith, but the spirit which they foster, in which they are undertaken. The Protestants of my youth were fond of prayer meetings which they held in schoolrooms and such places rather than in church. In church they felt bound to adhere strictly to the form and words of the Prayer Book, holding that inside consecrated walls it was disloyal to alter or amplify the Church's order. Since the authorized services of the Prayer Book failed to meet their spiritual needs—just as they fail to meet those of Catholics to-day—they practised supplementary devotions in unconsecrated rooms, where they could indulge in orgies of extempore prayer without the disagreeable feeling that they were being disloyal to the Church. There were at those meetings "addresses" which we were careful not to call sermons and much singing of what a schoolboy friend of mine condemns as "slushy" hymns. What was aimed at, and often achieved, was unction, a warm kind of religious emotion which certainly had its value in lifting the soul heavenwards. The danger was unctuousness, tepid religiosity, as unpleasant as the ungloved clasp of a perspiring hand.

I am no judge of these practices, for I do not like having my emotions stirred, being, I suppose, temperamentally a formalist. I have therefore no right to express an opinion. But I cannot help feeling that our new Catholic

devotions are in spirit and effect very like those Protestant prayer meetings. The main difference, not a very great one, is that the new devotions are practised in church. In the old Protestant days those who did not like them could escape if they chose by confining their acts of public worship to consecrated buildings. Now we are not safe anywhere and may find ourselves knee-deep in emotion when we expect and want nothing worse than a sober petition for “All sorts and conditions of men.” The Anglo-Catholic takes a rather looser view than the Protestant did of the obligation to use the forms set forth in the Book of Common Prayer and none other. I dare say he is right. The old Protestants were too strict when they retired to schoolrooms before breaking out into unauthorized devotions.

I am sure that both are right in seeking new food for hungry souls; even quails, when the perpetual diet of manna proves tiresome and unsatisfying. Fervent men have always wanted more than sober authority provides. The later Saint Anthony had, I feel sure, no commission to go preaching to the fishes, nor had his earlier namesake any licence for his aggressive singing of the sixty-eighth Psalm when the devil invaded his desert hermitage. Religion is, and always will be, new wine. It is the fate of old bottles to be burst when the fermentation begins.

All I want to hint is that no real change has followed our discarding the name Protestant and adopting Catholic instead. The fine old Evangelicals of my youth had no business to be angry, though they were, with those whom they called Puseyites, Tractarians, and Ritualists. The Anglo-Catholic ought not to be so contemptuous as he is of those whom he calls Protestants. No one knows, and unless some angel keeps statistics no one ever will know, whether the souls of simple men get to heaven in greater numbers with one label tied to them rather than the other. And getting to heaven must, I suppose, be the end and object of all we do in the way of religion.

Perhaps the difference between Catholic and Protestant is really one of temper. If so, it is something real and important. In Catholicism there seems to be a certain suavity, the result of a feeling of security. Protestantism is another name for aggression in religion. The Catholic spirit belongs to the man who is comfortably aware of being one of an unassailable majority. The Protestant is forced to assert himself and his position. His spirit is the vice—or perhaps the virtue—of active minorities. The Catholic is conscious of being a member of that universal, time-transcending Church which is the blessed company of all faithful people. He does not want to say so and is quietly tolerant of people who do not understand. The Protestant is eager to proclaim an evangel of some kind, and therefore must be aggressive. A man may possibly belong to some quite small body of Christians and still have the spirit of a Catholic, though no doubt this is rare and difficult. Most of the

members of the Irvingite body, queer as their religion is, seem to me to be Catholic in spirit. They have that feeling of security which saves them from the necessity of self-assertion.

The possession of this spirit has nothing, or very little, to do with belief. A man might accept and exult in every decree ever issued by the Vatican and yet miss the Catholic spirit. If he goes about the world shouting, "I'm a Catholic! I'm a Catholic!" with the inevitable implication "And you're not," he plainly does miss it. His very shouting proves that he is not the thing he wants us to think he is. To be "superior" is the vice of sects in religion, just as it is of cliques in literature and art. The superior person in letters, art, and culture is never great. The best he can be is precious. The superior person in religion, just because he is contemptuous, fails to achieve the position of a Catholic.

This is not to say that the Catholic-minded man is a more useful or even a better man than the man with the Protestant spirit. He is pleasanter to live with. That is all. Just as a gentleman is pleasanter to live with than an egotist. Perhaps all successful missionaries, all leaders of armies of invasion in thought and morals, are necessarily Protestant in spirit. They could hardly be successful if they did not want to argue and to fight—that is to say, if they were not aggressive. Perhaps Catholic-minded people are always somewhat ineffective, since the sense of security brings with it a disinclination for the exertion of controversy.

If this is so—if, as is quite unlikely, I am right in supposing that the essential notes of Catholicity are security and calm, while the characteristic of Protestantism is energetic aggression—then we reach the paradoxical conclusion that the most earnest Catholics are really Protestants though they do not know it, and that many who are passively proud of their Protestantism are Catholic at heart. This cannot possibly be true, so I must have gone wrong somewhere in my reasoning. I am scarcely surprised. Nor am I repentant. It is not in the least unpleasant to be mistaken, and I have always enjoyed playing about with words, especially with words which are provocative of passion when treated solemnly.

4. The Seaside

There are those who do not want to spend their holidays at the seaside or on the sea; but they are exceptional people, and I always suspect that in seeking mountains, woods, and roadside dells they are in reality moved by the same impulses to which most of us yield more frankly when we go to the sea. The caravaner, for instance, is at heart a yachtsman, but because he knows nothing about boats is obliged to do his cruising on wheels with the help of a horse or a motor engine. The great attraction of the caravaning holiday lies in the possession of a movable home, a habitation that can be shifted at will, so that every night may be spent in a new place. There comes with his mobility a sense of freedom and independence which are the most fascinating of the charms of sea cruising. In all the details of life the caravaner is a yachtsman. He cooks with delight under similar conditions of extreme discomfort. He sleeps in cramped places and has no convenient way of disposing of the clothes he takes off. He washes with the utmost difficulty. Save that it jolts instead of rocking the caravan is a yacht.

The man who goes to the mountains for a holiday, who is happiest among peaks and crags, is not in reality very different in spirit from the more ordinary seeker of the sea. I suppose that the climber, when he climbs high enough, gets the same kind of pleasure as a good swimmer who makes his way out a quarter of a mile from the shore. There is the feeling of personal triumph which comes of setting our strength and skill successfully against the blind but friendly forces of nature. There is the inexpressible joy of feeling that the world—the dusty road of ordinary life—is utterly remote from us. There is the moving delight of wide prospects. The climber at full stretch on the heather of some hardly-won hill-top feels just what the swimmer does when, far out from the shore, he turns over, lets the water gurgle in his ears, and gazes up at a sky flecked with white clouds; just what the yachtsman feels when the land begins to grow dim in the distance and the sea is broad in front of him.

I am inclined to think that even the wood-lover—and those who seek woods for their holidays are rare—finds among his trees something of what the sea gives to most of us. There is in large woods a sense of mystery, a consciousness of the presence of strangely fascinating beings, and this is one of the things we get from the sea. The imaginative wood-lover knows that Pan is beside him, sees dryads and fears satyrs, has sense of shy nymphs among the leaves by shady pools. Is this in any essential a different

mythology from that of the sea-lover, who knows, although he never says so, that there are mermaids among the rocks where the tangled weed washes slowly to and fro as the tide ebbs on calm evenings; who, when the dawn breaks high, hears “Old Triton wind his wreathed horn”?

It seems a far cry from this spiritual fascination of the sea, its freedom, its mystery, its width, its mythology, to the realities of the modern watering-place, the seaside resort advertised by railway companies. What have the crowds which throng those beaches got to do with lofty emotions? We look at the long lines of bathing machines. Lewis Carroll was certainly right when he said that it was open to doubt whether these things add to the beauty of the scenery. Bathing tents are no better. The bathers themselves, in spite of the pictures which break out in early summer on railway station posters, are not pretty creatures once they have got wet. Saddled donkeys beaten along the sands, rows of hammock chairs, and picnic parties are distressing sights. The shops along the far side of the sea front parade are shrines dedicated to inconceivable vulgarities. There are bands which play, creatures with stained faces who sing, bastard tennis and cricket games on the sand. The fearful revelries of the seaside crowd, cheap day trippers, week-enders, or long-enduring holiday lodgers fill the sea-lover with a sense of sick despair. He would perhaps be glad to kill the golfers who spread themselves across the glorious sandhills where once, many years ago, he used to wander alone among the spiked sea grass, with the trickling sand under his feet, with the smell of the thyme in his nostrils, with the crow-toe, the tiny dappled pansies, and the bright snail shells before his eyes, with the roar of the breakers in his ears.

Yet it is to the sea—we must always remember this—that the victims of our civilization crowd when they escape from their chains for a brief holiday. Even golfers prefer, I believe, seaside links when they can get them, and the delight of lying dormie six or getting one up on bogie—whatever these phrases may mean—is not so keen inland as on the sandhills beyond Portrush.

Holiday makers might, one would suppose, disport themselves with equal joy in huge pleasure palaces built near towns, places like the Wembley Exhibition. If necessary swimming baths could be added to the attractions of these shows. It ought not to pass the wit of man to provide sandy-shored pools and striped bathing tents for those who do not care to venture more than knee-deep into cold water. Holiday resorts of this kind might be manufactured and the real sea might be spared. But the places would be failures. People would not go to them. The holiday maker wants something more than the most enterprising and intelligent secretary of an exhibition can give him. He wants the sea. He tolerates and even appreciates the added

attractions of bands on piers, of cinematographs, dancing saloons, cheap photographers, and golf links. But not all of these, though provided in the richest profusion, would satisfy him if he were cut off from the sea.

All civilized peoples whom I have had the chance of observing are the same in this respect. The French have a whole row of watering-places which strongly resemble, and in some respects beat, the English ones. The North Germans crowd to sandy villages in Holland. Austrians and South Germans populate the myriad bathing-boxes of the Lido, or sun themselves on the tideless beaches of Abbazia. The north side of the Tagus is the resort of the sea-goers from Lisbon. Even on the Marina Grande of a remote island like Capri there are arrangements for crowds of bathers. The Americans swarm to Atlantic City and Coney Island. The same deep-rooted instinct moves them all. Set at leisure and masters of their movements for a day, a week, or a month they rush to the sea. They get into it, up to their necks if they dare. They paddle barefooted among the foaming margins of its waves. They gather its shells and keep them till their lustre fades and they become common things. They go out in boats and are rowed to and fro, getting nowhere, aiming at nothing, simply enamoured of the sea, passionate, inarticulate lovers, who must get closer and closer to the object of their desire. They insist that long piers shall be built stretching out into the sea. These are totally useless structures for any purpose connected with ships or sea-borne trade. They are hideously ugly. But they enable people to place themselves so that the sea is almost all round them and underneath their feet. They are the next best thing to boats, the substitute for boats among those whose stomachs cannot endure the tossing or whose purses are too lean to meet the exactions of pseudo-fishermen.

It is surely a good thing to feel that our holiday crowds—the crowds whom superior people most heartily despise—are sea-lovers in their hearts. They are often bewildered by their own emotions and they turn aside after other, commoner joys, sacrificing to cinematographs and golf links as the Chosen People did to Moloch and Ashtoroth instead of being faithful to the one true God; but it is to the sea that their hearts are going out all the time. They are dumb—we are all dumb—about the great emotions of the sea. We would laugh shamefacedly if anyone were to speak to us about its mystery, its greatness, and the sorrow that is on it of calm evenings when it surges gently among the reefs and draws slowly back from washing over solid rock. Who can blame us for being inarticulate? If the fascination of the sea could be expressed at all, surely the poets could have done it for us. Yet there are not two dozen good poems about the sea in the whole magnificent library of English literature. Swinburne wrote three or four. Matthew Arnold wrote two, one of them perhaps the best that has ever been written.

Wordsworth has a sonnet or two. There are lines of Tennyson. Chapman, among the Elizabethans, understood the glory of sea sailing. And there are others. But what a small anthology it is if we include in it only those poems which interpret for us the sea feeling and the sea longing of our hearts. It is small wonder that we commonplace people, though we seek the sea for our holidays and love it so much that we never forsake it, can find no words in which to express what it is to us.

5. A.D. One Thousand

We felt honoured and a little frightened. Never before had our schools been visited by three inspectors on the same day, and these were not mere County Council officials, but inspectors of the most superior kind who appended the letters H.M.I. to their names. His Majesty's Inspectors! Could anything be more impressive?

There were two gentlemen and one lady. They came in a motor-car. They settled down for the day on our schools—small, unimportant village schools. Their manners were charming and their appearance was most reassuring. They treated us all—managers, teachers, monitors, boys, girls, infants—as if we had been honoured friends, as if they were confident beforehand that we had all been doing our work in the best possible manner, as if we were sure to have taught our children all which children should be taught, as if the inspection of such schools as ours were a pleasure to them and a mere formality for us. Yet we were all a little frightened. Perhaps our consciences reminded us of things undone which ought to have been done, and things done which had better have been left undone. Not even membership of the National Union of Teachers, a sure shield against the attacks of economizing County Councillors, is much protection against the report of an H.M.I., and neither managers nor children have a Union to look to. They stand naked to the blast of every wind of criticism.

“Mention anything which happened in the year A.D. One Thousand.”

The inspector in the boys' school, smiling and cheerful, wrote that on the blackboard. He evidently meant to begin with history, ancient history perhaps, or modern history, or mediaeval history, or political history, or economic history. At all events history. Or, I began to feel doubtful, was this a question in the range of subjects vaguely called English? Or was it designed to test our General Knowledge? I remember the General Knowledge questions of my youth. “What is isinglass?” “Who were ‘The grand old gardener and his wife’?” I never, as a boy, scored highly in these papers. The passing of years has not apparently increased my store of general knowledge. I could not mention one thing which happened in the year 1000.

A chubby child tried “The birth of Julius Cæsar, sir,” and seeing, by my face perhaps, that he was wrong, corrected himself hurriedly and said, “No, sir, the death of Julius Cæsar.” Another—no one can deny the courage of our boys—said, “The signing of Magna Charta.” Another—there are a good

many boys, and if they had gone on mentioning the outstanding events of human history the right one was almost sure to come up in the end. Something of importance must have happened in the year A.D. 1000 or the inspector would not have fastened on that date.

I cornered our head teacher and whispered to him, "What did happen in A.D. 1000?" But he was agitated and nervous. He wriggled away without telling me. I gathered from his manner that I had been guilty of a grave breach of etiquette. I ought not to have whispered to him or anyone else while an inspector was present.

I greatly feared that some accident might betray my ignorance and abase me for ever in the eyes of teachers and children. I slipped quietly from the boys' room and went to see how the second inspector was getting on with the girls.

On the blackboard in that room was the same command, written in almost identical words. Perhaps out of consideration for the inferiority of the female intelligence that inspector had written "Tell me" instead of "Mention." But he wanted the same thing: "Some event which happened in the year 1000."

Our maidens are as spirited as their brothers. They tried the Spanish Armada, Joan of Arc, the discovery of America, and other things which certainly are in history books and therefore must have dates. The head teacher looked haggard, and the dreadful thought occurred to me that she knew no more that I did what happened in the year 1000. I refrained from whispering to her. A little fair-haired girl, on whose nose some medical inspector had lately inflicted spectacles, suggested the Thirty Years' War, hopefully. The inspector turned to me with a delighted smile, and, fearing that I might be drawn into the arena, I fled—to the infants' school.

My knowledge, so I foolishly thought, would be equal to the demands made on infants. That room was the scene of the lady inspector's activity, and she, too, wanted to know what happened in the year 1000. The babies in front of her stared, eyes and mouths wide open, making no guesses at all. I was disappointed. A really intelligent and well-taught infant might have been expected to venture on the Pragmatic Sanction or the Defenestration of Prague. The lady inspector was disappointed too. She told me so afterwards.

The day went on. Subject after subject was passed under review. The children, offspring of the men who won the war, remained undefeated to the end. The inspectors were just as cheerful and friendly, perhaps even a little heartier than at the start. Only the teachers seemed depressed and harassed. I was bewildered. It was my first experience of the operation of the English system of primary education, and I felt unequal to it.

The day came to an end at last. I asked the three inspectors to tea, and they accepted the invitation graciously, as those accept invitations who confer favours by doing so. This was quite their proper attitude. They were His Majesty's inspectors. I am a country parson. Besides, they knew what happened in the year 1000. I did not.

At tea we had hot scones, a rich cake, and thick cream, so every one seemed happy. Seeing the geniality of my guests I ventured to ask them their own question.

"By the way," I said. "I know I'm ignorant, but I'm getting old and my memory is failing me—what did happen in the year 1000?"

I was courteously but very severely snubbed. I know the attitude of a doctor to the inquiring patient who wants to know what "Aq. quant. suff." means at the end of a prescription. I know the smile of the Anglo-Catholic priest when someone asks him why he puts on his hat and sits down during the singing of the Psalms. I know the expression of a plumber's face when his client wants to know why the hot-water pipes which burst are invariably buried in inaccessible parts of the house. I can appreciate the necessity for keeping the laity in their place if mystery trades are to maintain their dignity. My inspectors—H.M.I. each of them—smiled at each other in a sad, superior way and ignored my question. I do not blame them. What would happen to the business of school inspection, what would remain of the dignity of the H.M.I. if impudent outsiders were permitted to question the questions of the questioners?

But I did not want to die in my ignorance and I recollected that there was on a bookshelf in my study, a book called "European History 476 to 1871" by Mr. Arthur Hassall of Christ Church, Oxford. It is a peculiar book, and one which, up to that day, I had neglected. It consists of tables of dates with the briefest possible mention of the events attached to them. There are four columns headed "Germany," "Eastern, Southern, and Northern Europe," "England," and "France." Opposite each date are the events of the year.

Making an excuse I left the three inspectors eating cake and darted into my study. I snatched Hassall from his shelf and turned up the year 1000. Under the heading "Germany" there were two events: "Hungary becomes a Kingdom under St. Stephen"; "Otto visits the tomb of Charles the Great at Aachen." I got those firmly into my mind. In Eastern and Southern Europe Sylvester II attempted to reform the episcopacy. That is a thing which needs doing so often that I felt I should have no difficulty in remembering it. In England nothing particular happened, though there was a mention of one Harold Bluetooth. In France the end of the world was expected and a great religious revival set in.

Muttering “Harold Bluetooth, Otto and Aachen, St. Stephen of Hungary and Reformed Episcopate,” I went back to the inspectors, who were still eating cake.

“Interesting thing,” I said lightly, “that expectation of the end of the world in the year 1000. I suppose people felt that something was bound to happen when the calendar got to a round number like that. I wonder whether when we get to the year 2000——”

“Did they expect the end of the world in the year 1000?” asked the lady inspector.

“Yes,” I said, “they did, and a great religious revival set in immediately.”

It became evident almost at once that none of the three inspectors had ever heard of that religious revival. They must therefore have had one of the other events in mind when they posed our children with their date. I tried them with Harold Bluetooth and then with Pope Sylvester II. They either knew or cared nothing about either. That reduced me to Otto’s trip to Aachen and St. Stephen of Hungary. I knew little or nothing about Otto and Aachen, so I touched them very cautiously. I need not have felt anxious. The inspectors, if they ever heard about it, had long ago forgotten that pilgrimage to Charlemagne’s grave. I fell back upon St. Stephen of Hungary, confident that I had at last got at what they had in mind. I had not. They knew something about St. Stephen, rather more than I did, but they had not got his coronation firmly attached to the year 1000, and they did not seem to think it an event about which English village children ought to be well informed.

Yet there were no other events in the year 1000. I feel certain about that. Mr. Hassall is enormously learned, diligent, and thorough beyond most men, a recognized authority in every university. If anything else had happened that year he would most certainly have noted it. I pin my faith to Hassall. If he says—as he does—that nothing else happened in 1000, then nothing else did. Our inspectors had deliberately, after premeditation, and unanimously, chosen to ask a question to which they themselves did not know the answer, to which no one in the world, except Mr. Hassall, did know the answer, to which, indeed, there is no answer, for Harold Bluetooth and the terror about the end of the world can scarcely be considered important events.

Nothing would be easier than to poke fun at school inspectors who ask questions which they cannot answer. But it is far from my intention to make merry and be glad over these gentlemen and their attendant lady. It is wrong to mock at worthy people, even when they do silly things; and I do not think that this question was silly. It was inspired by the very spirit of our educational system, and what more can be expected of our inspectors?

The year they fixed on, like the word education itself, is sonorous and impressive. There is something in a well-rounded date which appeals to the

best that is in us. There is what the Americans call “uplift” in those three noughts following their one in dignified procession. Something ought to have happened at a date like that; and if nothing did, the fault lies not with the inspectors but with God, or whatever we put in the place of the old-fashioned God as the producer of the drama of human affairs. Compare it with a date at which something actually did happen—1066, for example. There is no hint of the ideal, no inspiration at all in a date like that. It is jagged and untidy. Those two sixes are like the dragged petticoats of a sluttish woman. They arouse no feelings but those of slightly irritated disgust. It does not matter that no events attach themselves to the year 1000. The inspectors’ question was great and inspiring, dealing with a date in itself great and inspiring, just like the word education. Nobody knows what is meant by education, any more than anybody, except Mr. Hassall, knows what happened in the year 1000. That is why the inspectors’ question was such a good one. It brought the inspection of our schools immediately and without strain into harmony with our educational system.

Once, some forty years ago, we had a perfectly clear idea of what education meant. Our schoolmasters had a definite and more or less attainable aim before them. The children of those whom our bourgeois aristocracy arrogantly called “the lower orders” were to be taught to read, write, and do simple sums. There was no idea of enlarging their minds, widening their horizons, making good citizens of them, fitting them for the task of governing a great empire or anything of the sort. It was felt to be convenient that they should be able to read, write, and do sums. That was all. Schoolmasters tried to teach them. Inspectors examined them and rewarded the teachers with money—a good deal of money if the children could read well, very little if they read badly. For the boys of the upper classes, that is to say, the classes who could pay large school fees, the sums were left out and a knowledge of the Public School Latin Primer took their place. Nobody, I imagine, thought it in any way useful or even convenient that boys of the upper classes should know that a, ab, absque, coram, de, palam, clam, ex, and e govern the ablative case. But it was clearly seen that the teaching of the Latin primer gave muscular schoolmasters excellent opportunities for beating boys, who always hated this book. It was an article of faith that boys of the upper classes must be beaten, often and hard, if they were to maintain their position as members of the upper classes in after life. A boy who was not soundly thrashed was unlikely to grow up into a gentleman. The case of the girls of the upper classes was simpler still. They were trained to be useful and obedient to their elders at home, and, as far as possible, agreeable to the men who might be their husbands when the time came for their leaving home.

These were the simple and perfectly clear ideas of our fathers and grandfathers about education. They knew what they wanted. They aimed at a clearly seen mark. They were fairly successful in hitting it. A goodly number of the lower orders did learn to read, write, and do sums, to the convenience of their betters. Well-birched boys did grow up into gentlemen, without being able to do sums. A girl generally became a *placens uxor* and a competent mother of babes. We have outgrown such childish wisdom and treat these theories of education with contempt—well-deserved contempt.

Someone discovered the derivation of the word “educate.” It comes from two Latin words and means to lead out. The fact that this discovery was made at all goes to show that our fathers were not altogether fools when they taught the Latin grammar. If someone had not learned Latin the true meaning of educate would never have been known, and we should still be thinking that the duty of schoolmasters is to put something into boys, knowledge of some kind; whereas we now know that education is not putting in but drawing out something that was there before the educating process began. That truth—I suppose it must be a truth or it would not have become a platitude—was exactly suited to the mind of a loose-thinking, vaguely altruistic generation. One after another we all got up on our legs, on speech days and other solemn occasions, and said that education is not putting in, which for oratorical purposes we called cramming, but drawing out. Every lady in our audiences applauded us, having before her eyes a horrid vision of her own angel lamb being forced with threats and blows to learn something which he did not know. Male parents, a minority on such occasions, dared do no more than grumble that things were different in their days. Schoolmasters sat listening with puzzled smiles, and——

I travelled in a railway carriage one day with a gentleman who was very busy for an hour and a half with a dispatch box full of papers. When he laid down the last of them he turned to me with a weary smile and told me—I had already guessed it—that he had been reading and marking examination papers—hundreds of them.

“And there’s not one boy in fifty,” he said, “who can write three consecutive sentences of English correctly.”

He was, I gathered, a man of wide experience, accustomed to the compositions of boys of different classes, who came from different sorts of schools, and that was his verdict. He repeated it several times with emphasis. Evidently the writing of English is not one of the things which is in a boy and merely has to be drawn out. Either that or our schoolmasters have lamentably failed to “educate” it.

The fact appears to be that, hypnotized by the amazing *educatio* platitude, we none of us stopped to ask what is in a boy by nature. The Church says

“original sin,” and anyone who has ever dealt with boys knows in his heart, though he does not dare to say so, that the Church is perfectly right. But our educationalists, who are philosophers and neither schoolmasters nor parents, have never had anything to do with boys. Looking into their own souls, which, of course, are bright and beautiful, they think the boys’ souls are beautiful too and that nothing is required except encouragement of the natural growth and development of the natural boy.

Afraid to contradict the philosophers and anxious to placate the sentimentalists, we have abolished, or almost abolished, corporal punishment, have reduced punishment of any sort to an innocuous minimum, and gone adrift into complete and baffling vagueness on the whole subject of education.

We spend money, as men pour out water from a large jug, with reckless generosity. We have attracted into the service of our schools, as masters and mistresses, a very clever, very devoted body of men and women, as good as any men and women we produce. We build. We legislate. And we achieve—or hitherto have achieved—nothing, or something a good deal worse than nothing. By snatching infants at five years old from their mothers’ arms we have deprived them of the only training that is any use to them. By forcing them to walk miles in all sorts of weather and depriving them of proper food for periods of eight hours at a stretch five days in the week we have ruined any chance of their healthy physical development. We have forced upon parents the painful conviction that they have no responsibility for their own children. We have condemned the old idea of teaching them “the three Rs” as a mechanical and soul-stunting theory of education. We succeed in producing a generation which reads badly and writes worse.

We started a theory about opening the doors of the treasure house of English literature to the children of “the people,” and we might have accomplished something in that line for the two or three children in every hundred who are capable of enjoying literature. But before we got properly to work at that we started another theory about “hand and eye training” and another about adapting education to the conditions of the life of the children, which apparently meant birds’ eggs for country boys, which ought, in all consistency, to have meant the Tube system for Londoners, and the economics of coal-getting for the children in mining centres. Then somebody, chiefly Mr. H. G. Wells, said ponderously that science is the thing, and we began spattering and smattering our children with a diluted mixture of that. Meanwhile parents, who ought by this time to know that their only duty is to pay educational rates and keep their mouths shut, clamour incessantly that their children shall be taught what will enable them to win scholarships, with a view, after they have won them, to their being

taught more things leading to further scholarships, and after that— Few parents hope to go further than the second range of scholarships. But here and there, no doubt, life is visualized as a long series of State-provided scholarships, terminating after death in a tremendous matriculation examination by which the fortunate and clever will obtain admission into heaven. The higher grades of the Civil Service are a feeble earthly reflection of what that heaven must be.

We have got the finest material to work upon—English boys and girls. We have in our hands an amazingly fine supply of instruments to work with—our teachers. We have all the goodwill in the world. We have plenty of money and are quite willing to spend it. We have faith enough to remove any number of the largest mountains (there is nothing more touching than our belief in education); but we have not the very vaguest idea of what we are trying to do. Not even the most obedient and susceptible mountain will go toddling on into the sea in response to a faith which is unable to decide which member of the range it wishes to shift, or even whether it does not prefer to set the sea galloping up to the mountain.

“Education”! We blazon it on every banner. We shout it in every speech. Cheers invariably greet it.

“A.D. One Thousand”! Our most skilful educationalists write it on thousands of blackboards. At least I suppose they do, for I have no reason to think that our small schools were honoured with a special display of wisdom.

The one has just as much meaning for us as the other. If there is any difference between them the advantage lies with the date. Harold Bluetooth really did live then—so Mr. Hassall says—whereas no one has succeeded in educating anything but a hooligan out of the natural human boy.

6. Souls or Stomachs

It is very interesting to observe the way in which the general estimate of the value of things changes from age to age. There was a period, lasting several centuries, when his soul was regarded as by far the most important thing a man had. It was evidently thought more important than his mind, for anyone in those days who founded a school or college, institutions for the cultivation of the mind, did so in order to promote sound religion and virtue; that is to say, education was regarded merely as a means of improving the soul. It was more important than bodily health, for men quite willingly carried the practice of fasting to such a pitch as to injure their digestions and upset their nervous systems. They went on long pilgrimages, during which they must often have caught colds, and sometimes, so we are told, other diseases which they brought home with them to the great discomfort of their neighbours. But they did not think these things mattered so long as they were doing good to their souls. Even people who did not go in for heavy fasting or venture on distant pilgrimages praised those who did, thus witnessing to the prevalence of the belief that the soul is of more importance than the brain or the stomach. Money and possessions of every kind were, as we still have cause to know, freely given, and everybody recognized that they ought to be given, for the good of the soul. Monasteries were founded by kings, chantries by noblemen. Masses were paid for by the comparatively rich. The system of tithes seems to have been established by common consent. All with the idea that money was of no importance compared to souls.

After a while, but only for a short time, the mind got its turn. The men of the Renaissance period, those of them at least who were affected by the revival of learning, really thought that education was the most important thing in the world and that the mind ought to be cultivated for its own sake and not merely as a handmaid to religion. They founded colleges and schools, of which there are a number still left in England, and set young men studying Latin poets and Greek philosophers, authors who are certainly not good for the soul, but have a remarkable effect on the mind. But the cult of the mind was never very popular and certainly did not attain anything like the influence of the older cult of the soul. The ordinary man did not really believe in it, partly no doubt because the ordinary man has little or no mind and doubts whether other people have what he has not. But he has a soul, and he was so thoroughly convinced of its importance that even after the

Renaissance he used to make laws, and, what is more, enforce them, to the end that every man should cultivate his soul in what was regarded as the proper way. If anybody broke out and either refused to give his soul a fair chance or took care of it in some erratic way of his own, he was called a heretic and suffered accordingly, as all members of small minorities always must. But there never were any laws compelling people to read Ovid or Plato, which shows that men in general never regarded the mind as of the highest importance. The few who did believe in their minds did so just as wholeheartedly as the others believed in their souls. They used to spend their money freely on books, counting ten pounds a small price for a Greek manuscript. They sacrificed their health without regret. It cannot have been good for Erasmus' eyes to use them as he did in reading the crabbed and contracted print of those days by moonlight. He was unable to afford candles, no doubt because he had spent too much on books. Browning gives quite a list of the diseases from which his heroic grammarian suffered. A chronic cough was the least of them. But there never were more than a few of these men. The mind was not, even during the Renaissance period, a popular cult. No one believes in it now, though we do confess a faith in universal education which, in practice, is a very different thing from the cultivation of the mind.

The next thing men really believed in was money. What we call the Industrial Revival was the beginning of that faith. For nearly a hundred years in England and other progressive countries getting rich was considered far the most important thing a man could do. It was universally recognized that the condition of his soul did not matter compared with the condition of his banking account. The maxim "Business is business" excused almost any species of iniquity. The body suffered as much as the soul. In order to get rich men worked far harder and far longer than was good for their bodies. In order to earn wages, even without any very great prospect of getting rich, men, women, and children toiled under the most insanitary conditions, and nobody even protested. A regular creed, and what amounted to a system of theology, was evolved, and called "Political Economy." When an occasional heretic, like Ruskin, protested against it, he was regarded as a fool. There were watch-words and battle-cries of the new faith just as there were of the old. "*Laissez-faire*" was one of them, a sort of *homoousian*. "Supply and demand" was another. The mind came to be regarded as the handmaid of Mammon in the same way that it had once been regarded as the handmaid of the Church. Education was indulged in, and to some extent encouraged, because it was supposed that education would produce money-getters of superior efficiency. The apostles of the money faith even went so far as to make education—their kind of education—compulsory. They did not, of

course, aim at Greek plays and Latin poetry. They protested from the very first against that kind of education. It could not by any means, so they pointed out, be used for getting pounds, shillings, or even pence. What they meant by education was reading, writing, and particularly arithmetic. So general was the belief in their creed that people were actually compelled by law to have their children taught these things. If anybody objected he suffered, just as his great-great-grandfather would have suffered if he had ventured to protest against being married in church. The penalties indeed were different, but they were inflicted with equal ruthlessness. Afterwards it was found out that reading, writing, and arithmetic did not produce a perfect race of money-makers, so education became more and more what is called technical and the mind was regarded primarily as an instrument for bettering machines and applying chemical formulæ to the manufacture of steel or the dyeing of cotton. Bankers were the priests of this faith. They received the confidences which in previous ages were called confessions, that is to say, the revelations of the most important facts about the private lives of their penitents, or clients. Sometimes the bankers gave relief and absolution, called by them credit. Sometimes they did not, and then the poor penitent was as thoroughly damned as that creed could damn him. There was no special hardship about this. I suppose that absolution was always denied occasionally, and whenever it was the consequences were serious.

Now, it seems to me that we are losing our conviction that money is the most important thing of all and are beginning to put health into its place. It is a long way from the cult of the soul to that of the stomach, but we have travelled it or almost travelled it. Money is not nearly so important as it was. He would still be regarded as an eccentric who gave anything more than he could conveniently afford to found a church. Nobody but a fool denies himself nourishing food in order to buy books. But the poorest man, if he can scrape such a sum together at all, will count as well spent the fifty pounds he pays a doctor for cutting a hole in his stomach and taking out a small piece of his inside. Society once refused to allow a man to deny the doctrine of the Trinity, not so much for his own sake as because his heresy was regarded as a public danger. It might spread from him to others and involve people previously innocent in irremediable disaster. Now, for exactly the same reason, we punish the heretic who tries to assert his right to live in an unsanitary house if he chooses, or to harbour in his private room a case of scarlatina. Doctors are our father confessors and the recipients of those secrets which give them power to blast our reputations if they choose. Our theory of education is changing again and coming more and more to be based on the idea that the important things to know are the laws of health and the more or less disgusting processes which go on in our intestines. The

study of the multiplication table is interrupted, as if it were a trivial matter, by medical and dental inspections of our children. We are continually trying to stop men and women working in what we call unhealthy conditions. It does not matter, according to this new view, that they might earn more by working in a crowded room or even that they should become rich by working too hard. We have made up our minds that health is more important than money, the stomach of far greater value than the soul or the mind. A good many of us, pioneers these, the leaders of our progress, want to control our liberty even further. Not only must we clean our backyards, isolate our sick, repair our drains, and learn a lot of horrid things; we are even threatened with a new table of prohibited kinds of marriage. "A man may not marry his grandmother" was, of course, an infringement of human liberty, though I do not suppose that it was ever felt or resented much. But, "A man may not marry a woman whose mother died of consumption" will be a serious matter if our new priests ever succeed in getting it enacted. The old law, after all, drew its origin from a noble kind of faith. The soul was an immortal thing. It had its kinship with the divine. We might readily suffer encroachments on our liberty for the sake of it, even allowing ourselves to be denied the right of marrying our grandmothers. But it is a poor thing to surrender freedom for the sake of our stomachs. At best they only last a few years and it is a stupid thing to make gods of them.

7. Generalizations

The making of generalizations must be as old as the habit of reflective thought. Once a man begins to consider things and tries to understand them he finds a pleasure in generalizing. Besides being old it is dangerous, quite as dangerous as flying proved to Icarus. The wings on which we attempt to soar to the regions of wide truth invariably come unstuck and down we tumble, amid the laughter of our friends, who see clearly that our pretensions to flight were ridiculous.

The making of generalizations is therefore that rare thing, a pleasure which is also virtuous. It is always virtuous to afford delight to others, especially friends and critics, and our generalizations do that. They watch our fall with delight and very often snatch the additional joy of puncturing our poor wings. Then they are able to say, "See how quickly I brought that impostor down." That it is also a pleasure will scarcely be denied by anyone old enough to remember the fashion of jigsaw puzzles. It is hard to say exactly why, but there was a joy to be got out of arranging a couple of hundred crooked little bits of wood in such a way that they formed an intelligible picture. The maker of a generalization about life—*varium et mutabile femina*, for instance—gets that kind of pleasure. He has collected into his formula all the women he has ever met, a thousand perhaps or more, and has unified their most confusing diversities. He who ventures on historical generalizations gets a keener pleasure still, for the bits of his jigsaw puzzle are scattered over centuries, and the making of them into an intelligible picture is an achievement which gives real satisfaction. He also, more than other generalizers, gives delight to his friends when he wobbles, turns involuntary somersaults, and comes toppling down.

I here offer to anyone who cares to read what is really a sermon a generalization, indeed a series of generalizations linked together, which I have found some pleasure in making, which will give the chance of still greater pleasure to those who like the destructive art of criticism. I am a fool, of course, an especially foolish fool, since my subject is Church history. But at least I am a virtuous fool. I am offering to others a pleasure even greater than my own has been.

Church history is the record of man's attempts to understand and practise the teachings of Jesus Christ. That, as I am well aware, is not a description which will satisfy every one. There are those who prefer to say that Church history is the record of the efforts of a Divine Spirit, the Paraclete of Christ's

promise, to express Himself in the world, through the medium of a society, founded and preserved to give Him His chance. I am inclined to the opinion that this is the better description of the two; for this reason, if no other, that the Church could scarcely have survived its own folly and wickedness if there had not been God in it. But for the purpose of my generalizations I prefer to leave out this theory of indwelling divinity which in some way illuminated the consciousness of Christian society, thus fulfilling the promise of guiding into truth. It is simpler, less liable to complication, to deal with men's efforts, made after men's fashion.

For several hundred years the Church was chiefly occupied in trying to discover the truth about her Master and Founder. This was the period of the Christological controversies, which began with the struggle for the Nicene formula and unravelled out, like a skein of silk, into the incredibly fine subtleties of the later heresies. Christ was conceived of primarily as the Truth, which indeed He claimed to be, and the most earnest of His disciples occupied themselves chiefly in finding the expression of the truth and building it into creeds. The creeds, which have survived ever since, were their work, their gift to the Christian Church.

During this period the centre of effort was the eastern Mediterranean seaboard, and the great names were those of Levantine Greeks. There were Christians and Churches outside of Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria, east, west, and north of these prominent centres of life and thought, but we hear and read very little about them. I suppose they were just praying and preaching and converting the heathen and that "the trivial round, the common task," furnished them with all they asked. The really exciting work of truth-finding and creed-making was done in the small half circle of the eastern Mediterranean coast by men with Greek names and Greek minds.

The next period was perhaps longer, though it is difficult to put exact dates to its beginning and ending. In it Christ was conceived of chiefly as a king, the founder and ruler of a State, greater and more enduring than human States, but like them dependent for existence and prosperity on law, order, policy, and an established hierarchy of governors. Here again the Christ of the Gospels was entirely responsive to the idea men formed of Him. Just as He claimed to be the truth, so He claimed to be a king, the King of kings and Lord of lords, into Whose Jerusalem—that City of God which is the mother of us all—the kings of the earth should bring their glory and their honour. It is not to be supposed that the great men of this period cared nothing for Christ as the truth. They valued the old creeds and clung to them. They even occasionally quarrelled about them, which shows that they had them in mind. But they were not very deeply interested. Truth-finding was not their passion as it had been that of the Levantine Greeks. What absorbed them

was the effort to establish, visibly, the Kingdom of Christ on earth. They succeeded in establishing the Catholic Church. That was their achievement, their gift to the Christian world.

During this period the centre of effort shifted from the eastern to the western shores of the Mediterranean. Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria dropped out of sight. There were still Churches there, of course, and their members were busy and eager about religion, which is the proper business of Churches. But they were no longer doing things which were important to the world. They were not in the line of advance. They had dropped from the position of “storm troops” and had become camp followers, if indeed they even followed very far. Rome was the centre of Christian life and Christian effort. Round Rome were grouped the cities of Southern France, of Spain, and, for a while, North Africa. The great names were Latin, either those of men Latin by race or of men latinized by education and choice, at all events men of Latin mentality.

The next, the third great period of Christian effort followed close on the Renaissance and the Reformation. Both the Renaissance and the Reformation were movements of revolt, assertions of human freedom—the one of the freedom of the mind from the shackles of worked-out scholasticism, the other the freedom and independence of the soul from the tyranny of a hierarchy. Christ was for these men first of all the liberator—“Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made you free . . .” and then, as a necessary consequence of the belief in the value of the individual soul, Christ was thought of as the Saviour. His great mission was no longer the revelation of the truth or the founding of a kingdom. It was the plucking of the soul of this man and that, king, noble, soldier, peasant, whatever a man might be, away from the flames of hell to which the broad road of their sinful lives was inevitably leading them. Christ does that, of course. The name the angel gave Him, speaking to Joseph in a dream, proves beyond dispute that this is part of His mission. No Christian ever doubted it. It was an essential part of the religion of the truth seekers who made the creeds and of the statesmen who established the kingdom. But during this third period the thought of Christ the Redeemer, the Saviour of the soul of the individual man, became dominant.

Again, just as before, the scene shifted when the idea changed. Northern Europe took the place in the Christian world once held by the Levant and later by Rome and the Mediterranean lands. It was in Northern Europe that the most interesting and important things were thought and done. The flame of religious life burnt strongest there. The fiercest and most decisive battles for religion were fought there. It is even true, I think, that a new race became prominent in the Christian world as pioneers and leaders. With the exception

of the early Jesuits, the men of force and influence were Teutonic. And the Jesuits gained their influence by breaking boldly with the old Latin monastic tradition and learning to think and act in the new Teutonic way. The mediaeval Hildebrand was, I suppose, a German, but he was a German latinized. Is it a wild thing to say that Ignatius Loyola was a Latin germanized?

It is, I think, evident now—it seems to be quickly becoming indisputable—that we have passed out of the third of the great periods I have tried to describe. Men, even the most orthodox Christian men, are no longer occupied exclusively, or indeed occupied much, with the idea of the saving of the individual soul. The very phrases which were commonplaces of religious language a few years ago, “Scheme of salvation,” “The atonement of the Cross,” “Imputed merit,” and so forth, sound strange in our ears to-day. What would have been described in St. Paul’s words as “having our conversation in heaven,” is now liable to be stigmatized as “other-worldliness,” and the intense preoccupation with the problem of our eternal destiny is felt to be little better than a refined form of selfishness. Christ is still, admittedly, the Saviour, just as He is the Truth and the King, but it is not chiefly as a Saviour that we are thinking of Him. To those who think most about Him and love Him most He is the Good Samaritan Who poured oil and wine into the wounds of stricken men, the One, Who above all others was occupied in doing good, Whose life is the inspiration and strength of those who see life’s greatest possibility in acts of kindness and love.

Christ the Truth, Christ the King, Christ the Saviour, and now Christ the Healer, the setter right of wrongs, the maker of the crooked straight! How noble a list of titles for the Son of Mary! And is ours, the one which appeals to us to-day, the least noble of them?

Is it the world which has moved the Church to this conception of her Master? Certainly many of those who are most eager about doing good are outside the Church and even disclaim the name of Christian. Certainly also the Church was not the leader or inspirer of the war against social injustice and human suffering. It almost seems as if the Church had been compelled against her will to turn from prayer to work and to exchange her preaching of salvation hereafter for effort after salvation now. But this, I think, was always so. The Church sought truth and found her creeds because she was forced to do so by men outside, who asked questions and insisted on finding answers. She turned her energies to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth because law and order were disappearing from the world, society was breaking up, and civilization seemed about to perish. It is neither new nor strange that the impulse of philanthropy should come to her now from outside. The important thing is that she has recognized her

Master's spirit in the new desire for doing good which has possessed men and has found in Him Who healed the sick, fed the hungry, and took little children in His arms to bless them the great example of the philanthropic life.

It is not, I am sure, merely fanciful to see once more a change in the centre of endeavour. This time England is the leader, as Asia Minor was once, as Rome was. Nowhere else is there such fine intolerance of social injustice as in England. Nowhere else is there so ready a response to the often inarticulate appeals of the suffering. All that is best in our thought and effort is directed to find the cure for evil and injustice. The Church, at all events the vital part of it, has long passed from the preaching of compensation hereafter for ills endured here. The Christian conscience is no longer satisfied that Lazarus is borne by angels to Abraham's bosom. He may be. We hope he will be. But in the meanwhile we are determined that his sores shall have better treatment than the licking of dogs and that the rich man must be taught, or if unteachable, compelled, to supply food, more than crumbs for the beggar at the gate. In this work of amelioration of human life England is the leader of the world, and no other people are possessed as the English are by the necessity for doing good.

These are my generalizations. I should probably never have made them if I had known my great subject better and studied it more diligently. No one is more fully aware than I am of the way in which what I have written can be riddled and destroyed by criticism. But there is one small defence which I should like to make, one effort to save myself from being misunderstood. I have not said or meant to suggest that one great idea has ever possessed the soul of the Church to the exclusion of every other. The conception of Gospel liberty lay quite consciously behind the enthusiasm for pure truth. The most faithful statesmen of the mediaeval kingdom of God washed the sores of lepers and cast their cloaks over the shoulders of beggars on the wayside. The dominant conception of religion has always been permeated, leavened, tempered with conceptions of the Master's meaning which were strange to it. There has always been, besides, one great conception of religion, which has existed along with each of the others in its turn. Christianity has always involved a hunger and thirst after righteousness. Always and everywhere Christians have felt the unquenchable desire to be good, and have seen in Christ the great example of perfection. There has been no age in the history of the Church in which the idea of imitating Christ has failed to make an appeal to the souls of the faithful.

Yet even this desire has had its period of special intensity, its particular region in which it became for a while *the* expression of Christianity. During the fourth and fifth centuries, in the deserts of Egypt and Palestine, the

craving for perfection was more intense than ever elsewhere. Thousands of men and women, in response to a hunger after righteousness, set themselves to become perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect. They were not careless about right belief and the holding fast of the faith. The accusation of heresy was a thing which seemed to them wholly intolerable. Yet to them the supreme importance of being good was so felt that it seemed of necessity to bring with it a true faith. "What is faith?" asked a brother once. And another answered him, "It is to live always in charity and humility and to do good to your neighbour." Nor must we think of these men as disregarding the claims which the Church made upon their obedience, still less as neglecting the claims of the poor and suffering. But it is necessary to understand that they were not chiefly theologians, or churchmen, or philanthropists, but imitators of Christ. Their desire was to be good. That they also believed rightly and did good followed from their being good.

This aim of theirs ought not to be strange to us. Indeed it cannot be. In the midst of our multiplied activities there is something in us which responds to this idea of *being* as well as *doing* good.

8. Changing England

Lord Grey of Falloden, in his recent book of reminiscences, says that the social order of every country in Europe, with the single exception of France, has been altered by the war. This is plainly true of Russia, Germany, and Austria, which have passed through the throes of revolution. It is scarcely less true of Italy, where revolution has been averted by anticipatory counter-revolution. It is perhaps not obviously true of England. In England there has been no revolution, nor is there likely to be one. Neither has there been reaction, like that which followed the revolutionary epoch of the latter part of the eighteenth century. To the casual stranger it might very well seem that no profound change has taken place in the English social order.

Politicians are shouting threats of disaster and proclaiming their cures for the country's diseases. But they always shouted threats and proclaimed cures. Nobody pays much attention to them. They may be shouting a little louder than usual; but that is all. A shout or two more uttered on a note a tone higher is not a change in the social order of England. The strife between capital and labour has, perhaps, become more bitter; but only a little more bitter. When it reaches one of its recurring crises disaster is still averted, just as it has been any time during the last thirty years, by one of those strangely English arrangements which settle nothing, but somehow keep things going, not indeed silencing the shrieks of the antagonists, but reducing them to muttered growls which at all events do not deafen the rest of us. There is no fundamental, deep-reaching change there. We hear complaints from moralists of Puritan inclination about an orgy of luxury and a reckless spending by all classes. But almost exactly the same complaints were made during the reign of King Edward VII. Our spending may be a little more reckless now because we are certainly poorer and therefore have less wealth to waste, but we are still paying for the things we buy and the services we receive from each other.

It might very well be maintained that no change at all has taken place in the English social order. It is at least arguable that the country is moving along the lines of democratic development, exactly as it has moved during the last hundred years, sometimes by slowly gained inches, sometimes by what feel like violent bounds, but always, after the English fashion, by growth rather than revolution, scarcely departing from that ideal of Tennysonian Liberalism where

Freedom broadens slowly down
From precedent to precedent.

Yet in spite of all that might be said on the other side, Lord Grey is right. A fundamental change has taken place in England.

The social order of the English village has changed, or is rapidly changing. The position of the middle classes has been profoundly altered.

The English village community and the English middle class were singular things. No other country had anything quite like them. Their importance has never been recognized. England has not thought much about her villages or their life and has always steadily ignored her middle class.

Leaders of what it would be over-polite to call thought, what would be better described as opinion, do not know what is happening in the villages, and if they did know would not care. The village has never been worth the consideration of politicians, and for many years has been a favourite mark for the arrows of ridicule which our intellectuals delight to shoot. Yet it is certainly true that the English country-side and the English villages are largely responsible for that curious steadfastness of English character which is the despair of revolutionaries and the standing puzzle of observers from outside, whose calculations are upset and whose prophesies are falsified by what seems to them an unintelligible inertness. Given certain conditions it seems that certain things must happen next. In England they do not happen, although they must. In the English village is found the reason.

A very able American observer of English affairs, Mr. Calthorpe Stoddard, said recently that the English working man is the very worst material for red revolution to be found anywhere in the world. This is perfectly true and very interesting. It would have been more interesting still and its truth would have been more evident if Mr. Stoddard had gone on to ask why, and to find an answer to the question. This steadiness of the industrial workers in England came to them from the country and is the result of the English village order. Cities do not breed, or do not breed sufficiently to keep up their numbers. There must be and is an inflow of country people. The ranks of the industrial workers are recruited from the villages. If not the trades unionist of to-day, then his father, or at furthest his grandfather came from the country and entered his new life saturated with the tradition of the village. It was an inheritance not easily got rid of, a tradition which deeply affected the man's thought and feeling though he himself was scarcely conscious of it. To understand the English industrial worker it is necessary first to understand the English village, and this is not an easy thing to do.

I spent a Sunday last June in a remote English village. Peace brooded over the country-side. A sense of unfathomable quiet seemed to be choking life. From the great, dominating tower of the church the bells rang out, a succession of changes without method. Their mellow notes floated over the village, over the fields, away to the distant hills and the flanking outposts of deep woods. Men and women came quietly from the doors of ancient cottages. Children, shining with Sabbath cleanness, trooped from the doors of the Sunday School. Out of the many-gabled Manor House, old almost as the church itself, came the squire and his lady, crossing smooth lawns, passing through the arched gateway which led to the church.

Inside, where the people gathered soberly, was the long arcade of pillars and arches, the ancient wooden screen, the gleaming brass on the altar. The choir came in, village men and boys in white surplices, and behind them the vicar, elderly, benignant of face. The service began. Prayers, familiar for centuries sung to melodies older still, quiet, ordered chanting, emotionless reading of great words, sober preaching. Over all of it was the feeling of a sincere conviction that as it was in the beginning and is now so it ever will be, world without end.

In the whole of this illogical and absurd world there is perhaps no institution so wholly indefensible, so easily riddled with ridicule as the Church of England. It excites the irritated hostility of quick-witted intellectuals and the scorn of scientific theologians. There it is, a great unwieldy, defenceless body, a standing invitation to the satirist, and yet . . . The church is a potent thing in the village order. It has done no small part in forming the slow, steadfast character of Englishmen.

Along with the church goes the system of landownership. The village is the property of the squire, who is, or was, god in temporal affairs, while his lady was the villagers' kindly providence. Scarcely less than the church and the parson have the squire and his wife been mocked. Where the two positions have been combined, as has often happened in England though nowhere else in the world, the result has been that curious hybrid, half country gentleman, half priest, the squire-parson; a figure so absurd as to stagger even our intellectuals. The "Squarson" has to some extent escaped the satirists. I suppose he was too easy a mark. To fire at him was to shoot a sitting bird.

I sat on in the church that morning till the service was ended. Afterwards I wandered in the lanes, past cottages with flowery gardens, over fields where sleek beasts grazed placidly, where young men and maidens wandered along half-trodden paths, where children played. I went across the lawns and through the gardens of the Manor House. I peeped through flowering trees at the Vicarage. Everywhere was the same feeling of settled

peace, of steadiness, of a civilization based on something strong. Long afterwards I began to understand. The village order rests on two foundations. There are rights and there are duties. Rights are sacred and deeply respected. Anyone who tries to interfere with them finds himself up against something immovable. Neither squire nor parson can override the rights of others. No wealth—not even that of some incredibly rich newcomer—is sufficient to buy these rights. They are a settled heritage, respected when they belong to others, tenaciously defended when they are our own.

Yet it is not chiefly on rights that the village order rested. Inseparably connected with all rights—rights of property, rights of control, rights of position, rights of personal liberty—are duties. There is no escape from the yoke of duty. The squire and his lady are bound to their duty, the parson to his, the schoolmaster to his, the farmer, the labourer, the maidservant to theirs. Like the rights these duties are unwritten, no part of any formal law, for the most part not enforceable except by conscience. Yet they are enforced, for they can be escaped only at the price of self-contempt and the contempt of the community.

Such is, or was, the village order in England, a thing very little noticed except to be scoffed at, very little valued or understood, but an immensely powerful factor in the formation of the English character. Now it is rapidly passing away. In many parts of England it has already passed away. The war, or rather the effects of the war, has destroyed it.

At first it looked as if the war, the actual going forth to fight, would strengthen and not destroy the half-feudal ideas on which the village social order rested. The squire class proved how sound it was at heart when the call for sacrifice came. It displayed also a capacity for leadership. The sense of duty was so entirely a part of the nature of the village people that they were willing to follow the example they were given. The village social system proved its worth.

It was afterwards that the breakdown came, and it was due to two causes.

The first was the redistribution of wealth which followed the war. The squire and the country parson suddenly ceased to be well off. They were never rich men as the term is understood in America, but they were rich in the eyes of the villagers among whom they lived. The Manor House was the home of a certain stateliness, and the Vicarage of more modest but imposing comfort. From both benevolence was expected and rarely failed. The sick, the aged, and the poor looked to these two houses for material help in time of need. It was part of the duty of squire and parson to give, and they gave, not always wisely, seldom lavishly, but they gave and the giving could be

reckoned on. Every amusement and sport—the cricket club, the football club, the village Institute—every festivity, every party, expected and received support. Grounds were given for games. Rooms were supplied, heated, lighted, largely at the expense of the squire. The giver was thanked from time to time, formally and perhaps sincerely, but only as those are thanked who do what it is their business to do.

Then, in the course of a few years, the squire and parson became poor men, sometimes desperately poor. Such riches as had been theirs vanished mysteriously. The crippling taxation of post-war England fell with severity on them. The rise of all prices hit them with peculiar severity, since by no means could they gain that increase of income which came to almost every one else. The rise of wages, a necessary consequence of the rise of prices, crippled men who had always spent an unusually large proportion of their incomes in paying for the services of others. With the riches passed the possibility of doing the duties. Their own way of life was necessarily altered. The Manor House lost something of its stateliness, the Vicarage much of its comfort. And with these went prestige. The long-admitted rights of squire and parson began to be questioned and denied. This was inevitable, for respect for the rights depended on the performance of duties, and the duties were no longer done.

The wealth which these classes lost did not disappear. It passed into new hands. Some of it has gone to the newly rich, those who managed to make fortunes out of the war. These people had no tradition of duty, no inbred sense of responsibility to steady them. To them wealth generally meant nothing but the opportunity of lavish spending. Not always but too often they claimed all the rights of the rich without recognizing that there were duties.

It is true that this same transference of wealth had been going on for a long time in England. Since the beginning of the Industrial Revival the impoverishment of the squire class and the enrichment of the manufacturing class has been one of the most striking features of English social history. It was probably a wholesome thing making for ultimate stability, because it happened slowly. The newly rich were absorbed into the class they were dispossessing. They were learning the meaning of duty and responsibility even while they were coming into possession of their wealth. They were never a class apart for very long. During and since the war the transference of wealth has taken place so rapidly and so widely that there has been no possibility of absorption. It is doubtful whether the rich of these later days want to be absorbed into the old upper class. The life and position of the squire, with all its intimate ties of place, does not attract them as it did their predecessors, the newly rich men of the nineteenth century.

It is, however, easy to exaggerate the importance of the war-enriched. Their blatant extravagance advertises their existence and forces their wealth on the notice of the less fortunate. They are disliked, abused, and held responsible for many evils. They are held up as the worst example of the orgy of spending about which we hear on all sides. In reality they do not matter so much as is supposed. The transference of wealth which followed the War has not been simply a matter of taking money out of the pocket of one rich man and putting it into the pocket of another rich man. A great deal of the wealth of England has not gone to rich men at all. It has gone to those who were poor before the war, who now, though they still regard themselves as poor, have raised their standard of living immensely. The village people have things and do things which they could not have or do ten years ago, which their fathers never dreamed of. What has happened was not merely a transference but a redistribution of wealth.

It is no longer necessary in a village community that things should be done for the people as they had to be done for them before the war. The people are in a position to do things for themselves. Unfortunately, as in the case of the war-enriched class, the conception of duty lags far behind the power to do it. The addition to the people's wealth has not brought with it any sense of responsibility. One of the most surprising things in the English village to-day is the extreme unwillingness of the people to pay even small sums for the conveniences, charities, and amusements for which the squire and parson used to pay. The old order, under pressure of wealth transference and redistribution, is vanishing or has vanished. The birth pangs of the new order are protracted and severe.

Along with the transference of wealth, and partly dependent on it, there has come a new spirit into English country life. Up to the end of the nineteenth century and well on into the twentieth the English village was spiritually self-contained. It was very little influenced from outside. New ideas came slowly, if they came at all. Local tradition, local pride, and the sense of village patriotism were extremely strong. The people travelled little, read little, and were content with home. Then the war took men, often women too, out of familiar surroundings. They saw new places and new things. They learned new things. While the process of learning was going on men resented it. It was my lot during the war to read hundreds of letters written by soldiers in France to their friends at home. Almost every letter breathed the same desire for a return to familiar things. The men wanted to be back again in an unchanged world, wanted to live as they had lived before the great catastrophe snatched them from their homes. But, when they got back, the familiar things for which they had longed so earnestly no longer satisfied. A restlessness, feverish in its symptoms, took possession of

people. They wanted to move, to keep on moving, to move constantly ever greater and greater distances. The improvement of motor transport and the popularization of the charrs-à-bancs ministered to their desire. The redistribution of wealth made the realization of the desire possible.

The roaring of crowded charrs-à-bancs along our roads is something more than a nuisance, more than a desecration of beautiful scenes: it is an effective factor in the breaking up of a social order. The village is no longer a self-contained community living a self-centred life. It has been merged into something large, a vague, as yet unrealized society, involving new social relationships very different from the old sense of neighbourliness. With this widening of horizons has gone a fading of old intimacies.

In the old order a man had a definite, settled position, and connected with it many rights which were valued and cherished, all of them local, all of them dependent on an unbroken tradition. The new life is independent of locality, a little scornful of tradition, and careless of rights which now seem to be of very little value.

The two foundations of the old village life have been broken up. Neither duties nor rights are any longer of great importance. The order which depended on them has gone. Is the kind of character which that order created gone too? If so is steadfastness no longer to be a characteristic of the English, or will that survive, re-made by a new order of village life of which we cannot yet see even the beginnings?

The other great change which has taken place in English society is the depression of the middle class.

Like Wordsworth's lonely maiden, the English middle class has had none to praise and very few to love it. It used to be the fashion some years ago to speak with moderate enthusiasm of this class as "the backbone of the country," and so forth. But this was never more than lip-homage, and in any case was paid only when middle-class votes counted in elections more than they do to-day. The middle class has always been despised by the class above it, disliked by the class below, and, like the squire, the parson, and the villager, mocked by those gay poppies of the wheat-field, our clever intellectuals. To some extent it deserved the treatment it got. The outstanding characteristic of the middle-class Englishman has always been independence. He refused to be imitative of the aristocracy in social matters. He refused to conform to the teaching of those who claimed the right to establish standards of taste in literature and art, resting in secure Philistinism on his favourite formula, "I know what I like." A work of art may be good or bad. For that the middle-class Englishman cared nothing. If he liked a book or a picture he liked it, or if he disliked it he disliked it, and there was

no more to be said. He faced the world with the You-be-damned expression of face which has made him quite deservedly unpopular everywhere.

The dividing line between this class and those above or below it is fairly simple and, as such distinctions go, well defined. The man of the middle class earns his keep, that is to say, lives entirely, or almost entirely, on what his work produces. An aristocracy lives on what it inherits, that is to say, on wealth earned, fought for, stolen, or received as gifts by ancestors. The true aristocrat, where such a person still exists, despises those who work. In England the members of the middle class have always felt a real, not merely an assumed, contempt for anyone who does not work. What we, somewhat foolishly, call "the working class" depends to some extent, and is coming to depend more and more, on the largess of the State. For a long time in England this class has enjoyed free education, to which has now been added free medical and dental care of the children. The middle-class man might enjoy this gift too. The schools are open to his children. He prefers to pay for his family's education, even though, as often happens, he pays for something inferior to what he might have had for nothing. The old age of the workman is provided for by the State by means of a pension, very inadequate, but so far as it goes a free gift. He receives, only partly paying for, insurance against accidents, ill health, and unemployment. The middle-class man depends entirely on his own savings for provision against the accidents of life, the chance of not being able to earn, and the coming of old age. The State does nothing for him. He would regard help from taxes or rates as an insult, and is unwilling to barter his cherished independence for any mess of pottage.

It was the savings of this class which made England financially the strongest nation in the world in the time before the war. Financiers and bankers dealt with the money skilfully, cautiously, and at a profit; but it was the middle class which provided the money to be dealt with. One of the least amiable characteristics of this class was the excessively high value it set on money. Capital was really in the case of this class what economists suppose capital always to be, the result of saving. What is saved by means of long-continued self-denial acquires a sort of sacredness. To spend capital is to the middle-class Englishman a sin, a breach of an eleventh commandment quite as binding as any of the original ten.

The village has given steadfastness to English character. The middle class has contributed self-respect, that virtue, if it is a virtue, which belongs only to those who feel that they are under no obligation to anyone. If, like Longfellow's blacksmith, the ordinary Englishman looks the whole world in the face without fear he owes it to his middle classes, whose obstinate

determination to be independent at any price has permeated English life, affecting the outlook of every other class.

The middle-class man, like the squire and the parson, like every one else with any possessions, has been hard hit by the taxation which followed the war. Someone has to pay the interest on the huge war debts, has even to try and reduce the amount owed. Someone has to meet the bills for the semi-Socialist experiments which are rapidly reducing the working classes to a condition of servile dependence on the State. It seems impossible to tax adequately the large fortunes which chance has flung into the laps of a small class. It is plainly foolish for anyone who wants votes at election times—that is to say, for our governors—to attempt to make a majority bear any burden which can be laid on the backs of a minority. It is on the middle class that the heavy hand of the tax collector falls with the most merciless severity, with such severity that it might very well have been crushing.

Comfort after comfort and pleasure after pleasure has been given up by a class which had long been accustomed to comfort and had learned the value of sober enjoyment. The sacrifices have been made silently, with surprisingly little grumbling. But there is one sacrifice which is not made. The middle class is unwilling to give up its independence. The education of sons and daughters is still paid for though it might be had for nothing, though the paying means that the father must wear shabby clothes and patched boots, must give up the “spot” of whisky which in better days sent him cheerful to bed at night, must watch others, who work less than he does, enjoy pleasures impossible for him; though the paying mean that the mother must patch and mend, shift and scheme, get up at half-past six on winter mornings to light her kitchen fire, though she is not so young as she was and has all her life been accustomed to having that job done for her. But all these and worse things are reckoned preferable to sinking into that position of dependence on the State which is welcomed, even coveted, by others.

The immense power of persistence and the strong vitality of men of this class would enable them to struggle on and finally regain their old position if nothing worse than poverty and hardship threatened. Poverty, hardship, and even injustice stiffen the back of independence. They do not beat it down.

Unfortunately there is another danger more subtle than poverty. That is fear. Men who are frightened cease to be self-confident and therefore lose the virtue—or is it a vice?—of independence. It was my lot to live for a while among a bourgeoisie which had been badly frightened. The Hungarian middle class lost its nerve during the brief reign of Béla Kun in Budapest, and the memories of the Bolshevik regime haunt it still. It has never recovered those evil days, and lives now, even under a Government which is

essentially Conservative, in a condition analogous to that of the shell-shocked during the war. At the back of the mind of the middle-class Hungarian is the feeling, driven into him by the apostles of liberty and progress, that he is allowed to exist only on sufferance. He submits with a helpless shrug of the shoulders to every kind of insolence and petty oppression from those who once had the power and still have the will to bully him. A workman with a paint-pot, smoking a foul-smelling pipe, walks at any hour it pleases him into the bedroom or sitting-room of a flat in Budapest. He proceeds to make a nasty mess and a nastier smell without the smallest regard for the feelings of the respectable occupant. He, poor man, lacks the spirit to throw a boot at the intruder's head. The painting is to be done by the order of some remote landlord. The man who does it rejoices in an opportunity for being impudent. The cowed occupant of the flat, though he is the person who ultimately pays for the painting, sneaks off in his dressing-gown, because, recollecting the days of Bolshevism, he is afraid.

Nothing so bad as this has happened to the English middle classes. But it is scarcely possible to avoid seeing that the mutterings of the storm of social unrest are inducing nervousness, and those who are nervous come near to being afraid. The woman who dare not ask her friends to dine with her because she is afraid of the servants she pays and feeds is getting nervous. The man who is inclined to try supplication with a plumber, instead of saying "Do your job or get out" is half frightened. Instead of going his own way, saying his own say, thinking his own thoughts, as he loved to do, the middle-class man is beginning to look round him cautiously before he says anything, to whisper instead of speaking out loud, to make excuses for being where and what he is. Fifteen or twenty years ago he said—often foolishly, sometimes offensively—"I'm going to do what I jolly well please, and be hanged to anyone who tries to interfere with me!" Now he is much more inclined to shrug his shoulders helplessly and murmur with an appearance of resignation, "I suppose I've got to put up with it."

This is not to say that fear has as yet laid a paralysing grip on the English middle classes. They are nervous, but nothing worse, and there are already signs that the combative spirit is beginning to take the place of nervousness. The tradition of independence and the love of it will die hard in this class, if it ever dies at all, and that is well, for greater than the loss of the village-bred steadfastness would be the loss to England if the middle-class independence disappeared.

These two things, the breaking up of the old village order and the partial cowering of the middle class, are the two great changes which the war and the peace after it have wrought in England. They justify Lord Grey's inclusion of England among the countries whose social order has been changed.

Whether the changes are fundamental and lasting is another matter. It is permissible for those happy people who are expecting a new heaven and a new earth, “Jerusalem in England’s green and pleasant land”—how tired we are all getting of that poem of Blake’s!—to hope that the changes are permanent. It is surely also permissible for those who love the old to hope that they are not, to rejoice at every sign of returning steadfastness and reviving independence.

9. Hooligans

Blunt people speak of the growth of “Hooliganism” as one of the most disquieting features of society to-day. Those who like to use gentler language talk of the decay of discipline and restraint. They mean the same thing. Children are not obedient to their parents. Young men refuse to follow the advice of their fathers. Girls openly scorn the wisdom of their aunts. Nobody, young or old, has very much respect for the law. The result is the unpleasant condition of society which every moralist laments. The blame is laid on that universal scapegoat—the War.

There is certainly some cause for complaint. I do not suppose that young men ever thought their fathers wise or that girls at any time were much impressed when “Aunt Tabitha told them she never did so.” As long ago as the days of Charles Dickens it was generally agreed that Bumble was perfectly right in saying that “the law’s a Hass.” Our perturbed moralists are only echoing the plaint of the elderly in every generation. Is there not an Ode of Horace’s which says very much what we are all saying now, and far better than we have yet succeeded in saying it?

Yet it does seem that we have some special reason for our growling.

England was, until lately, a singularly well-disciplined country; not as Germany was disciplined by minatory “*Verbotens*” which everybody feared; but in a peculiar way of England’s own. English people really respected law and in the main wanted to obey it, without being much influenced by the thought of the consequences of disobedience. This used to strike me with fresh wonder every time I came from Ireland, where I lived, and spent a holiday in England. In Ireland law of any kind, good or bad, put our backs up at once. Just because it was a law we disliked and despised it; unless, of course, we had some private reason for wishing other people to obey it. Then we praised it. But such occasions were rare and the general feeling was that it was foolish to obey and fussy to enforce laws of any kind.

Nothing was more difficult for an Irishman than to adapt himself to the English way of regarding law. “Oh, that’s the law, is it?” we used to say. “How funny!” and then went on breaking it with no sense of evil-doing. Our English friends who had kindly admonished us stared with open-mouthed wonder at first, then with sullen indignation. They failed to understand our flippant irreverence and greatly disliked our blasphemous insults to a sacred thing. We, on our part, with no intention of behaving disrespectfully to other

people's household gods, found it extremely hard to realize that anyone could really worship what looked to us like a very silly little idol.

There is one explanation—the only one I have ever come across—of the English attitude of respect for law. The 18th century laws, a Draconian code, attached the death penalty to quite trivial offences and the penalty was actually inflicted. Men, women, and children were hanged in large numbers for things which do not now seem very serious. The result was that every one with the least antipathy to law was killed, generally while still young and before he had the opportunity of transmitting his individualist tendencies to descendants. It was only the naturally docile people who remained alive long enough to leave families behind them. The population of late Victorian England consisted entirely of the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of these people. England had been breeding from stock carefully selected for its docility. It achieved a population with an innate respect for law. In Ireland, though the laws were much the same, we never thoroughly enforced them. Irish social history has no record of hangings for petty larceny. When we killed each other, as of course we did, we took care not to do it by process of law. What in England were executions among us were what a bishop lately called “unauthorized murders.” That difference had a profound effect on character. In England it was the men of lawless inclination who were killed. The docile survived. In Ireland it was the lawless who did the killing, themselves surviving while all that part of the population which might have transmitted law-abiding tendencies to descendants was wiped out.

I do not press this explanation of the facts. I doubt whether it would be satisfactory to many people. I am not, indeed, quite satisfied with it myself. But I am not inclined to cast round for another. The matter is now of only academic interest, since the English are ceasing to be what they were, more or less, ten years ago, a law-abiding, law-respecting, law-loving people. They have not yet achieved our Irish attitude of contemptuous detachment from law, but they are on their way to it, and the present general discomfort is a natural symptom of a period of transition, like the horrid noise made by an unskilled motor driver when changing gears on a steep hill. At present an Englishman has an unpleasant sensation of being naughty when he breaks a law. After a while, unless the general trend of things alters, he will come to regard law-breaking as normal conduct and see nothing wrong about it, nothing even uncomfortable if the penalties can be evaded.

But while I admit that our moralists are right in their lament about the decay of the law-abiding spirit, I differ from them in blaming the war for what is happening. The lamentable decay of discipline did indeed follow the war in point of time, but not as a consequence follows a cause. The war, if

left to itself, would have been much more likely to strengthen than to destroy the love of the English for law. Almost every man and woman in the country had to submit to discipline during the war. Almost everybody was compelled to learn obedience to orders. The few who resisted were shot, if their individualism took the form of mutiny; severely ill-treated if they pleaded conscientious objections. The result of the war itself, the fighting and the drilling, would have been an increase of the docility of the people who survived since exactly the same forces were in operation as in the 18th century.

The real connexion between the war and the “Growth of Hooliganism,” the “Decay of Discipline,” or whatever else we choose to call it, lies in the fact that the years between 1913 and 1919 were a golden opportunity for the people, Puritans, busybodies, or mere fussers, who take a delight in making laws. They used their time to the fullest advantage. They had been about their business for some time before the war, making laws whenever the rest of us happened to be looking the other way. The war, being a great thing, absorbed the attention of all good men, and the lawmakers were able to indulge in a perfect orgy of lawmaking.

Polytheism is a workable and even a respectable kind of religion so long as the number of gods is small. Unfortunately for themselves, polytheists cannot resist the temptation to add more and more gods to their lists. When the supply of large, obvious gods runs out they fall back upon trivial little deities whom no one can really respect. Then the heart goes out of their religion. The ordinary worshipper, the man in the nave, becomes bewildered and cannot keep track with the business of worship. He is irritated by the increasing number of sacrifices required. Almost every day he comes up against some petty little god who does not strike him as worth a passing obeisance. Very soon he begins to think that all gods are much the same, and the original, genuinely weighty gods fall into disrepute. Even those who are naturally devout become atheists at last—a most undesirable thing.

It is just the same with laws. As long as there were only a few obviously useful laws people respected and rather liked them. At least the English people did, being, as I have said, naturally docile. But when laws became extremely numerous, trivial, and even vexatious, public opinion of them began to change.

Things have gone further in this way in America, where the war cannot be regarded as the reason, than they have here. This is owing to the system of double legislation which prevails in the United States. The central legislative body, Congress, makes at least as many, perhaps more, laws than our Parliament. But in addition to it there is a legislative assembly in every State, and all of them turn out laws rapidly, apparently on that system of

mass production invented, or at all events popularized, by Mr. Henry Ford. The result, so I am told, is that in some American cities, especially in the Middle West, it is impossible to cross the street without breaking a law of some kind. Everybody breaks laws and goes on breaking them all day. Nobody feels that he is doing wrong. For the most part no attempt is made to enforce the laws or to punish those who infringe them. The common man does not, perhaps can not, distinguish between one law and another. Having come across five or six obviously silly laws he is likely to come to the conclusion that all laws are silly, even those which forbid highway robbery and garrotting. Knowing perfectly well that it is not wrong, though it is illegal, to buy a glass of beer, the ordinary man is apt to reason that murder, which is also illegal, is not wrong either. He must, if he is to live at all, break six or seven hundred laws every day. After doing that he very naturally feels that it does not matter much if he breaks a couple more.

England is moving in the same direction. There is, for instance, a law which forbids me to drink a glass of sherry at luncheon in my club before 2 o'clock on Sundays. If I put off my luncheon till after 2 I may have what I like to drink. Between a glass of sherry drunk at 1.57 p.m. and a glass of sherry drunk at 2.1 p.m. there is no real difference. The attitude of a man who says that it is always wrong to drink sherry is intelligible. So is that of the man who says it is never wrong—unless you have drunk ten or twelve glasses before that one, when everybody agrees that it is at least unwise. The law is totally unintelligible, and its existence merely serves to lead people to think that there is no sense in any law.

There is a law which forbids us to drive motor-cars at a faster rate than twenty miles an hour, anywhere at any time. Everybody breaks it, except the people who have not got motors, and they will break it as soon as they have. There is nothing wrong about driving a car twenty-five miles an hour along a lonely road. That it is illegal does not stop our doing it. All that happens is that people lose the feeling they once had that laws are useful things which ought to be respected. When we are trapped in the act of breaking this law, haled before a magistrate and fined, a conviction grows on us that laws are not only silly but noxious. If we happen to have seen the very magistrate who fines us driving up to the court at thirty miles an hour—a very common sight—we dislike the administration of the law nearly as much as we do the law itself.

It is an unfortunate fact that law is made to look even more silly than it actually is when it is administered by our local justices of the peace.

The survival of the Dogberry mentality in this class of men is a curious thing, well worth the attention of students of apostolic succession and other forms of official heredity. For three hundred years at least gentlemen, who in

the conduct of their own business are perfectly sensible, have become almost imbecile when they entered a court-house and sat on a bench. Dogberry had his own way of being silly. So had Squire Inglewood, so had Mr. Justice Foxley in his leathern breeches, his jockey boots, and his handsome pair of boot garters. Their official descendants to-day differ from them only in the greater opportunities which our multiplication of laws has afforded them.

There is, for instance a law against gambling, begotten by Puritanism out of the singular superstition that morals can be improved by Acts of Parliament. It was meant, I suppose, to prevent people playing baccarat and betting on the Derby. It does not, of course, do anything of the kind. It can, however, by the exercise of the sort of ingenuity common among country magistrates and policemen, become a trap for the unwary and an annoyance to the innocent. It was usual a couple of years ago at village Flower Shows and Church Fêtes to offer a prize to the competitor who went nearest to guessing the number of currants in a cake, or perhaps of peas in a bottle. Since our magistrates and police turned their attention to the gambling laws that simple amusement has become illegal, being regarded as a game of chance, which it obviously is. But if you ask the competitor to “estimate” the number of currants or peas then you are not breaking the law, for you are promising to reward him for success in a game of skill. The expert cake-maker, who always counts her currants when baking, is supposed to bring her skill and experience to bear on the problem set her. The man who spends his leisure hours dropping peas into a bottle, counting them as he does so, becomes by practice a highly skilled player of this game. This, so I suppose, is the way the magisterial mind works.

A friend of mine once wanted to have a performance of amateur theatricals in a parish room. He was told at once by the police that he could not do so without a licence. There is a law—as laws go a surprisingly sensible one—that theatres must have proper exits so that the audience is not burnt alive when the building catches fire. It is the business of magistrates to see that only buildings with proper exits are licensed for theatres. By the exercise of what are called their reasoning powers magistrates have discovered that a building in which a play is performed is a theatre. My friend’s parish room was used for concerts, lectures, with or without magic lanterns, dances, schoolchildren’s feasts, Christmas trees, exhibitions of gymnastics, even at one time as a miniature rifle range. None of these things made it a theatre, and for all the law knew or cared there might have been no way of getting in or out of it except by crawling through a drain-pipe. The moment it was proposed to act a play the room became a theatre and the law began to operate. My friend was described in a long document as “the actual

and responsible manager of a certain theatre.” This, considering that he was a clergyman, came near being libellous. It would have been libellous twenty years ago, when the prejudice against theatres was stronger among religious people than it is now.

It seems odd that the law should be so careful of the lives of those attending amateur theatricals when it does not move a finger to safeguard feasting school-children, lecture audiences, or dancers from horrible deaths by burning. But perhaps the law is right, and those who are heroic enough to attend and firm enough of purpose to sit out the performances of amateur actors are specially valuable to the State. Or perhaps, more probably, the law was never meant to apply to parish rooms and only the fussy self-importance of our magistrates—amateur judges unfavourably to be compared even with amateur actors—brought it into play.

These are but examples of the extraordinary foolishness of our laws and the way they are administered. Hundreds more might be quoted, hundreds much worse than these. Is it to be wondered at that the English are losing that respect for law which characterized them a few years ago? The true wonder is that they still have any respect at all for law. Surely the ordinary man, worried, harassed and teased by meaningless enactments is scarcely to be blamed, ought certainly not to be lectured for his growing contempt for what is plainly contemptible.

To blame the war for the new spirit which our moralists deplore is unjust. The war has plenty of evils to answer for and should be held guiltless of this one. Let us, if we must find a guilty party, lay the blame on the proper shoulders. When we hear our boys and girls accused of being hooligans we ought to retort: “Yes, O Censor of Morals, they are indeed in the way of becoming what you say, but you are the person to blame.” For it is generally the makers, maintainers, and administrators of trivial laws who complain most of the prevalent want of discipline. “Go away and repeal a few hundred of the laws with which you scourge us. Learn common sense in your dealings with your fellow-men, and then the evils which you deplore will cure themselves.”

10. Lost Causes

Most Churches have in their calendars the names of martyrs, and we have all learned to greet with reverential applause the stories of the men and women who suffered for their faith. It is a proof of the existence of some greatness in us that we glow and thrill over the tales. It is a fine thing to die for an idea, even a foolish one; much finer than to be false to a faith for the sake of being allowed to live or to lie through terror or a desire for gain. Yet I feel sure that he was quite right who first suggested that most martyrdoms must have appeared vulgar affairs to the men who witnessed them. The victim whom we now greet as a hero very likely struck his contemporaries as a disagreeable fanatic. They almost certainly thought him a fool. His bold defiance must have sounded hysterical at the time. The heroic pose had something theatrical in it, something tawdry, when viewed in the actual light of day. There was probably very little of the pomp and circumstance with which our imaginations deck the scene. The faggots were damp perhaps, and spluttered and smoked instead of burning. Then the martyr sneezed and wanted to blow his nose, which was very undignified. Or the wild horses turned out to be quiet old creatures who could not, or would not, tug hard enough to rend the victims' limbs. It must have been funny enough to see him lying there on his back while his executioners tried in vain to get the horses to move on. There were a hundred possibilities of ludicrous fiascos and nothing is so sure a solvent of the heroic as a titter. Yet we are right, and the contemporary crowd, sneering and sniggering, was wrong. Our artists, romance writers, and hagiographers have seized the essential realities of martyrdom and neglected only what does not matter when they failed to reproduce for us the unheroic details of the scenes.

As with martyrdoms, so with those great romances over which historians and poets of later generations shed pleasant tears and sentimentalize agreeably. The romances were great, there is not a doubt of it. But did they look great to the people who witnessed the acting of them? About that one feels far from sure. Sir Walter Scott and a hundred minor writers have moved us with their accounts of the fantastic loyalty of Jacobite Highland chiefs and Lowland lairds. Yet, if we had known him, the Baron Bradwardine would have struck us as a boring and somewhat drunken squire with a lot of pedantic nonsense simmering in his brain. Vich Ian Vohr, if we had come across him in daily life, would almost certainly have been very tiresome. And we should have complained of his total inability to see a joke.

I always think that Robert Louis Stevenson did us a bad turn when he penned for us the diary of the excellent Mackellar, and allowed us to see what Jacobite loyalty looked like to the contemporaries who actually saw it. There must have been a great many families whose sacrifices for the cause of Bonnie Prince Charlie were very much on a level with those of the House of Durrisdeer.

Miss Emily Lawless, in a volume of poems which is far too little known, surpasses even Scott himself in the emotions which she excites in us over Jacobite loyalty. She has set the figures of the Irish Wild Geese, Patrick Sarsfield and the rest of them, in the glow of an imperishable sunset. I do not for a moment question the sureness of the instinct which led her, and others before and after her, to make romantic heroes of those

War dogs, hungry and grey,
Gnawing a naked bone,
Fighters in every clime,
In every cause but their own.

But I wonder whether their contemporaries saw them just thus; whether perhaps the men themselves would not have been a little surprised if they had read Miss Lawless' poems. There is a splendid imaginative passage in which Miss Lawless pictured Ireland as a mother, lifting her head from the ashes of her grief at the news of the great deeds wrought by her sons in other lands.

She said, "I never called them sons,
I almost ceased to breathe their name.
Then caught it echoing down the wind,
Blown backwards from the lips of fame."

The lines are most touching. And yet there is a proverb which says that it is the distant cows which have the longest horns, and there must have been another way of regarding those members of Ireland's older aristocracy. If we had lived then we might very well have thought of them simply as hired mercenaries who fought bravely enough because fighting was their trade, and a trade which suited them. We should almost certainly have set them down as fools. As their contemporaries we should not have seen the whole of them just because we should have seen so much. The trees would have bewildered us and we should have caught no glimpse of the wood. The judgment of history is much wiser; and history, perched on the eminence of

some two hundred years, has turned her thumbs up and not down—has set the Wild Geese among the heroes.

History is always lenient in her judgment of those whose lot it is to be on the beaten side. Losers can count on the sympathy of the poets, and poets have more to do than we think with the verdict of history. In the end we love men because they are capable of the divine kind of foolishness which espouses a failing cause and is desperately loyal to the beaten side. That was the kind of foolishness which possessed the Irish Jacobite aristocracy. James II did not in the least deserve their loyalty. If they had regained his English throne for him he would have sacrificed them afterwards without even an apology. That was the way of the Stuarts. Charles II, once restored to his throne, had very little notion of gratitude, especially to his Irish friends. James would have been no better. If they had set him, as perhaps they hoped, on an Irish throne, distinct from that of England, they would only have had to turn him out again a few years afterwards. No one could have stood James II for very long. Even we, with the sound of Miss Lawless' verses in our ears and the glare of that great romance in our eyes, must admit that these men were fools. If we had lived among them we should have also recognized that their foolishness was not altogether of a purely heroic kind. There were all sorts of questions burning in Ireland then, and not least among them the everlasting land question. Who was to own the acres—the Cromwellian settler, or the old proprietor? Mixed up with the fantastic loyalty of the Irish Jacobites there must have been a strong leaven of more sordid feeling. These gentlemen were not only fighting for their king's crown—they were making a bold bid for the possession of the estates which had once been their own.

Thinking thus about the past I find myself wondering whether posterity, a century or so hence, will weave romance out of the disappearance of that other Irish aristocracy which is now, what is left of it, scattered among the English villages and the watering-places of the Continent. Michael Davitt chronicled its earlier battles in his "Fall of Feudalism in Ireland," showing very little sympathy for the men who were worsted in the Land War of the 'eighties and the 'nineties; as little as one of Derry's 'prentice boys, who represented the insurgent democracy of those days, would have shown to the defenders of Limerick. But Michael Davitt was too close to the events of which he wrote to form a true judgment. The haze which blurs details and leaves only broad shapes visible is the effect of distance. The actual struggle is over now, and the fate of that aristocracy is sealed, but none of us are far enough away yet to decide whether their fall was great or mean. Even Mr. Standish O'Grady, as faithful a friend as any our failing aristocracy ever had, was unable to guess at the possibility of romance gathering round them.

There are some words of his often quoted in which he laments with the sorrow of a Hebrew prophet the failure of our later Irish gentlemen to glorify their defeat with a single noble word or striking deed. But he too may very well be wrong. They fled their country, leaving the smoking ruins of their houses behind them, or, helpless as sheep in a slaughterhouse, fell before the pistols of murderers. It may well seem that men can scarcely be heroic who put up so poor a fight for all that was most dear to them. Yet there must, I think, lurk some romance in the pathetic steadfastness of the loyalty with which they clung even to the very end to their belief in English justice and the value of English promises. They were somewhat like their predecessors in the possession of this quality of trustfulness. The English used them while they wanted them, and when the time came sacrificed them, just as the Stuarts used, and would quite readily have sacrificed, the Wild Geese. No doubt there has been much that was ignoble in their struggle. But there is much that is ignoble in every struggle. Hereafter, when all the turmoil, now over, has been forgotten, men will come to see that the haggling about rents and prices which seems the main feature of the earlier part of the story was not the essential thing at all. Behind it and behind the ultimate total collapse lay a true form of loyalty to race and faith and class, to a whole cycle of ideas which in themselves are anything but base. The story of the Wild Geese is far less inspiringly romantic if we read into it the fact that those men too wanted estates and comfortable competences and position and power; that they saw and seized a chance—a bad one as things turned out—of getting them. But we forget all that, and we are quite right to forget it. We like to dwell on the other side of the story and to put into the mouth of the typical exile the words which Miss Lawless has given him to speak:

For the choice is open now, I must either stand or bow—
Secure this beckoning sunshine or else accept the rain;
Must be banished with my own, or my race and faith disown—
Share the loss or snatch the gain.

The choice did not come just that way to the Irish gentlemen of our time. But it will scarcely be doubted that they had a choice, “either to stand or bow”; nor will it be denied that, having made it, they abode by their decision to the end. Will posterity be less charitable to them than we are to their predecessors? Will it not, as we do, meditating on the fall of this later aristocracy, forget the meaner details of the struggle and recognize only the greater spirit which we find it hard to discern, devotion to race and cause? And will not posterity, judging thus, judge rightly?

It is curious to notice in how many ways these two aristocracies resemble each other. Each was pathetically loyal. Each was steadfast in its loyalty. Each suffered for it, the one because King James cared for nobody but himself, the other because the king of these later days, the British working man, is concerned entirely about his own comfort and convenience. In character too these two classes or castes, both in their day governing classes, had one striking point of resemblance: they both bred great fighting men. We remember how small these societies really were, a few families, for the most part connected with each other by ties of kinship until they were almost one family. Then we wonder how, out of so small a parent stock, so many famous men could have come, and all—or almost all—their fame was of one kind: military. It almost seems as if there were something in the Irish air, something in the very soil of the estates taken over by one aristocracy from the other, which goes to the making of great soldiers. The memory of feats of arms grows dim after a while. But we are not likely altogether to forget Sarsfield at Landen, Lally of Tollendall at Dettingen and Fontenoy, the Dillon and Burke regiments which saved Cremona, Nugent's horsemen at Spire, and, greatest of all perhaps, Lally again in India. Miss Lawless, speaking through the mouth of Ireland, has commented on these:

Not mine, not mine, that fame;
Far over sea, far over land.
Cast forth like rubbish from my shores,
They won it yonder, sword in hand.

How curiously three of the four lines fit the history of the men who succeeded the Wild Geese in the possession of Irish land. Their feats of arms were surely not less glorious than those of the others who, like them, won victory everywhere else and failed in Ireland. We think of Beresford raiding Buenos Ayres—an enterprise of the true romantic kind; of the same man in Portugal, and, later on, redeeming his blunder on the heights of Albuera. We remember Wellington crouched behind the lines of Torres Vedras, and afterwards storming through Spain, driving Napoleon's most famous generals across the Pyrenees. We read of Gough's career in India, and discover in it a very romance of great soldiering. Names crowd thick to the memory, and noblest among them those whose fighting was only yesterday. Surely if we did not know that they were written about the others we might apply Miss Lawless' lines to these men of the later race:

Far over sea, far over land,
They won it yonder, sword in hand.

And the first line is true of them too. Not Ireland's their fame. Considering the contemptuous silence of Nationalist Ireland about their deeds, and considering the fate of those of them who survive in exile, the third line of the verse applies most bitterly and truly of them all:

Cast forth like rubbish from my shores.

We may think as we choose about the wisdom of the wars, of the justice of the causes in which these soldiers fought; we may doubt, perhaps, about the righteousness of any war; but we can hardly deny that these Irishmen gained imperishable glory by their deeds and won for the race to which they belong a right to a certain reverent admiration.

There are two ways of reading history. The cold-blooded philosopher traces through its stories the emotionless working out of forces against which human heroism beats in vain. The soldiers of Sarsfield failed, as in the long run they were bound to fail, because they stood for a theory which could not live, for that Stuart idea of monarchy which the world was outgrowing then and has altogether outgrown now. The later aristocracy went down before the irresistible pressure of economic forces, and fell finally under the murderous leap of an insurgent democracy. This is history as the scientific mind reads it. But our minds are not the slaves of science. They respond to the stimulus of human emotion. They insist on finding heroes among the men who defied the rising tides, who were loyal in spite of loyalty's manifest absurdities, and maintained a lost cause amid the scornful laughter of the winners.

11. Emotions in Stone

It is not in all moods that I love our northern Gothic cathedrals. Their majesty indeed always appeals to me. I never enter Westminster Abbey, for instance—I never even view it from the outside—without being deeply impressed, but the impression is sometimes a disquieting, often almost a painful, one. Pillars and arches reach heavenwards. The whole mass of stonework climbs to dim divine heights, but it does so at the cost of ceaseless stress, of almost unbearable effort. Doubtless this is an expression of one part of the spirit of Christianity and is altogether right in a Christian church. “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way. Strive to enter in.” The crucifix, which is the consecrated type of the agony of all lofty spiritual life, is fittingly placed in these buildings. With their straining aisles and labouring buttresses they express the ceaseless effort of the life modelled on the “Imitation of Christ,” the life which finds its inspiration in the cross itself. It is inevitable that there should be times when it seems too terrible a thing to live under the shadow of such emotion, moods in which the superb stress of such high calling is intolerable. We look to Christ to give us some other message as well as this.

There is also a feeling—I have experienced it when standing in the nave at Notre Dame—that demons are lurking in the shadows. I am sure that the men who built these great temples felt this. Their gargoyles were not mere grotesques, untimely outbursts of the irrepressible comic spirit. They were images of genuine terror. They represented haunting devils, the Peor and Baalim of Milton’s poem, the spirits of the detestable old deities who found their place in the theology of St. Athanasius, with whom St. Anthony fought desperate battles in their last strongholds. I do not like being demon-haunted. I cannot but believe in them; but I rather wish to worship in bright, sunlit spaces where there is no fear of grinning monsters with iron claws leaping at me out of shadows. I am not Albrecht Dürer’s knight. I cannot ride on unmoved while grim horrors dog my steps.

But chiefly, I think, I am repelled at times in these buildings because they oppress me. I am continually conscious of some vast power which overwhelms me. The little, lambent flammings of the human spirit in me are smothered. The utter insignificance of my own feelings and hopes is brought home to me very painfully. “Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery.” So they preach and I cannot contradict them.

Very different is the spirit of another great church which stands far south on the banks of the Tagus estuary. Manoel the Fortunate built Belem Abbey on the spot, so they say, where he stood month after month watching for the returning sails of Vasco da Gama's ships. They did return, as we know, from that most romantic of all human voyages. On a sudden the whole boundless wealth of the East lay open to Portuguese adventurers, who should pour it into Manoel's Kingdom. We buy Round-the-World tickets at Cook's offices, and have vulgarized Jerusalem itself with our cheap trippery. It is hard for us to realize what Vasco da Gama's voyage meant to the waiting king. I realized it, as I never did from books, when I gazed at the wild adventurous tracery of the arches and cloisters at Belem. Here is the work of heroes made almost mad by the prospect of unimaginable achievements. Here the spirit of man leaps up. Nothing is impossible. Even to build a tower whose top shall reach unto heaven is no vain dream. "Go to, let us make brick," and what shall stop us? Prince Henry the Navigator pored over quaint charts and wrestled with the mathematics of voyaging. Mariner after mariner forced his way, each a little farther than his predecessor, down the African coast and returned beaten. The strange dream of joining hands with Prester John and making a circle of Christian steel round the empire of the Mussulman still possessed men's minds. Then Vasco da Gama did something far more wonderful: he opened the gates of fairy land, and Portugal went drunk with sheer excitement. Belem is the expression of a frenzy. Bacchanals built it, and we who look at it to-day are lifted up. We are "a little lower than the angels." Hardly at all lower. "I have said Ye are gods. Ye are all children of the highest."

It is a far cry from Belem Abbey to the Pantheon in Rome. To me this is far the most fascinating of all the Roman churches. St. Peter's revolts me. I stand not appalled but disgusted at the pretentiousness of its vast spaces. Michel Angelo may have planned the dome, but if he did he planned neither for the glory of God nor the glory of humanity. A millionaire might employ a Michel Angelo to-day to design a motor-car for him, and the result, the emotional result, would be the same. This church is the achievement of ostentatious wealth and Mammon is "the least erect of spirits that fell." Nor have I felt myself stirred to any noble emotions by the gilt roof and heavy splendour of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore. Its present appearance is the result, no doubt, of the Renaissance spirit of its restoration, but there were two sides to the Renaissance spirit. I can conceive a church, though I have never seen one, built by a man like the Grammarian, whose funeral Browning hymned. "Tussis attacked him." "Calculus racked him." But he laboured on austerely, settling Hoti's business for him. He might have built a church in which to worship, though it is difficult to imagine what it would

have looked like. But the bishop who ordered his tomb at St. Praxed's was also a child of the Renaissance, and he, I think, was the kind of man who gave the church of Santa Maria Maggiore its present form. He wanted when he died to lie where he could "hear the blessed mutter of the Mass." A church of his designing would not, I suppose, appeal to me much in any case. It makes no appeal at all when I remember that he did not even believe in his own Masses, that he conceived of God as "made and eaten all day long," amid clouds of "stupefying incense smoke." Nor, in spite of Matthew Arnold, does that vast lonely church of St. Paul's-without-the-Walls move me greatly. I feel its dignity; but it seems to me to be the dignity of some cold soul, whom life's joys and sorrows have left untouched, someone who has not wept, nor laughed, nor loved, nor even hated, but who has remained calmly impassive while life flowed by him. I can wonder at the dignity but I do not care for the company of such a man. It is no pleasure to me to linger in the vast aisles of the church which expresses his spirit.

The Pantheon is altogether different. There is an austerity in the simple circle of its walls which fascinates me. The eye, wandering round and finding no fixed resting place, no inevitable central shrine, rises slowly to the flat dome, and the mind is filled with the sense of almost perfect calm. The man who built this temple had found, if not the "peace which passeth all understanding," at least an inward strength which enabled him to face life and all that lies beyond with untroubled courage. It is possible now, even for us to whom their creeds and most of their philosophies are less than nothing, to stand for an hour or two watching the broad panel of sunlight steal slowly round the grey sides of the dome. So, silently, passes the irrevocable hour. So, surely, comes the darkness in the end. But the light, while we have it, reaches us, not stained with the purple falsehoods of coloured glass, but straight from the sun itself. God—so they must have felt when they left that open space in their dome—should not be interpreted by any formula. At the beginning of the seventh century they turned this wonderful building into a Christian church, or tried to. It was Pope Boniface IV who placed the cross there and filled the Emperor Hadrian's shrine with wagon-loads of martyrs' bones. But what a foolish attempt that was! The facile philosopher to-day seeing the Christian altar, the crucifix, the Madonna, finds his thrill of satisfaction in repeating the words of the Emperor Julian: "*Vicisti Galilæe.*" I lack the heart even to scold. It is so obvious that the Galilean has not conquered here. The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them are His. But this building remains aloof from Him. I imagine that when the sightseers are all gone and the great doors are locked, when the panel of sunlight has passed and the grey dome darkens utterly, that the old Pagan gods flit to and fro through the shadows, themselves dim shadows now.

Apollo, Mercury, Venus, divinities with white, graceful limbs pass one another silently. They have wan, faint smiles on their faces. "He has not altogether conquered us," they whisper. "His cross is here indeed, but the walls and dome are ours, and always will be."

The Duomo at Pisa also gives me the sense of calm, but it is calm of a different kind. It is peace. The builders of the Pantheon reached an untroubled atmosphere by way of courageous agnosticism. The Pisan cathedral is the work of Christians who obtained peace through faith in the living God, and with peace, joy. There is no feeling of joy in the Pantheon. The Pisans built their cathedral after a great victory, and I suppose it was their triumph and the external peace which followed it which first filled them with the sense of joy. But the emotion went much deeper. No signing of any treaty, no crowning victory over enemies could have induced the sense of peace which that most wonderful building expresses. The men who planned the vast, clear space of the nave, who conceived the perfectly restful poise of the roof, who admitted the stream of sunshine through rows of high-up simple windows, had realized a peace and a joy beyond any which earth can give. Our Gothic cathedrals are eloquent of noble strife. Their builders were for ever reaching for an ideal not to be attained. This cathedral is an achievement. All that its designers wished to do they did. There is no beyond. Sitting in it, letting its rapturous peace lay hold on me, I feel, as nowhere else, the absolute felicity of the redeemed. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat."

The same sense nearly, but not quite, comes from the cathedral of Orvieto. It rises from the clustering houses of a little town huddled together on a hill-top plateau. It is in close touch, so it seems, with the multitudinous cares and anxieties of daily life. The Pisan cathedral stands aloof. The houses of the town seem to shrink back from it. There are no men with wine-carts, no women with baskets of olives on their heads, jostling each other across the sunlit space on which it stands. It has no neighbours save its own proud baptistery and exquisite bell-tower. The cathedral at Orvieto has narrow streets near it. The noises of life assail its walls. I can imagine it thronged with human crowds on festivals. At Pisa there should never be human crowds. Only the lofty company of the spirits of just men made perfect ought to gather inside its walls. This emotional difference between the two buildings is partly due to their surroundings, but more, I think, to their architecture. Orvieto is in the Italian Gothic style. It is not, indeed, dominated by that sense of strife which makes the northern Gothic so terrible. But the feeling of strife is there, or, perhaps, only the feeling of trial, which is hardly strife, because the soul is always sustained by a power

beyond its own. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me." In Pisa we have already learned to use that Vale of Raca as a well. In Orvieto we pass through it, conscious of its barren stoniness, but more conscious of the rod and staff which are with us.

These great churches have one common characteristic: they all tower above life. Even those, like Orvieto, which are to some degree in touch with life tower over it. Though touched by the spirit of our infirmities they belong to another city, not to any of ours, a city where infirmity is pitied, not shared. But there are other churches—the little churches of Sussex, for instance—which belong to the life of the people. The same hands which held the plough-handles built their walls. The homeliness of common life is theirs. The God in them is a Christian household God, very different indeed from the majestic deity of the great cathedrals. Among the famous shrines of Christendom there is only one—at least only one that I have seen—which shares with the Sussex churches the peculiar character of being an actual part of the life of the men who dwelt round it. The earliest impression which I had of St. Mark's in Venice was that it did not tower above the town. I saw it first, I remember, in the evening. Its gorgeous colours were not ablaze. It stood across the end of the Piazza, no loftier than the buildings on each side, overtopped by the Campanile, the highest domes very little higher than the clock-tower on the left. It adjoins but does not dwarf the Doge's Palace. The men who built this church built a house which they and God might inhabit together. They were not overwhelmed, nor was their spirit daunted, by their conception of divinity. Wonder was in their hearts, the wide-eyed wonder of men who beheld the pageant of life with all its glory. "The earth is the Lord's," they said, "and the fullness thereof." But no awe moved them. There was no sense of fear in their religion. They bowed their heads and, clad in long, furred robes, made their stately genuflexions. They were never beaten to their knees. They never grovelled in abject prostration. They put no sackcloth on their loins nor ashes on their heads.

It seems strange to compare this gorgeous building to the stunted grey churches of the Sussex country-side. Yet there is this single point of resemblance between them: they both grew out of life—the life of every day. But how widely different the lives were! The English farmer had his oxen, his cornfields, and his homestead. He built for the God he found in these. The Venetian "held the gorgeous East in fee." He built for the God he found in Adriatic voyages, in Eastern silk-markets, in the sun-soaked caravans of Midianitish merchantmen. It is said that Venice, alone of Italian cities, looked eastwards. It was that vision which inspired the building of St. Mark's, and I find a curious note of sympathy between it and the abbey at

Belem, the one other great Western church whose builders dreamed of India and Araby the Blest. There is the same kind of untamed romance in both buildings, the same lawless riot of the spirit of adventure. But there is much in St. Mark's which is not in Belem: there is a splendour of colour which King Manoel never imagined. He looked to exploit the East. The Venetians established a kinship with it, conquered it less than they absorbed it, and their church blazes with gold and colour as Belem never did.

I feel, too, that the Venetians were never possessed by the great romantic spirit of the Crusades. They made sound profit, hard cash, and political advantage out of the single-minded enthusiasm of simple Northern knights. Therefore their towers and pinnacles did not reach heavenwards, only sunwards. And the great flagstaffs from which the banner of the old republic flew had pride of place right against St. Mark's façade. Their God was no absolute monarch, infinitely remote from any worshipper. It is hard to say just where His house ends and the palace of the Doges begins. He was not indeed—no real God could be—the petulant, emotional divinity of a democracy. He was the stately, heaven-born Doge of aristocratic republicanism. All splendour and all wealth were due to him; but not supreme, unquestioned, irresponsible sovereignty. Wander through St. Mark's, stand at gaze, sit in contemplation, even kneel in prayer, you never get the Hebrew feeling that the Lord is King. You never ask the Hebrew question: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?"

It is highly characteristic of the men who made St. Mark's that they should have placed above the door those four bronze horses which were first shaped for a pagan emperor's triumphal arch. What have those to do with the Lord Jehovah? What connexion is there between their arching pride and the spirit of the Galilean who was crucified in Jerusalem? But with the God of the Venetian Republic they were in full sympathy. The feeling of the men who placed them there survived until it found its final triumphant expression in the pictures of the great Venetian painters, most plainly and typically in Tintoretto's "Crucifixion," where the Cross itself and the Figure on it are no more than a conventional episode in a splendid pageant of the *superbia vitæ*.

God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past, and men built churches to express the Word as they heard or beheld it. I wonder sometimes whether we, who have done so much in other ways, who are surely feeling after Him if haply we may find Him, will leave behind us in stone any record of the way in which we conceive of Him, any building which will tell our children's children what the everlasting Gospel means to us.

12. Autumn

Some time ago I had the good fortune to hear a thoughtful sermon on the subject of autumn. It was October and there was something in the preacher's manner, in the cadence of his sentences, in the mild benignity of the sentiments he expressed which harmonized curiously well with the calm weather of St. Martin's summer. It may have been this subtle sympathy between the man's spirit and nature's mood which made the sermon attractive to me. Out of doors the leaves, turned brown or red, were dropping quietly in ones and twos from the branches of the trees, tired of living every one of them, content at last to have done with the hopes of spring and the joys of summer. Within the church, measured sentences, touched with a somewhat mournful dignity, were lapping, like water in the gloom of the evening, against my ears.

Perhaps it was only this charm of manner and form which made the sermon pleasant, but I think there was something in the preacher's matter too. He spoke of autumn as the season of accomplishment. In the autumn nature's great yearly effort attains its goal. Blade and bud and flower become fruit or ripened grain. There is something of the same feeling in Keats' Ode:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close-bosomed friend of the retiring sun
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run.

Considered this way, autumn ought to be the season of triumph—loud triumph with trumpets, like the exultation of the people whose armies return victorious after the long effort of a war. No doubt men try to feel thus about autumn, and to express themselves in festivals of Harvest Home and jubilant thanksgiving. But such rejoicings are human only, man's affairs. They are out of touch with, even a little defiant of, nature's mood. Keats felt this. The fall of his verse expresses not triumph, but melancholy. My preacher, though he argued otherwise, felt it too. Why, he asked us, should the autumn of a well-spent life, the near approach of the end of long endeavour, be a mournful thing? Timely death, the serene dropping off of ripened fruit, is not failure but accomplishment, the close, sober but satisfying, of a wrought-up melody. Yet the preacher was well aware that he asked a vain question. Nature and man both know that no conviction of accomplishment can

extinguish in triumph the sense of melancholy which haunts "The End." One man here and there finds victory in death. St. Paul did when he said: "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." But St. Paul was spiritually possessed and we are not. For most of us autumn and the close of life are not jubilant times, but, at the best, mistily grey with the calm of resignation; and this even if we know that abundant harvests have been reaped, though we have seen our children's children and peace upon our Israel.

There is indeed a real kind of autumn triumph. It belongs to the young. I can remember when I enjoyed it, though the time is long past now. It was the triumph of the man who feels no autumn coming for himself. "All things around me die," he says, "but I do not die. Flowers which challenged my gaiety a month ago with their brightness are withering now. I am not withering. I am greater, stronger than they. Trees which were my rivals in the spring-time, when the sap ran through their branches fresh and strong, are giving up their pride and have found that there is an end to their rejoicing. All nature is falling into a sleep of weariness. The time of love and joy and effort is over for everything. But I am not as my surroundings. The passion of desire is still strong in me. The pride of life possesses me. I am a man. For me no autumn comes. I am master. I am greatest. I live and wish to live when all things else are tired of life and of the joy of it."

This is a true mood of triumph. But the triumph is over autumn and not in it. It is no mood of sympathy with nature, but a defiance—perhaps a noble defiance—of an unalterable law. Very soon this youthful temper becomes impossible for the strongest and most hopeful of us. A few years pass and we become aware of a certain dread which comes to us at the first signs of autumn. On some September morning we notice that the extreme leaves upon the branches of the horse-chestnut tree are touched with brown. Haws in the hedgerow have turned red and their thin leaves shrink a little back from them. Mists gather in the morning and hang over calm seas. Certain flowers flare gorgeously, outdoing the summer splendour for a day or two. But upon us comes a vague, unreasoned fear, a cold clutch at the heart. No wealth of gathered fruits, no comforting drawing home of ripened grain, no glory of autumn colouring, makes up to us for the oppressing consciousness that the end is drawing near. When we reach middle age we begin to shrink from autumn and to long for the spring, the reawakening of desire, the resurrection of life.

Thus nature slowly, kindly tames our pride, teaches us a lesson that we are not gods set above her, but children of her womb, as birds and flowers and leaves are, nursed at the same breasts which nursed them, to be laid asleep at last in the same strong arms. At first we hate to learn the lesson.

We shout out our defiance of it. Doubtless we do well; for the mother rejoices in the struggle of her babe against her holding. But at last we learn, and surely not without a sober comfort. The fruitfulness is something. It was not wholly without reason that my preacher dwelt upon the satisfaction of accomplishment. To have spoken the truth now and then, to have stood firm against trouble and not bent our heads, these are good harvestings for those who can claim them. To see the children of our getting grown brave and strong, this is more. To have loved and to have been loved is more still, for this abides. No autumn withers it nor winter kills. Many waters cannot quench it.

And then there is, besides the harvesting, the great desire for rest which in the end comes to all of us.

My preacher went too far, outran his text when he claimed joy as the dominant emotion of our autumning. Rather I feel with Wordsworth that joy must pass and that all things

Take a sober colouring from the eye
Which hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.

But sobriety is not sorrow. Certainly it is not despair. Death is not "the giving over of a fight which must be lost," but the gathering in of a harvest well toiled for, ripened at last.

So of the autumn of October, the true natural ending of the year. But there is a false and altogether hateful ending of life which comes untimely in the spring. A fierce blast rages from the east, bearing pitiless sharp hail with it. Blossoms wither and are slain before the fruit they promise has been born. Young leaves, which have never known the summer's glory, blacken suddenly. The trees bear a ghastly burden of death and premature decay. There is no sense of accomplishment to console us, no harvesting, no "mellow fruitfulness." At such a time a creed built on nature's ways helps us not at all. What has happened is wrong, abominable, not to be borne. We rage in impotent rebellion, beating our hands fiercely against the stone face of a malignant fate. It is an intolerable evil that life should perish thus, before it has tasted half the joys that should belong to it, or borne any fruit, or come to its maturity. It is indeed an intolerable evil, if nature's quiet teaching is the whole philosophy of life. So we should be forced to yield to mere despair, perhaps even to sink into the abyss of cowardice. But we are not content to yield or sink. Though we are nature's children our hearts claim for us also a higher parentage. We recognize something more than abject failure, the blank defeat of purpose, in untimely death. The Sacrifice on Calvary was such a death, the blasting in its early summer of a beautiful

life. But the hearts of all who ever heard the story of it are sure that it was something else. This is not a matter for pale reasoning or balanced doubt. We know that there is nothing greater for a man to do than to offer another sacrifice like that one. No nobler, fuller possibility than to take a place in the elect company of Christs Crucified. We shall not cower before the spectacle of untimely death which seems to conquer us if we have seen even such death vanquished many times on many crosses.

13. Reach-me-Downs

The trade in reach-me-downs is, I understand, increasing. Many people, men as well as women, are finding ready-made clothes satisfactory. In some things—boots for instance—there is hardly any special making for individual customers left in the world, and the old-fashioned shoemaker, unless he happens to have a wealthy and aristocratic connexion, has been driven out of business. There are certainly great advantages about the ready-made garment. An overcoat, bought from the peg, may not be a perfect fit, but then all the annoyance and waste of time involved in trying it on is avoided. I know nothing more irritating and few things more humiliating than having to stand, feeling and looking like a fool, in the middle of a circle of mirrors, while a man with pins stuck in his coat makes marks on my back and shoulders with pale green chalk. Now and then he increases my exasperation by asking me to view my own back, though he knows quite well that no multiplicity of mirrors will enable an ordinary, healthy man to see anything except his own scowling face and the fatuous smile on the face of the tailor.

The purchaser of the ready-made coat is able, before buying it, to see exactly what it looks like in its completed form instead of having to guess after a survey of a misleading bale of cloth or perhaps a still more misleading pattern. The man who tries to choose cloth for himself invariably finds that a stripe or check which is unnoticeable in the original bale has a way of emphasizing itself most offensively when the cloth is cut up and sewed together again. If he leaves the choice of material to the tailor, who is supposed to be an expert, the result is even worse. He is then clothed in the stuff which of all in his stock the tailor is most anxious to get rid of, probably because customer after customer has refused to buy it.

But the chief, the decisive merit of the reach-me-down is its cheapness. Being susceptible of mass production it always costs less than the garments which are made singly for individuals.

Yet dealers in ready-made clothing, however great their success at the moment, must not suppose that they have nothing to do except continue the display of old models, unaltered. It is not, of course, necessary that the garments they sell should conform to the shape of the human figure. Buyers are always ready to alter their bodies in such a way as to make them suit the clothes offered them. A dealer might without difficulty sell hundreds of three-sleeved overcoats if the public were persuaded, by advertisement or

otherwise, that it would be nice to have three arms. The only thing the salesman must be careful about is to see that his coats, hats, skirts, boots, or whatever he is selling, are kept up to date. He must not go on offering garments made in the fashion of ten years ago. By attention to this one simple rule success can be ensured. As might be expected, the shopkeeper does keep the rule and therefore grows rich.

But there are other purveyors of reach-me-downs who do not keep this rule. Oddly enough, our novelists and public speakers, both of them large dealers in ready-mades, take very little trouble about keeping their stock up to date. No one wants to reproach either writers or speakers for selling reach-me-downs. Indeed we, the public who buy the books and listen to the speakers, prefer that they should do so. It saves us thought. It saves them labour. It is, in fact, the cheapest way in which these trades can be carried on, and cheapness is advantageous in the long run both to producers and consumers. But it is not unreasonable to ask that the goods offered us should not be the same as those which our fathers and grandfathers bought. No one demands fundamental changes or the creation of new models. All we ask is a little variety of trimming, fresh buttons, and so forth. Trade would be brisker if the goods were fresher and there need be no sacrifice of cheapness.

A consideration of a few of the most popular "lines" in these goods will show what I mean.

1. THE PIOUS BUT FOOLISH MAIDEN LADY.—She is useful in any novel and almost necessary in a story of village life. Readers clamour for her and have a sense of grievance if she is withheld from them. Writers find her convenient in a hundred ways and are perfectly willing to supply her. No one blames them or the readers. But why is she invariably represented as embroidering slippers for the curate? No pious lady, however foolish, any longer embroiders slippers for the curate. Nor would any curate wear them if she did. I have taken some pains in this matter and even overstrained my eyesight in prolonged historical research. I have reached the conclusion that the latest authentic instance of the embroidering of slippers for the curate by a pious lady belongs to the year 1856, and that was in a remote and backward country town. In the great centres of religious life the practice was *démodé* a decade earlier. There is not a single example of piously embroidered curate's slippers to be found, except in literature, after 1856. Now no firm of ladies' outfitters would dream of offering their clients to-day ready-made dresses with large bustles at the back of them. Yet that would not be nearly so unpardonable as the introduction of spinster-embroidered slippers for clerical feet in a novel of present-day life. Bustles were in fashion more than thirty years after curates' slippers went out.

2. THE DULLNESS OF VILLAGE LIFE.—This is one of the reach-me-downs of political speakers, but is largely used also by those amateurs of mediævalism who have been nicknamed “The Merry Englanders.” The politicians offer it to us when they are lamenting the decay of agriculture and proposing a new land policy. The mediævalists produce it whenever they engage in their favourite pastime of throwing stones at Henry VIII for disendowing monasteries. It is, of course, very useful, and saves both the speakers and essayists a good deal of trouble. It has, in fact, the virtue of all ready-made things—cheapness. Every audience expects it and likes it. But it is even worse than the pious spinster and the slippers. She did embroider slippers within human memory. I doubt whether the English village was ever dull. It certainly is far from dull to-day. I persuaded a friend of mine who lives in a village to send me a list of the social activities of the place for a week in November. Here it is:

Monday.—Practice of the Choral Society. Practice of the handbell ringers. Dispute for the possession of the schoolroom wanted by both practices at the same hour.

Tuesday.—“Long-night” dance. Admission 1s. 6d., including refreshments. Jazz band.

Wednesday.—Lecture on the Making of Paper Flowers in the Women’s Institute, with demonstration. The men were left out of this, but heard all about it afterwards from their wives and daughters.

Thursday.—Whist Drive. Gymnasium Class. Lecture on Roman Roads, given under the auspices of the Workers’ Educational Association, apparently for those who preferred instruction to amusement or strength.

Friday.—Concert and miscellaneous entertainment by the pupils in the Girls’ School. Practice of the bell ringers. (Tower, not handbells.) The whole village must listen to this whether willingly or not.

Saturday.—Meeting of the Parish Council. Meeting of the Committee of next summer’s Flower Show. Meeting of the Committee of the Football Club. Meeting of the Committee of the Hockey Club. Meeting of the Committee of the Christmas Parish Social. Almost every one belongs to one of these Committees. Most people belong to at least three or four.

Sunday.—8 a.m. till 8 p.m., Religion, with intervals for meals.

The week before was equally busy. The week after promised to be congested. My friend is thinking of giving up his country cottage and going

back to London for rest and quiet. If the village was ever dull, which I doubt, the cure has been amazingly complete.

3. THE VICAR'S WIFE.—No novel is satisfying which does not contain a disagreeable woman. In order to excite our antipathy to the highest pitch she ought to be a malicious gossip, an interfering busybody, a tyrant in small affairs, something of a Puritan in her dislike of innocent amusement, so uneducated as to be ignorant of the names of the current "best sellers," badly dressed, and, if this can be conveniently worked in, a snob. The wife of the country vicar is, by universal consent, cast for this part. The moment you meet her, in Chapter III or thereabouts, on the way to do her husband's duty in the parish, you know what she is going to turn out. Here, as always with reach-me-downs, the writer is saved an immense amount of trouble. Instead of having to search round for a woman to take this vacant place in his story, having to explain who and what she is and how she comes to be objectionable, he merely says "vicar's wife" and the reader understands all about her. The reader is saved the unpleasantness of meeting the unexpected. No popular writer can afford to surprise his readers. If he ventured to introduce an agreeable woman into a Vicarage, or to clothe an actress or anybody else in the characteristics of the reach-me-down vicar's wife, he would give his public a shock from which his reputation and, what is far worse, his circulation, would never recover. Yet it is doubtful whether in all England to-day there is a single vicar's wife who possesses half the vices she ought to. I have been associating for half a century with vicars' wives. I have known several thousands of them, some intimately. But I have never been able to discover that they differ in any way whatever from the other women who were not so unlucky as to marry vicars. My only hope is that perhaps some day one of our lady novelists—the purveyors of this particular reach-me-down are generally women—will herself marry a clergyman who will in time become a vicar. Then we shall read about a sweet and charming lady in the Vicarage. But perhaps not. She may become the vicar's wife of her own early imaginings and this most misshapen reach-me-down turn out at last to be a fit for someone.

4. THE CLEAN-LIMBED YOUNG ENGLISHMAN.—This does not mean, as a foreigner might suppose, a young Englishman who washes his legs and arms every day with soap and a nail-brush. It means one who was at a well-known public school, usually Eton, who plays cricket well enough to have got into his college eleven, who is somewhat stupid but very honourable, who can be counted on to win a V.C., before the story ends in a small frontier war. He is usually very fond of his mother in a slightly patronizing way, and when the happy moment of his marriage with the heroine arrives he asks the officiating "*padre*" to put him up to the "drill" of the "parade."

His popularity with the reading public is immense and his mass production saves the writer pages of laborious description. All that is necessary after mentioning that his hair is curly and his eyes bright is to say, "In short, one of those clean-limbed young Englishmen who are to be found, thank God . . ." It is always well to add "Thank God," for that shows that the author, if a man, is himself clean-limbed; or, if a woman, would be if she could. This reach-me-down, unlike some of the others, does bear a superficial resemblance to a real kind of young man. But that, I think, is because a number of young men try to conform to the type, actually aim at being clean-limbed, though often without any very clear idea of what is required of them. This is an interesting and curious result of the trade in ready-mades. The human foot, among civilized people, and often the female figure, actually become something other than what nature made them because they are forced or lined into ready-made garments. It is not altogether surprising that the human character behaves in the same way. But the tradesmen who sell the goods have a great deal to answer for. It is to them we owe it that women are perfectly flat, front and back, from their collar bones to their ankles, and that we often meet "clean-limbed" young Englishmen who will, when they get up in years, become strong, silent men.

5. THE OXFORD MANNER, with which are closely associated THE OXFORD VOICE and THE OXFORD ACCENT.—This is one of the most amazing of all the reach-me-downs on sale to-day. There seems no reason whatever for its existence. The vicar's wife, the village dullness, and others do supply felt wants, just as overcoats do and dress suits. But there seems no reason why the Oxford manner should exist in fiction, newspaper articles, or conversation. And why Oxford? What has Oxford done to the world that it should be saddled with a manner, a voice, and an accent of its own? In reality—not that reality has much to do with these things—the manners of Oxford men, like the manners of city men, or army men, or medical men, are sometimes good, sometimes bad, hearty perhaps or languid, reserved or expansive, deferential or aggressive. There is not a shade of manner which is not to be found at Oxford and among those who dwelt there. I pride myself a little on my discernment of men. I have sometimes spotted a priest in a Turkish bath, when he was not only without his collar but wore nothing whatever but his skin. I have known almost at first glance that a man in a striped bathing-dress was an actor. During the war I have recognized lawyers in khaki for what they were. But I cannot tell, and if I guess I am generally wrong, whether a man whom I meet casually has been at Oxford or not. There is literally nothing to go by.

6. THE YOUNG ARTIST.—He or she or both—for this kind of reach-me-down is generally sold in pairs—lives in a flat either in Chelsea or the

Quartier Latin, fetches home food, in leaky newspaper parcels, to be cooked on Primus stoves (unless the author wants to work in a description of a “little Italian restaurant in Soho”), drinks enormous quantities of beer—or red wine, if stationed in Paris—swings to and fro between moods of hilarious merriment and black depression, is entirely contemptuous of bourgeois morality, especially the marriage tie, but can be calculated on in emergencies to do the right thing, even if it has unfortunately been done before by stupid and conventional people. Whether the young artist corresponds to or resembles any reality I do not know, but he can be strongly recommended to enterprising salesmen of ready-mades. A novelist can scarcely be overstocked with this commodity, but to make sure of a good market a foil should be provided. In the case of the male young artist a benevolent, wealthy, thoroughly old-fashioned aunt with a large motor-car and a fat dog is effective. For the female, a simple-minded, gentle father in a country rectory will be found useful.

There are other “lines” which the salesmen of ready-mades will find it profitable to display; but these six will be found sufficient for most novelists and public speakers. If they can all be included in a single window display, neatly and tastefully arranged, success and a fortune are assured. But they ought to be kept up to date. The young artist’s aunt must not drive about in a carriage and pair however pleasant it may be to say that her horses are fat. Nor must she keep a poodle, also fat. All contemporary aunts keep either Pekinese or Sealyhams. The native of the dull village must not wear a smock frock. Scarcely anyone to-day can be induced to believe in a smock frock. The note of costume for the villager now is a string tied round the legs of his trousers just below the knees. The man with an Oxford manner no longer comes down to breakfast in a dressing-gown—Mr. Mantalini was the last who did this—or wearing a smoking cap. Big game shooting in Central Africa is no longer the fashionable remedy for the clean-limbed young Englishman’s broken heart when the heroine refuses him under the mistaken impression that he is in love with someone else. It is better—since the gospel of work for the upper classes has become popular—to send him to Java to plant rubber, pepper, orange trees, or coffee bushes. It is not necessary, of course, to find out what is actually planted in Java, or even where Java is. The pious spinster, as I have already hinted, must not make slippers, but her talent for needlework will find ample scope in the embroidery of stoles or, if the curate is Anglo-Catholic, copes. With attention to a few little details like these there is no reason why the most venerable reach-me-down need ever become unfashionable or cease to be saleable.

14. A Point of Conscience

There is a train by which I used often to travel at one time, although I hated it with great bitterness and intensity. It started at an hour of the night at which all wise people are thinking of going to bed. It arrived, at a metropolis, at an hour in the morning earlier than that at which the most conscientious cook gets up to light the kitchen fire. Half-way between its starting-point and its destination it reached a junction, and there, such was the calculated cruelty of the railway company, all passengers were turned out and made to wait twenty minutes on the platform.

As I grew older and less fitted to survive extreme hardship I came to dislike and resent this performance more and more. Once, the night on which I travelled was particularly cold. I had some thoughts, when turned out at the junction, of organizing the other passengers into a gang and persuading them to break all the windows we could find as a protest against the treatment to which we were subjected by the railway company. I gave up this idea because when I got out of the train the only other passengers I could see were a limp and broken-hearted young woman and a small boy who clung to her skirts. These were evidently not the stuff of which efficient rioters are made.

Then I became aware that there was another passenger. A porter, whose temper was excusably bad, was endeavouring to eject a man from the compartment in which he was sleeping soundly. The porter spoke to him, shouted at him, finally shook him. The man sat up and allowed himself to be dragged on to the platform. I saw that he was indisputably drunk—very drunk indeed.

I walked away. I do not know why it should be, but I am always particularly attractive to drunken men. If there is one anywhere near me he invariably attaches himself to me and is so friendly that I cannot shake him off.

I was not quick enough in walking away. The man saw me and staggered after me.

“Excuse me, sir,” he said, most politely, though with evident difficulty of articulation. “Excuse me, sir, but would you have any objection to singing a hymn?”

The grotesqueness of the request, considering the time and place, startled me. I cannot sing hymns or anything else at any time or anywhere. The idea of attempting a rendering of “Fight the Good Fight” at 2 o’clock in the

morning on a railway platform for the benefit of a drunken man was not to be entertained for a moment. I said so and moved on.

He pursued me.

“Excuse me, sir,” he said, still imperturbably polite, “but if I’m not taking too great a liberty in asking you, would you oblige me by singing a hymn?”

I walked on and found myself at the extreme end of the platform, close beside the sorrow-stricken young woman and the little boy. The drunkard approached me again, this time with an air of dignity and something like righteous indignation.

“It appears to me, sir,” he said, “that as a clergyman it’s your duty to sing a hymn.”

This was a new way of putting the matter, and there was a good deal in it. A clergyman certainly ought to be ready to sing hymns, even when other men shrink from the exercise. But my heart was hardened and I refused again.

Then the sad lady, who now had the little boy in her arms, spoke.

“He’s very fond of hymns,” she said. “Wonderfully fond of them. He wouldn’t ask anything better than to be singing hymns all day long.”

This was beside the point. My objection was not to his singing hymns all day but to his trying to make me sing them all night.

“Is he,” I said to her, “any relation of yours?”

She admitted at once that he was her husband. This accounted for her knowledge of his tastes; also I thought for her despondent appearance.

The bad-tempered porter had his eye on us, and I was not sure that my singing might not be construed into a breach of the company’s by-laws. In any case my mind was quite made up not to sing. I began a rapid walk up and down the platform. The drunkard could not keep pace with me, but he intercepted me at various points of my progress. For twenty long minutes he kept on urging me to sing a hymn. He used every conceivable argument. As a matter of politeness to a stranger I ought to sing. In virtue of my clerical office it was my plain duty to sing. Because hymns are in themselves soothing and delightful things I should take a pleasure in singing them.

I was saved at last by the porter’s gracious permission to get into the train again. I watched the drunkard choose his compartment and then chose another for myself.

Next day—really, of course, the same day—duty rather than inclination led me to call upon a church dignitary. Besides being a dignitary he was the rector of a large and important parish. He always treats me kindly and generally explains to me that the multitude of his activities prevents his giving me the time which he would otherwise like to spend in my company.

His tone implies that I am a mere cumberer of the ground, an idler with hours and hours to waste in useless talk. This tone—it is nothing more definite than a tone—increases my respect but not my liking for him.

“I shall be at your disposal,” he said, “in two minutes. There is a man waiting for me whom I have to see.”

We were in his study when he spoke, a room lined with beautiful pigeon-holes full of neatly folded papers, all of them, I am sure, of immense importance.

“Perhaps,” he went on, “you won’t mind if I bring him in here. His business isn’t the least private.”

I said that I should be pleased to hear him talking to the man. I intended to add that I should learn a valuable lesson from the way he did it—a lesson which would be of use to me in case I ever had to interview anyone. But the dignitary, whose time is very precious, had hurried from the room before my sentences were formed.

In another minute he was back again, and with him my drunken travelling-companion who was so wonderfully fond of hymns.

“This is Mr. Hautboy,” said the dignitary, “our new organist. He has arrived just in time to take up work in the church to-morrow.”

Then I had a short struggle with my conscience. It seemed plain to me just at first that Mr. Hautboy was not the kind of man who ought to be a church organist. On the other hand, the dignitary prides himself so blatantly on his judgment of men that I felt it would be very good for him to be entangled with a thoroughly undesirable musician.

Mr. Hautboy fortunately did not recognize me, and had evidently no recollection of our previous meeting. He looked sleek and respectable and made me a bow which expressed a mixture of friendliness and condescension. I think he took me for one of the curates of the parish. This rather inclined me to tell the truth about him, for I am more than a curate, and would not, if I were a curate, serve under that dignitary.

Then I recollected the wife and the little boy, who looked desolate on the platform in the middle of the night. I felt that for their sakes I ought to keep silent and give Hautboy a chance of earning their bread and his own drink.

The dignitary, meanwhile, talked fluently about a *Te Deum* in A Flat with which Hautboy seemed quite familiar. I still hesitated. In the end I said nothing, determined, I think, by a consideration which occurred to me at the very last moment. *In vino veritas*. I had enjoyed a glimpse of the real nature of Hautboy, and in one respect at least he was singularly well suited to be an organist. There cannot be any question about the fact that he has a real fondness for hymns.

15. Getting Back Again

Work—the ordinary work which we do every day—is supposed to be a tiring thing, and holidays are regarded as times of rest. In reality, for most of us work is quite restful and holidays are extremely exhausting. There are, I admit, some people whose work tires them. These are the unfortunate few who are intensely interested in the occupation which they call their work and who therefore go at it too hard, spending energy with reckless prodigality. They either die young or break down hopelessly because they never succeed in getting away from absorbing interests and have no recuperative spells of dull monotony. Strictly speaking, these men are not workers at all. They are perpetual holiday-makers, because they are always engaged in doing what they want to do. It is well to be clear about this, so I venture on a definition. Work is an activity in which we do not want to engage. Work is a thing we would not do unless we had to. Holiday-making is also activity, extremely exhausting activity, but it is activity which we choose, in which we want to indulge. It follows that work does not take very much out of us, because being very little interested in it we do not voluntarily expend much energy. It often, indeed generally, bores us; but it very seldom tires us. Holidays, on the other hand, do not bore us if they really are holidays, but they tire us terribly.

At holiday seasons we go off in high delight because we are, most of us, healthy, normal beings, and we want to be excited, to be active, to spend the vital force that is in us. At the end of the holiday we get back to our work again with real satisfaction because we are thoroughly tired. We want the blessed rest of monotony and moderate expenditure of energy. I remember once spending the Saturday before Easter in a little seaport town. A small yacht, a seven- or eight-tonner came to anchor opposite the house in which I was staying. She was manned by two young men who were plainly not professional sailors but holiday-makers. It was blowing hard. There were three reefs tied down in the boat's mainsail, and she carried only a small spitfire storm jib. She had undergone what is most inappropriately called a "dusting," that is to say, she had been swept by showers of spray, had taken green water over her bows, had dipped her bowsprit deep into biggish seas, and had carried away her topmast fore-stay. I do not know where the boat came from or how long she had been at sea, but I am quite sure of this: for five or six hours those two young men had gone through an immense amount of physical and mental strain. It is no joke to get in the sheets of a

jib time after time during a series of short tacks. It takes it out of you to peer to windward through driving spray in the endeavour to catch sight of a buoy and to make sure when you have sighted it that it is the right one. Running before a following sea with the main sheet paid out to the last inch tries the nerves of the holiday helmsman, who has present in his mind every time the boat yaws the horrible possibility of a gybe, "all standing." I am convinced that their day's sailing left those two young men more tired than a whole week's work in their offices. But they were not a bit too tired, for they left their peaceful anchorage again in the afternoon and went out to haul sheets once more and to feel after more buoys. On Monday evening, or Tuesday at the latest, they must have been as tired as they wanted to be, both physically and mentally. They would probably not confess as much to each other, but they were very glad on Wednesday morning to get back again to their restful work.

Theirs was an extreme and therefore a particularly delightful kind of holiday. But all well-devised holidays, all holidays which we really enjoy, exhaust us in the same way. Take the case of a man who runs over to Paris for a prolonged week-end. From the moment he takes his place on the platform at Charing Cross he is a victim of the delicious but unescapable anxiety of the adventure. He is never quite sure of anything. There may be no seat for him in the train. He may get separated from his own, or, what is worse, his wife's suit-case. It may turn out that his French is not the sort of French that Parisians understand. There is a horrible uncertainty about the size of the tip that will satisfy a foreign waiter, and a doubt whether the damsel who shows him to his seat in the theatre is not "trying it on" when she demands recompense for *petite service*. He sits down occasionally during his four days in Paris, but his muscles never really relax. He sleeps a few hours every night, but his sleep does not bring that sodden unconsciousness that he gets at home. He is conscious all the time he is asleep that he is enjoying his holiday. And he is. But when he gets back again to London he goes about his work with the agreeable feeling of a tired man who has found a chance of resting.

It sounds as if it would be a restful thing to go down to the country, to put up in a small inn or to hire two rooms in a farm-house. So it would be if we could stay in them for three months or make a home of the farm-house. But a stay of three days or a week in the country is painfully exciting. The unaccustomed silence of the night induces restlessness. The sudden outburst of the birds' songs at dawn sends a thrill through our nerves. The feeling that there is nothing particular to do after breakfast sets us all a-quiver with wonder and delight. The sight of some woodland bank covered thickly with growing primroses turns us suddenly into children with the desire to leap, to

do all manner of silly things. We are all the time the prey of keen and exquisite emotion. The catkins, green, silver, or gold, the blaze of the gorse in the morning sun, the cushions of bright moss beneath the trees, move us to ecstasy. This is not rest. No acute feeling is rest. We get the rest when we go back to work again, to all the entirely familiar things of ordinary life which fail to move us in any way because we no longer notice them.

We get a very simple illustration of this real difference between work and holidays by watching a schoolboy. An ordinary healthy boy is a very even-tempered animal when at school. He takes life as it comes without complaining much, and seldom spends more than two or three hours in the day in deliberately annoying other people. That is because when at school he is having a quiet, restful time. When he comes home for the holidays he is a very angel in the house for three days or a week. Then his temper begins to wear thin because he is getting tired. He takes a curious delight in teasing his younger sisters. He devises ingenious annoyances for the cook. With diabolical cunning he finds out how to get on his parents' nerves with some exasperating tricks. Every one agrees that holidays—schoolboys' holidays—are too long. And this is quite true. A strong man in the full maturity of his powers may endure a month's holiday without being over-tired. A young boy cannot hold out half so long. His nature cries out for rest—that is to say, for what he and we call work—and his breakdown of temper is simply a sign that he is tired, worn out by the incessant exertions of the holidays.

Monotony is the only real form of rest, and we achieve that by doing something which does not excite us every day at the same hour and amid the same surroundings. All unfamiliar things are the enemies of rest. They keep us in a state of tense expectation, and while they crowd on us, each forcing us to experience some strong sensation, we cannot rest. What is the matter with most of us is not that we take too much out of ourselves by working, but that we rest too much for want of a sufficient number of holidays. The value of holidays lies in the fact that during them we deliver ourselves over to activity, to excitement, emotion, wonder, fear, delight, and that we live fast and splendidly. The true value of work is that it enables us to recuperate, to gather fresh energies for more holidays; in short, to rest. Both holidays and work are good in giving us enjoyment; but I am inclined to think that work is the better of the two. There is more solid satisfaction in getting back again than there is in the delicious thrill of getting away; because it is the evening, the resting-time, that crowns the day.

16. A Winter Holiday

I have just enjoyed a most agreeable and beneficial holiday, very economical and attended with a minimum of discomfort and inconvenience. I have been ill for a week, and have made the discovery that there is a great deal of pleasure to be got out of being ill. The business must, of course, be wisely managed. It does not do to be ill too often. The chronic invalid unquestionably obtains a certain amount of satisfaction out of his condition, but he sacrifices the love of his family and the respect of his friends. All he gets in exchange is a sense of personal importance arising from the virulence of the symptoms he is able to describe to unwilling listeners. His losses are out of all proportion greater than this miserable gain. It is impossible to think that his lot is a really happy one, though he appears to enjoy it. Wise men, and I among them, know that the well of human sympathy is a shallow one. If the bucket is dipped too often there comes up little except mud. I had not been ill for more than five years previous to the attack I am now discussing.

In the next place, it is important not to be very ill. If your temperature rises much and your disease appears to be serious a doctor is sent for, and he will almost certainly insist on your having a nurse. Then there is every kind of fuss and unpleasantness. The doctor, who is not to be blamed, for he has to earn his bread like another man, orders you to eat and drink unpleasant things and cuts off all the more agreeable kinds of food. As for the nurse, when she comes—I have never myself endured the ministrations of a nurse, but I understand that she does things which every self-respecting man must passionately resent.

Besides, a serious illness often entails pain and almost always keen discomfort. At the same time it is not satisfactory to get one of the common disorders, influenza or any of the various forms of cold. Every one knows what they are and the sufferer does not get the attention and sympathy he hopes for. The thing to do is to look out beforehand in a dictionary of family medicine and select an unusual disease with a good name which has never been known to be fatal or even serious. I did not do this, but I happened by the greatest good fortune to catch something which no member of my family had ever had.

It was in many ways an entirely satisfactory disease. It was recognized at once that I ought to stay in bed until 12 or half-past 12 o'clock, which is a very agreeable thing to do in mid-winter. I had a good breakfast brought up

to me, for my symptoms, although they necessitated my being given things like oysters and snipe to eat, did not debar me from the pleasanter kinds of ordinary food. My eyes were not affected, so the newspapers were all brought up to me at once and I could read them at my ease. When I ventured to crawl downstairs I was carefully shielded from worries and annoyances of every kind.

The nature of my disease was such that, although quite comfortable while sitting in an easy-chair with cushions round me, I suffered acutely if I attempted to get up and walk about. It used to happen to me occasionally, as it does to most men, to want something which I had not got. I sometimes left my pipe in my bedroom, for instance, or the book I was reading in another room. Someone was always ready to go and get these things for me, without grudging the service. It will be readily understood that it does not do to order people about, even when you are ill. The plan of the Centurion in the Gospel narrative, who used to say simply, "Go," or "Do this," does not work well with the modern family. When I wanted anything I used to rise very slowly and with evident pain out of my chair, saying in a voice attenuated by suffering: "I have most unluckily left my pipe in my bedroom and I am going to get it." Then someone, wife, son, or daughter, went joyfully, bounding upstairs like an antelope, to fetch it for me. By assuming a right to this kind of service the invalid courts, if not absolute refusal, at least such grudging obedience as makes the pipe, for hours afterwards, taste bitterly.

There are other reasons which make it wise to contract an illness which is supposed to have some kind of pain connected with it. Every kind of pain except toothache, is recognized as a valid excuse for irritability, and there is nothing pleasanter than to be able to give way, without qualms of conscience, to a fit of bad temper. The delight of being snappy and disagreeable to people who are doing their best to please you is one of the keenest there is. They cannot, if you are visibly suffering, say anything in reply. And if you are ill there is never any need for self-reproach. My illness only lasted a week. For my own sake I am sorry that the time was not a little longer. But I think that during that week I made every one who came near me acutely uncomfortable.

Properly managed, there is no more agreeable form of winter holiday than a short illness. It may not be so enjoyable for the bachelor who lives in lodgings. A great deal, for him, will depend on the nature of his landlady. But a married man who cannot afford a trip to the Riviera will find a short sickness the very thing that is required to set him up for the trying season of spring. No family, unfortunately, would stand it twice in one year; and only the most affectionate would agree to its becoming an annual festival, like

Christmas. I myself have only ventured on it once in the last five years, but if all goes well I mean to try it again in January or February next year.

17. Sea-sickness

It was, I think, in Belfast, that I once saw a particularly good anti-spitting notice posted in the tram cars. "Spitting," so it ran, "is a disgusting habit. Anyone indulging in it renders himself liable to the loathing and contempt of his fellow-passengers." When I was a boy a very similar view was taken of sea-sickness. The victim of the wretched malady was regarded with loathing by those of his fellow-passengers who were inclined to be sick themselves and with contempt by the few who felt perfectly well. That was while the party was at sea. On shore this kind of sickness was always a matter of gruesome joking. Neither at sea nor on shore was there any sympathy for the sufferer. I notice now that a great change has come in the public view of this disease. We still jest about it; but no longer with the old brutal callousness. A note of tenderness has crept into our allusions to feeding the fishes. We no longer insult the sufferer in the hour of his extreme helplessness. We offer him brandy, apples, lemons, and other feeble palliatives. We wrap his legs up warmly in rugs and assure him, often with small regard to the truth, that the water will soon be calmer. We no longer frown upon prize-fighting as our fathers did. But we are in reality a tenderer-hearted generation than those later Victorians who turned away their eyes from bruised boxers but mocked the sea-sick.

We are certainly right in considering sea-sickness as one of the greater miseries of life. Men seldom die of it, but they suffer at least as acutely as they do from influenza or toothache. An American writer whose book I read lately, says that there are two stages of sea-sickness. During the first the victim is afraid that he is going to die. Later on he is even more afraid that he is not going to die. I have never myself reached even the first stage; but I have, at times, been as bad as my worst enemy could wish me to be. I have again and again endorsed the considered verdict of an old fisherman, a friend of my boyhood. I used to go out with him in the early mornings when he lifted his lobster-pots. It may be that the sea is particularly trying before breakfast. I am sure that you get the full benefit of whatever roll there is when lifting lobster-pots. The result of those expeditions was the same for me every morning. At the third or fourth lobster-pot I collapsed hopelessly. My old friend used to look sadly at me. "It's a sore disease, Master James," he used to say. "Surely it's a sore disease."

It is also a singularly freakish disease. We escape unexpectedly under the most trying circumstances. We go on escaping for months at a time. Gales

rage; huge swells set steamers rolling their sides under water. All previous experience teaches us what we have to expect, but we suffer not the smallest inconvenience. We eat large meals with relish. We take a pleasure in balancing ourselves first on one leg and then on the other. We accommodate ourselves to the outrageous motion of the ship as easily as if we were swinging cabin lamps or some other piece of stomachless mechanism. I remember very well one proud occasion on which this happened to me, on which my pleasure was greatly increased by the contrast between my lot and that of a fellow-traveller. He was a boy of about seventeen years of age and he was a professional sailor. He told me that he had just returned to England from a voyage round the world. He had rolled eastwards in a large sailing ship round the Cape of Good Hope. He had pitched for weeks among the mountainous billows south of the Horn. He had run through the Roaring Forties, whatever they are. There was no form of the sea's malice to which he was not thoroughly inured. But our channel passage finished him, though it only lasted an hour and three-quarters. For the first quarter of an hour he swaggered while I sat still, shivering, and feared the worst. For the next half hour he sat still while I ventured to look about me. For the last hour I swaggered—this was in the days before the new tenderness was known—while he wallowed in misery. Such are the incalculably impish tricks which this disease plays on us.

I do not know why it should be so, but immunity from sea-sickness and early rising in the mornings incline men to boastful arrogance. Archbishop Whately used to say that he had only got up early once in his life. He was so proud of himself all the morning that, being a good and Christian man who valued the virtue of humility, he never got up early again. Whenever he was tempted to see a sunrise he remembered the danger and the sinfulness of pride. Only a man of exceptional virtue can get up every morning at five without becoming arrogant. Only a saint can suffer the extreme good fortune of total immunity from sea-sickness without rapid deterioration of character. There are many of us who brave unhurt the effects of influenza or go through a whole winter without catching a cold. Yet we feel no sense of superiority to our fellows on that account. But the temptation to boast when we escape sea-sickness is almost irresistible. There are people—I have known one or two—who remain humble though qualmless. I am not one of them. I disguise my exultation, successfully I hope, but in my heart I exult when others succumb and I escape. This is one of the compensations of the sea-sick. The extraordinary humiliation which accompanies their sufferings is very good for their moral characters.

There is, I think, another consideration which ought to console those of us who suffer. I have not actually proved this, nor have I ever heard it

asserted by a doctor or other scientific man, but I notice that the few people who have all their lives been perfectly safe from sea-sickness are peculiarly liable to catch other diseases. If they go within a mile of a case of influenza they are stricken at once. They get things like whooping-cough and chicken-pox three or four times over. Mosquitoes, which merely irritate most of us, poison them, and they swell grotesquely after being bitten. It is better, of course, a far happier destiny, to get influenza annually than to be sea-sick every time you cross the channel; but it is some comfort to feel that the ruffian who smokes his pipe while we are groaning will, next January or February, have a temperature of 104 degrees and be ministered to by a hospital nurse—a thing which will humiliate him almost as much as the sea-sickness did those at whom he scoffed.

There are several widely advertised remedies for sea-sickness. I cannot say anything about them with confidence. I tried one once, but the result of the experiment was indecisive. There were two of us on a small yacht. The first day of our cruise we were both sea-sick. The next day, putting into port for the purpose, I bought a sea-sickness remedy. The man who sold it to me said that it would partially paralyse my stomach. This seemed just what was wanted; but we did not wish to run any risks. The thing might conceivably paralyse more than our stomachs, and it would be awkward, indeed dangerous, if the whole crew of the boat were reduced to helplessness at once. We decided wisely, I think, that one of us should take the remedy and the other live, drugless, on ordinary food. I was the one who took the remedy. The next day was as rough as the first, but neither of us was the least uncomfortable, nor, I must say, did the partial paralysis of my stomach, if it took place, affect me in any way that I could detect. We were therefore unable to form any opinion of the value of that remedy. I am bound, however, to record the fact that another friend of mine had a singular experience with one of these remedies. He followed the directions of the manufacturers with scrupulous care, taking one dose immediately before embarking and another at the exact moment at which the steamer was advertised to sail. Owing to the extreme severity of the weather, the steamer did not sail at all and my friend was obliged to stay on shore. He was violently sick all the afternoon. Different inferences can, no doubt, be drawn from this story. My own opinion is that the remedy was a particularly good one. It was evidently calculated to counteract the effects of severe tossing, to keep the stomach, so to speak, in a condition of calm and equilibrium. When there was no tossing to counteract, it seemed to have rolled the man's inside the other way and produced the effect which would have followed a voyage without a remedy. It was like applying a force to a pendulum. If the

pendulum is swinging your hand brings it to rest. If the pendulum happens to be at rest your push starts it.

I have often wished to see a convinced and skilful Christian Scientist in conflict with an attack of sea-sickness. There is no doubt that the disease is more susceptible than most others to treatment by suggestion. I have repeatedly noticed that the man responsible for the safety of the ship is never sea-sick. I myself recover at once if there is the least danger of any kind of disaster in a boat which I am helping to work. If I am in command and have an unskilful crew under me I never succumb to sea-sickness. This looks as if a proper course of readings from the works of Mrs. Eddy applied at the proper moment, say when the traveller first begins to yawn, might stave off the attack. No one—at least no one who understands what is happening—is sick in a boat which misses stays with a reef of rocks under her lee. You cannot, at such times, afford to be sick, especially if you are in any way responsible for the safety of the ship. It seems to me that a Christian Scientist ought to be able to arrive at the same mental condition without the stimulus of a risk. But I have never seen the experiment tried. Only on one occasion have I heard of spiritual power being invoked against sea-sickness, and then the spiritual power refused to accept the challenge. An Irish Chief Secretary, with a strong sense of duty, was doing his duty by inspecting the west coast of Ireland in a small steamer. He was extremely sea-sick. At one port he met and conversed with a friendly priest. “I have heard,” he said, with heavy jocosity, “that the power of the Church is unlimited in the west of Ireland. Can’t you arrange that the sea shall not be quite so rough tomorrow?” “Sir,” said the priest, “the power of the Church extends to high-water mark. Beyond that it’s Britannia rules the waves.” The answer was a good one. Britons have been boasting for a century and a half or thereabouts that they rule the waves. They have no right to expect other people to come to their help when their subjects rise in rebellion and get the better of them.

18. Howlers

About Christmas-time every year we are delighted by the publication in our newspapers of lists of the “howlers” made by school-children. They come appropriately, like holly and frost, for the season is devoted to examinations in school and cheerfulness at home. The paragraphs are a creditable attempt to combine the two by extracting laughter from the torture chambers. Even the victims, the rack-stretched subjects of the examiner’s art, are amused, for they know just as well as the rest of us that the howlers are not theirs but the inventions of teachers who take this way of showing the world that the life of the pedagogue is not so dull as it is supposed to be. It is impossible, for instance, to believe that any boy credited a dying Oliver Cromwell with the lament, “If I had served my God as I have served my King He would not have deserted me in my old age.” This, and all the other brilliant blunders at which we titter, are the work of mature minds. The mistakes actually made, being those of stupid children, since the clever ones get the things right, are almost certain to be dull.

But the fact that a whole fresh source of merriment is tapped by those who know how to give the necessary twist in the mistakes of school-children, suggests that something of the same sort might be done, to the great advantage of those who like laughing, by exploiting the blunders of older people.

Why should not someone who knows the clergy well—an archdeacon perhaps—contribute now and then to the Press a list of clerical howlers? Sermons are full of such things. I have heard a preacher assure a congregation three times in the course of a single sermon that *châris* was the Greek word used by St. Paul in the 12th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which our Authorized Version translates by “charity.” That was a simple and quite unamusing blunder, and no one got any good of it. Nine-tenths of the congregation did not know that it was a mistake and the other tenth was merely a little irritated. But a humorist who attends church regularly, if there is such a person, ought to be able to work up that, or something like it, into matter for laughter. The schoolboy who made a mistake about Cardinal Wolsey’s speech probably attributed it to Walpole, Pitt, or the Duke of Wellington, and was not in the least funny. It was his master who hit on the idea of putting the words into the mouth of Oliver Cromwell, and thereby made an excellent joke. What we want is someone capable of doing the same sort of thing for our clergy.

And for our doctors. Doctors make mistakes just as other people do—dull mistakes. There is no fun in hearing of a man who diagnosed appendicitis when the patient had caught measles. But there is laughter in the story of the howler not made but attributed to the doctor who prescribed — But that story cannot be printed. I dare say that is the reason why the doctors escape. The amusing blunders which might be fathered on them are never suitable for publication.

Authors, on the other hand, are an inviting prey, and the very best of them are guilty of howlers. Scott made the sun set over the sea on the east coast of Scotland, and the thing was not simply a slip of the pen over a word or two which might have been represented afterwards as a printers' error. He wrote a long and beautiful description of that sunset, full of picturesque detail, just the sort of detail which shows that the author has really observed the thing he sits down to describe. There ought to be a good joke, a joke provocative of open laughter, to be made out of that sun which set mistily in the east. I am perfectly certain that Sir Walter himself, if he hears it in the Elysian Fields, will laugh first and loudest.

How is it that the English, credited by every one who ever wrote about them with being a nation of sailors, come to grief as often as they do when they write about the sea? Allan Cunningham wrote what is perhaps the best sea-song in the language and made a howler in the first stanza which leaves the reader gasping:

A wet sheet and a flowing sea.
A wind that follows fast. . . .

I strongly suspect that he meant a sail by his wet "sheet." But luck served him there. The sheet, the real main sheet of a cutter, would be wet if the boat were running before a following sea. It would hang slack from the boom, touch the tops of the waves, and then tauten, dripping. But this undeserved good luck did not hold to the end of the stanza:

Away the good ship flies and leaves
Old England on the lee.

I admit that a rhyme for "free" was necessary; but surely another could have been found. "Old England, dear to me" would have been weak perhaps. "Our own beloved cuntry" would have been feebler still. "Old England, home and she" is admirable in sentiment but unfortunately ungrammatical. But would not any of these have been better than saying in a sea-song that a place which was unmistakably dead to windward was left on the lee? The

captain of that good ship was a better sailor than the poet. If Old England had been on his lee he would not have run down on her in that fashion. I should imagine him clawing off for a while till the weather moderated.

Did not Allan Cunningham know? Of course he did, just as well as Scott knew that the sun does not set in the east, or as Tennyson knew that a ship drops and does not pick up her pilot when she crosses the bar:

And I shall see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

If there was a pilot in that “bark” of his he saw him face to face long before that, indeed ceased to see him either face to face or any other way when the moment came for voyaging beyond the bounds of “time and space.” But Tennyson did not care about pedantic accuracy any more than Scott did, or Cunningham. He had a picturesque idea and a convenient rhyme. If they did not correspond to prosaic facts, then so much the worse for the facts. Why should the habits of pilots and such-like people be allowed to interfere with the sacred duty of affording poetical consolation to the thousands of sorrowing souls who cannot quite believe the Christian creed? If Tennyson had allowed his imagination to be fettered by the actual facts of a pilot’s work, his poem would not have been set to music and sung for a whole generation at memorial services. That is surely justification enough for any blunder.

I find it harder to forgive the people who blunder because they know no better. What are we to think of the novelists who believe that spring tides are in some way connected with March or April and do not come in summer or autumn? Scott made no mistake there. He knew that a spring tide, though not a very high one, occurs in July, the month of Sir Arthur Wardour’s walk along the shores towards Knochwinnock; but many a writer would have offered an apology for the behaviour of the sea that night. “Although it was July and the season of spring tides was long past, yet . . .” Or, “Had it been earlier in the year when spring tides were to be expected Sir Arthur’s journey would have been even more perilous . . .” Or Sir Arthur would have reassured his timid daughter a little testily, “My dear girl, this is July, not March. There is not the slightest risk of a spring tide at this time of year.” Yet one would suppose that our novelists, who no doubt spend their holidays at the seaside just as other people do, might have discovered that the highest spring tides of the year occur in September.

Another snare for the feet of the unwary is walked into by men who have made up the subject of tides before writing about them. They know that a spring tide rises further than an ordinary tide, and they have picked up the

information that a neap tide is all that a spring tide is not. What is more natural than to suppose that as a spring tide flows farthest a neap tide ebbs most? I certainly remember one, I think I remember more than one, delightful description of stretches of “naked” beach, and “jagged weedy rocks” left uncovered, “only by neap tides.”

I came across a hero once who sat at the tiller of a small yacht with a pipe in his mouth and “the smoke drifted gently to windward.” It was a calm evening; but even so, would the smoke have done it? Would any yachtsman in his senses slack away the toppinglift just before letting go the throat and peak halyards in order to lower a mainsail? I made that blunder myself, which makes me feel kindly towards those who perpetrate howlers. I have lowered mainsails hundreds of times, perhaps thousands of times, and never once did I begin by slacking away the toppinglift. If I had, either I or someone else would have been hit hard on the head by the boom. Yet when I came to write about the thing I made a howler that would have disgraced a bank-holiday clerk out for his first sail.

Perhaps the same malignant spirit which led me astray is responsible for the sporting errors of our story-tellers. The men of a country-house party do not shoot pheasants in June. Nor do they go out fox-hunting at any time of year with packs of beagles. Even a lady novelist from Kensington or Chelsea, or any other urban or suburban resort, must and does know these things. If she does not she ought to be cautious. It is really quite easy to avoid blunders by the simple method of not committing oneself to details. Consider the wisdom of the male novelist faced with the necessity of describing his heroine’s best dress? Is he fool enough to say that it is made of *crêpe de Chine* or madapollam? Not he. He knows that he would be caught by half his readers, by all who do not skip the descriptions of clothes, if he made an error on such a point. He gets out of his difficulty quite easily by saying “She was wearing a frock of some clinging black,” or perhaps “of some shimmering blue material, which reminded Adolphus [the hero] of . . .” How much wiser the sporting writer would have been if she had sent her gentlemen out to shoot “some flying creatures” instead of committing herself to pheasants. No one could have cavilled then. It might have been blackbirds or bats. Her mistake lay in supposing that she knew—or perhaps she really did know—the season at which pheasants are shot. That made her careless and the howler crept in.

I suppose that more blunders are made over titles than anything else. The sea, after all, only comes into a few novels, perhaps ten per cent of all that are written. Sport finds a place in another ten per cent. But every novel must contain people of title. Otherwise it would have no chance of popularity. And here the novelist may very well find it impossible to evade his

difficulty. How does a young man begin a letter to an aunt who happens to be a duchess? Very few people know that. And yet a story may demand the reproduction, verbatim, of such a letter. "Darling auntie" seems too familiar, and besides robs the reader of the thrill of feeling that the lady addressed really is a duchess. "Your Grace" on the other hand, is too stiff, unless the letter is meant to be quarrelsome. What happens to Miss Gwendolen Smith's name when she marries the wicked baronet? Many writers of high merit incline to the opinion that she becomes Lady Gwendolen Brown. And it certainly seems a pity to have to suppress a really fine name like Gwendolen throughout the last half of the book by calling her simply "Lady Brown." It is just as bad to call her simply by her Christian name without a prefix of any kind, for then a valuable title runs to waste. I have known writers who compromised by calling her "Lady Hercules Brown" (the baronet's Christian name is Hercules), or in moments of tense feeling, "Lady Hercules." Does a hero who happens to be, as many heroes are, the younger son of an earl put "The Hon."—the Honourable Eustace Fitzwarren—on his visiting cards? And if not why should the heroine put it on the envelope of the letter she writes to him? There is no sense in these things, and I feel convinced that novelists are right in refusing to be bound by a set of purely arbitrary rules. It is the public and not the Heralds College that we have to think of, and if the public likes to promote Miss Smith to the rank of Lady Gwendolen why should it not be gratified even if she has done no more than get herself divorced from a knight?

That, after all, is the excuse—more, it is the justification—of all blunders. The public, for the sake of which all writing is done, prefers things which sound well to things which are merely right. Scott knew that and made his sun set in the east. Cunningham knew it and gave us a good rollicking rhyme—"Old England on the lee"—though he was perfectly well aware that England in his poem lay to windward. Spring tides ought to be as inseparably connected with April as showers are, and literature would be a poorer thing than it is if they were allowed to appear out of season in September. It is far more convincing to say that a house party shot pheasants than to say that it shot crows, even in June. And titles are nothing but ornaments. Why on earth should we not stick them on wherever they look and sound well? Besides, we are all good democrats now. We very properly refuse to admit that our beloved Gwendolen can never become Lady Gwendolen unless the Prime Minister makes her father an earl, and that is generally impossible, for in nine cases out of ten the old gentleman was dead before the story began.

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SPANISH GOLD

THE SEARCH PARTY

THE BAD TIMES

LALAGE'S LOVERS

GOSSAMER

THE ISLAND MYSTERY

UP, THE REBELS!

INISHEENY

THE LOST LAWYER

THE ADVENTURES OF DR.

WHITTY

THE GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Transcriber's Notes

A small number of changes to spelling and punctuation have been made silently to achieve consistency.

[The end of *Spillikins, A Book of Essays* by James Owen Hannay (as George A. Birmingham)]