ETHICS OF CITIZENSHIP

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ETHICS OF CITIZENSHIP

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PREFACE

THE object of the following pages is to connect some leading aspects of democratic citizenship with ethical facts and beliefs. In *The Equality of Men* justification is sought for the bestowal upon the citizen of civil and political rights, as well as for the increased attention given of recent years to questions relating to the distribution of wealth; and this justification is found, not in the untenable doctrine that men are equal, but in the fact, recognised alike in moral and in religious experience, that the humblest member of the community possesses a spiritual worth which effectually parts the man from the chattel and the animal.

The same idea is applied in *Fraternity* to a consideration of the nature of social ties. Powerful as are the forces which make for individualism, and even (if some writers are to be believed) for the disintegration of Society, these, it is contended, find a final limit in that mutual respect and sympathy, which arise between man and man, as

soon as each begins to recognise in his neighbour that principle of moral life which he feels bound to acknowledge and prize as his own highest endowment.

It is on Equality and Fraternity, as thus interpreted, that democratic citizenship is, in these pages, held to rest; and it is to realise these fundamental ideas that it is justified in becoming practical. It does this in two ways: it claims Rights, and it performs Duties. These aspects are respectively dealt with in "*The Rights of Man*" and in *Citizenship*. The first of these is mainly critical. It examines the claims which have at various times been urged in the name of "rights," in order to emphasise the distinction between the so-called "rights" that are simply strong inclinations, and the genuine rights that admit of proof. This is followed by *Citizenship*, which is meant, firstly, to expose the inadequacy and emptiness of that phase of Democracy which dwells exclusively upon its rights; and, secondly, to indicate in outline the value of the various modes of civic life, through which men become citizens, not merely in name and in form, but in reality.

No attempt is made to discuss in detail the manifold ways in which a complete and satisfying citizenship may be realised. But two aspects seem to demand special attention. The one concerns the citizen's attitude to

the Majority, through which a democracy expresses its will; and the other his relation to Political Party, as the recognised instrument by which convictions find effective enactment. These subjects are discussed in *The Rule of the Majority in Politics*, and in *Party and Political Consistency*. The aim of both sections is the same; it is to show that a reasonable presumption in favour of the Majority, as the ultimate court of practical appeal, and an acceptance of Party as a necessary instrument of action, are alike justifiable only in so far as the individual asserts a self-reliant independence of conviction and judgment.

This leads to an exposition in *Elements of Political Consistency* of the view that a sound practical judgment lies at the root of all true consistency; and to an analysis of the conditions which combine to make the judgment sound.

Democracy and Character, which follows, is an attempt to estimate the influences which a democratic form of society, especially when it is commercial and industrial, tends to exercise upon moral character. It is not denied that there are reasons for misgiving and apprehension; but, as against these, grounds for confidence are sought, firstly, in the fact that there is already much in democratic development to strengthen the belief in the

worth and possibilities of men; and, secondly, in the hope that the spirit of Democracy, rightly understood, will find an unfailing ally in Religion.

To this is added the concluding section on *Luxury*, in the conviction, suggested by the previous section, that the most serious moral problem which awaits democratic society is to find securities, not so much against lawlessness and licence, as against that "virtuous materialism" which follows so naturally in the train of commercial and industrial prosperity.

LIVERPOOL, 1894.

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I

THE EQUALITY OF MEN

The idea of Equality, strictly understood, is inapplicable to human beings. Yet, when applied to men, it embodies the fundamental truth that a man has a spiritual and moral Worth that parts him from an animal or a chattel. This Worth commands Respect; and Respect for men, when felt by moral beings, finds expression in action. Thus (1) *it dictates equality of Civil Rights; and also* (2) *equality of Political Rights: why ought men to have votes?* (3) *Does it also demand equality of Wealth? It seems reasonable to insist that, in any society that is not a failure, every citizen should have within his reach that modicum of competency without which a good life is fatally obstructed, and the value of civil and political rights destroyed: herein lies a justification of movements for a greater equalisation of ways and means. But once this modicum of competency is ensured, there are reasons why the problem of equalisation of Wealth becomes of secondary importance. Independence grounded on a true Equality is not disturbed by the inevitable existence of many forms of inequality.*

It seems almost as hard a task to expunge the idea of Equality from mathematics as to find it realised, or realisable, among men. Apt enough to express the relations between lines, triangles, ratios, it is not therefore adequate to compass the relations between men. For men are not units, lines, or ratios. They are neither so simple nor so comparable. They are highly complex organic beings, no two of them, by the very conditions of finite existence, operated upon by just the same influences, or shaped by just the same history. Are they not, by law of social growth, differentiated endlessly, even to eccentricity,

and diversified throughout all the infinite detail of natural proclivity and social function? Supplementary to each other we find them—there is reason enough for that; but by what cunning transformation can we make them equal? Least of all is the equalitarian suggestion tenable when it takes the even more dogmatic form—found in writers diverse as Paine and Mazzini, as well as in popular views—which describes men as "equal in the eye of God."[1] This is but the apotheosis of fallacy. Equal perhaps men may sometimes seem *to us*—to us with our superficial, purblind scrutiny and imperfect data for judgment. But if, even to us, inequalities beyond enumeration emerge, what, we may wonder, would be the state of things disclosed to a Being who reads the heart! It is a commonplace of science that no two simple leaves of the forest are undistinguishably alike; how then, we may well conjecture, would it stand as between man and man, when all the diversities of native capacity and force, of physical, moral, intellectual attainment, of experience, influence, aspiration, not to add of entire mental and bodily history, were laid bare before Omniscience? If this were the era of Scholasticism one might perhaps start the question, whether it be within the compass of the Divine Power to make men equal. But if we decline to raise the question, it need be from no misgivings as to the reality of Omnipotence, but only from the conviction that it can hardly be an attribute of Omnipotence to try to misapply categories of thought.

There is, in truth, no fallacy more dangerous, because there is none more inviting, than that which brings what is complex and obscure under what is simple and familiar. And into this fallacy our grandfathers certainly fell, when, in vehement reaction against inequalities which had come to seem intolerable, they could not rest satisfied with anything short of the affirmation of the "equality of men." It was more than fallacy. It was bad policy. It is a maxim in controversy that the best weapons are not the most sweeping denials, which do indeed but offer a needlessly large target for rejoinder. But the revolutionary

[1] Cf. Mazzini, "Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe," Section I, in *Life and Writings*, Vol. VI.

writers of a hundred years ago did not observe this. Grant that, in revolt against political and social and economic inequalities, they were right; it was not therefore necessary to invoke anything so large as equality *of men*. It would have been enough to make out a case for equality before the Law; or for equality in vote and in eligibility to office; and perhaps for some effectual abatement of inequalities of social status, and of fortunes. But they did not think so. In an evil hour for their cause, they took up a position which they thought to be strong because it was extensive, and even by public declaration proclaimed "equality of men."

They paid the inevitable penalty. It quickly appeared that, in their zeal to be besiegers, they had opened lines so wide that they had themselves in their turn become the besieged. Thinkers so diverse as Burke[1] and Bentham[2] assailed them from opposite sides, with all the weapons of argument and derision: Coleridge[3] confuted them: Carlyle, with bitter humour, satirised them.[4] If we say that, in the world of theory at any rate, they have fallen before this onset of the giants, it is not to their discredit. Controversialists can do much. But the best of them can no more prove men to be equal than they can show that spirits are triangular.

And yet, when a formula has long passed current, it is a mistake to have done with it, merely because, logically speaking, its brains are out. It is wiser to take just the opposite course and to see in its defiance of the worst that logic can do, a proof that, though not true, there is truth at the bottom of it. It is so here. This dogma of the equality of men persists, and will in all probability continue to persist, because to so many minds it has come to express truths, and facts, of the first importance.

[1] *Works*, Vol. II., pp. 310 and 322, "Reflections on the Revolution." "Those who attempt to level never equalise." Cf. also Vol. III., p. 86, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." Bohn's Standard Library.

[2] *Theory of Legislation*, p. 99, Trübner & Co., 1876. Cf. also "Anarchical Fallacies. Examination of the Declaration of Rights," Article I, *Works*, Part VIII., Edinburgh, 1839.

[3] *The Friend*, Section I, Essay IV.

[4] Cf. *Shooting Niagara: and After?* Section 2.

What then are these?

One of them—in a sense the root of all the rest—is the truth that all men have worth, worth that effectually parts the man from the chattel, and even from the highest animal.

It is this thought, presumably, that arises in the religious mind when it is (too unguardedly) said that men are equal in the sight of God: and it has expressed itself in more forms than one. When aggressive and levelling, it prompts Andrew Melville, in the spirit of many another of our Reforming, and Puritan, and Covenanting ancestors, to remind King James that he is "God's silly vassal."[1] When sympathetic and glowing, it finds its vent in the words in which Burns ennobled his friend Henderson, as "a gentleman who held the patent for his honours immediately from Almighty God."[2] And in those still loftier regions where Christian philanthropy and Christian theology join hands, does it not carry the message that the life even of the day-drudge has, in the eye of God, a worth never adequately measured, and too often through false fancied superiority ignored, by human standards? It is the thought of Matthew Arnold's "Nameless Epitaph":—

> "Ask not my name, O friend!
> That Being only, which hath known each man
> From the beginning, can
> Remember each unto the end."

And it is but the simple truth to say that, thus interpreted, the conviction that all men alike have worth has been the source of strength and of consolation to millions.

And the moral consciousness bears witness to the same truth. It is undeniably the fact that we attach a worth to man such as we concede to nothing else—not to the costliest chattel, not to the highest animal. Why this difference, this gulf which even Evolution cannot bridge? Is it not that we discern in man a principle of moral

[1] Mr. James Melvill's *Diary*, p. 370. "Yet Mr. Andrew bore him down, and uttered the commission as from the Almighty God, calling the King but 'God's silly vassal.'"

[2] Title of the Elegy *On Captain Matthew Henderson.*

and spiritual life, which enjoys the unique distinction that, whereas nothing else in the world—gifts, or power, or wealth—can be pronounced absolutely good, this always can?[1] If only it be there, even though it be starved or obstructed, we recognise it as no less a thing than the ultimate condition and touchstone of worth. And yet it is just this which, though not of course in equal degree, is the commonest possession on earth. It is not like gifts, or wealth, or opportunity. These come and go capriciously—so capriciously that we do not feel it is in us to censure their absence. It is only the snob or the Pharisee who thinks men his inferiors, because they have unlettered minds, or scant houseroom, or shabby coats, or awkward manners. But with moral worth it is otherwise. *It* we expect, and *it* we even demand; and we think our demand rational; because it rests on the conviction, deep rooted in the moral consciousness, that for what is great in life, or in death, we need not look beyond the cottage or the garret. Even the bitterest opponents of Equality will admit this. Bentham did, when to his Greatest Happiness formula he felt constrained to add the significant addendum, "each to count for one." The Tory Scott[2] did, when he declared to Lockhart that he had heard higher sentiments from the lips of poor uneducated men and women than he had met with out of the pages of the Bible. Even the author of *Shooting Niagara* did, when he saw "the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death bed, though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath."[3] But it is not needful to multiply evidence. Few are likely to grudge us the concession that in the people of a country such as our own—perhaps even in the dregs—there is at any rate this root of moral worth.

If this be so, however, it is a fact of such magnitude that we may expect it to have results. And one is that the proper attitude towards men is one of Respect. This can be put to a simple test. Let any one take from the list of his acquaintances a man of worth, and select him

[1] Cf. Kant, *Metaphysic of Ethics*, Section I.
[2] Cf. context in Lockhart's *Life*, Vol. VI., p. 60.
[3] Carlyle, "Essay on Burns."

—where he need have no difficulty in finding him—from the humblest circles of life; and then let him ask himself why he respects him—respects him, it may well be, more than his cleverer, or richer, or more successful neighbour. It is not on the strength of what he has *done* in life. That may be insignificant indeed. Nor is it on the strength even of the moral qualities he may have been able to manifest to the world. Others more happily situated may have incomparably more to show. Ultimately it is because, under meagre and stunted opportunities,—and in some respects the more, just because the opportunities are meagre,—we discern a strong and struggling principle of moral life, which gives worth, forbids pity, resents patronage, rebukes fancied superiority, and compels respect. It has sometimes been thought a serious difficulty in Christian Ethics that, in bidding us *love* our neighbours, it seems to command what, with the best intentions on our part, is often hardly in our power.[1] But if we cannot count upon giving our "love," no more can we withhold our Respect. Grant that men have worth, and we can give them no less.

But if Worth is thus the parent of Respect, so in turn has Respect offspring of its own, and one of these is Courtesy: not the Courtesy of mere good manners—though these need not be despised—but the Courtesy which, however it may lack the polish of manners, can never in spirit be far from a man who meets his neighbour on the footing of Respect.

Courtesy, however, is but a younger, and a less noteworthy child, and long before she is born we must look for her elder sister, Justice. And Justice in her turn has many phases of growth. The first of these is Equality of Civil Rights. It is here in fact that we begin to pass from that spiritual equality, which means that all alike have worth, to the first instalment of material equality, which means that men, rich, poor, great, obscure, titled, lowly-born, are "equal in the eye of the Law." Now, it is not our concern at present to ask how it has come to pass, in the course of history, that men have thus been made equal before the Law. The history of a right is

[1] Cf. Kant, *Metaphysic of Ethics*, Section 1.

not its justification; and it may well be that at times civil rights have been wrung from tyranny only by threat or by force, such as would ill serve as justification. It is our business, therefore, to ask if such justification is forthcoming; and, as answer, to suggest that justification may perhaps be found in the essence of that moral Worth for which we have claimed at any rate Respect.

For moral Worth, in so far as we are conscious of it in ourselves, is no mere passive quality. It exists in closest union with a prompting, which in all developed moral beings becomes an imperative command, *to act*.[1] It is, in this sense, nothing if not practical. Whence it would seem to follow that the Respect we cannot withhold from our fellow men ought in consistency to take a practical form. We cannot doubt that in them too there resides this prompting, imperative in its urgency, to action. But once we truly recognise the presence of this, we cannot stop short at bare Respect. Believing that Worth lies close to this capacity for action, what more consistent with a sincere belief in Worth than that we should wish, and strive, that there be not denied to our neighbour, any more than to ourself, at any rate a minimum of opportunity to show the stuff that is in him? At the very least we cannot stifle the wish that his person may not be at the mercy of the first brutal ruffian, or his property or good name open to the malign inroads of thief or slanderer. But it is precisely in this rational wish, and in the effort to give effect to it, that Civil Rights seem to find their strongest justification. For a Civil Right is just a certain minimum of opportunity, in which at all events a man must be secured, if that principle of moral life that gives him Worth is to find its demanded expression in act. "This at all events you must have—this modicum of immunity from aggression, from plunder, from slander, and so forth. More you may acquire: that will depend on your fortunes in life. But this at all events must be yours—if your life is not to be wrecked on a perpetual and exasperating contradiction between the inward spirit of worth, that prompts to act, and the outward accidents of circumstance which deny you opportunity"—

[1] Cf. Kant, *Metaphysic of Ethics*, Section 2, *passim*.

it is some such tacit declaration that we make as often as we justify the concession of equal civil rights; or, as it has been briefly put, we justify Rights as the fundamental condition of the discharge of duties.[1]

In this country, however, we have not—as everyone knows—stopped short at equal civil rights. To them we have added the rights we call *political*. If distinctions drop off from men when they enter a court of justice, so do they when they enter a polling booth. As, in the one case, they are in the eye of the Law simply *persons* or *parties to a suit*, so in the eye of the Constitution they are, in the other, simply voters. Nor is it needful to do more than remark that, especially in countries where the suffrage is universal, and all office open to all, there is here a second and an immense instalment of equality. The interesting question is, whether we can justify the second instalment on the same grounds as the first?

In one sense we certainly cannot. Even in the most exemplary of democracies there can never be so clear a case for political equality as, even under aristocratic rule, there is for equality in the eye of the Law.

(1) In the first place it is much harder to prove that it is for the public good to give every man, or even a considerable number of men, a vote, than to prove the same point in respect of civil rights. Civil rights are elementary conditions of civilised life, whereas even civilised societies may exist long before political rights are heard of. Civil rights moreover may be possessed by every man (not criminal or insane) without endangering the Commonwealth; whereas the concession of political rights might, under easily conceivable circumstances, precipitate anarchy.

(2) In the second place, it is much harder to prove political rights to be a gain for the individual citizen himself. Absolutely necessary it never is for every man, or even for any man, to have a vote. Many a man lived a good enough life in days when votes were close monopolies. There are other ways of doing one's duty besides going to the poll; and ultra-democracy herself is far from lacking in the type of man that is profoundly convinced

[1] Mazzini, "The Duties of Man" ch. i., in *Life and Writings*, Vol. IV.

that the rank and file are in their right place when leading private lives; doing their work, rearing their families, amusing themselves as best they can; perhaps going to church, certainly *not* going to the poll. There is at least this to be said for such a view: Take away political rights, and you still leave a man much; take away his civil rights, and you degrade him at a stroke to the level of a chattel or a beast.

Yet, in another and a deeper sense, political equality follows from the same ultimate ideas that justify equality before the Law. It is good that men should claim, and it is just that they should get, the vote, because the right to vote can alone open to its possessor that sphere of public activity, which cannot be closed on him who is fit for it without contracting his life and stunting his development. We cannot respect men for the moral worth that is in them, and yet think it a final and satisfactory state of things that they should spend themselves wholly on interests that never go beyond the narrow range of private lives. But, if this be so, we come at once in sight of a conclusion. Never is it to be forgotten in any question of the extension of the franchise, that (outside religion, and perhaps not even outside it) there is no means to be named beside political rights, whereby the wider interests of life may be made a vitalising influence throughout the rank and file of democracy.

When these political rights are to be given is, of course, a problem for the statesman. It is for him to determine when his country is ripe for the experiment, as well as when his fellow countrymen are fit to use votes, if they get them. Our concern at present is not with the time for giving them, but with their justification when the time for giving them has come. And for that justification is there a better source to go to than to the fact that a vote, just like any civil right, is simply one more opportunity, one more instrument, whereby the potential moral worth of the man becomes the realised and practical worth of the enfranchised citizen?

This is at any rate a plea that will compare reasonably well with others, which one finds advanced for political equality.

"Give us votes or we will take them," may be an *argumentum ad hominem*: it is not a justification.

"Give us votes that we may depose incapacity," or "that we may demolish monopoly," are at best provisional and temporary justifications, which, unfortunately, lose their force just in proportion as the votes so claimed are used with effect.

"Give us votes in order that (as Bentham phrases it) we may make public functionaries uneasy,"[1] is a plea only to be conceded if we think that the detective policy of "minimising confidence and maximising control"[2] can ever be a hopeful plan for securing public service.

"Give us votes because we wish to manage our own affairs," is a natural aspiration; but, in a spirit all too narrow, it treats the franchise as if it were no more than an instrument for governing.

Is it not better at once to say, "Give us votes, not because we fail to value those opportunities in our private lives which are secured to us by our equality in the eye of the Law, but in order that we may make men of ourselves, in that larger scene that lies open to the life of the law-abiding citizen who is also the intelligent patriot"?

It will not be denied that these are considerable instalments of equality, so considerable that there are many who will rest well content with them. For many it is enough to watch over these rights, whether political or civil, to bring them to greater precision and perfection, and possibly at times to descant upon their value. And they are profoundly convinced that to grasp at more is the sure way to get less.

This may be so. At the same time it is well to realise the extent to which, in face of even the fullest instalments of civil and political equality, the inequalities of life persist, if indeed they do not actually sprout and flourish anew.

[1] "Make public functionaries uneasy. High-pressure engine, nothing is to be done without it." *Memoirs of Bentham*, by Bowring, ch. xxvi.

[2] Bentham, *Constitutional Code*, Bk. I., chs. viii. and ix.; *Works*, Part XVII.

Thus, our equal civil rights do not (as Burke reminds us) imply that we all have rights to equal things.[1] How could they, when nobleman and beggar, worker and idler, wise man and fool, all alike sit secure?

So with our political rights. Too manifestly, they cannot mean, even in ultra-democracy, that men are politically equal. In capacity, in energy, in influence, in achievement, in reputation men remain to the last degree unequal. And experience shows that even in a country saturated, as is the United States, with the spirit of equality, it needs but time to produce an unfailing crop of inequalities —inequalities of wealth, of social position, of political influence, of intellectual power.[2]

It may well be that these inequalities will persist for ever: it is not for us to say. Ours is the safer task, to try to discover in how far they seem to be in harmony with "the equality of men," as we have interpreted it.

Be it said at once, that equality does not mean levelling. Equality, rightly understood, so far from being hostile to the existence of superiorities, is itself never on firmer ground than when confronted with superiorities that are beyond a doubt.

This is especially the case when superiorities are moral. When a man stands face to face with his moral superior, his final thought ought not to be that of self-disparagement. Rather ought he to see, in the spectacle of worth made manifest in his superior, the reassuring reminder of worth implicit in all. And if he draw the sound inference, he will pass from the presence of superiority more than ever confirmed in his belief in equality—the equality that means that all men have moral worth. Does it not sound a platitude to say that worth made manifest in human nature is a proof of the worth of man? Where inequalities are inequalities of moral worth, it is mere suicide on the part of any believer in equality to refuse to recognise them, because, if he does, he makes it doubly hard to concede to him that modicum of worth which is his own sole claim

[1] Cf. context, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 332, "Reflections on the Revolution."

[2] Cf. Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, Part VI., ch. [illegible] edition.

to recognition at our hands. If some graceless upstart tells us he is "as good as Aristides any day," the right rejoinder is, "If Aristides is no better than that, what are we to think of you?"

The same holds good, though to a less degree, not only of intellectual gifts, but even of social advantages. Some men are happier in their homes, and more favoured in their friends, than are their neighbours. Why not? The less happy, the less favoured, are not injured thereby, unless it be a wrong to find that human ties are capable of more than our own experience alone could have ever taught us.

This is the only reasonable attitude to one large class of inequalities. The inequalities that express worth can be nothing other than the truest allies of the equality that rests on the reality of worth. And yet it is perhaps time to draw a distinction. For there are inequalities and inequalities; and it would be rash indeed to say that they can all be viewed in this same light.

Were we, for example, to take the inequality—to select the widest—of saint and sinner, and to compare it with the inequality of millionaire and hand-worker, there is certainly a difference. Spiritual riches have peculiarities. To take from the rich, in this case, in order to give to the poor, would be needless, because, the treasury being inexhaustible, it is not necessary to impoverish one man in order to enrich another.[1] And, in any case, the superiority of the saint is wholly for the benefit of the sinner, who would be but little profited by a massacre of the saints. With this world's riches it is otherwise. Of them there is no inexhaustible treasury. Of them it is at least possible for many men to have too much. Of them it is not beyond human device to substract something from the one in order to add to the other.

Hence we must not assume that the arguments just advanced in favour of inequalities, apply as a matter of

[1] Cf. Dante, *Purgatory*, Canto xv., 52-56. "But if the love of the highest sphere moved your desire upward, you would not have that fear [*i.e.*, fear of loss] at the heart; because the more there are by whom 'Ours' is said there, so much the more of good each possesses." (Butler's translation.)

course to inequalities of wealth; nor expect the agricultural labourer with 16s. or 18s. a week to look upon his neighbour's £10,000 a year with just the same eye as the sinner ought to turn on the treasury of the saint. As a matter of fact, we know that there is a certain number of persons who are ready to urge him to press by organisation, by agitation, by legislation, for at least some modification of these inequalities of ways and means, which at present disastrously part the rich and poor. And our question is, whether it be indeed the case that the principle of Equality can be said to justify a movement of this kind?

In answering this question, it seems important to bear in mind that, in the mere possession of civil and political rights, there lies no necessary guarantee for adequate subsistence. In giving a man security, however complete, we do not therefore give him anything to secure. We do not even guarantee him work whereby subsistence can be earned. And in giving him his vote we do not directly add one penny to his wages, or put one ounce of bread on his breakfast table. A "free and independent" elector *may* therefore be a poverty-stricken and even starving human being. Such things are certainly possible, because of course the adequacy or inadequacy of anyone's livelihood depends on causes that go far beyond the possession of mere rights, whether they be political or civil. And such things are, in times of industrial and commercial crisis, beyond gainsaying, painfully actual even in a country like our own.

When this is so, the condition of a country is profoundly unsatisfactory, for more reasons than one.

(1) In the first place, worth and grinding poverty are ill bed-fellows. All the heroic pertinacity of honest poverty does not alter the fact that, if it be a contradiction to admit worth and deny rights, it is a contradiction ten times intensified to admit worth, and then with the eye of indifference to look on at it tried, obstructed, it may be undermined, by a precarious and cruel struggle for bare subsistence.

(2) In the second place, rights, and especially political rights, become suspiciously like a mockery and a satire, if they are the possession of men to whom life is nothing

but an absorbing struggle for livelihood. There is an old sketch—it is one of Leech's best—in *Punch*. Two soldiers —Crimean veterans—gaunt, starved, ragged,—sit on a pile of shattered war material. "Well, Jack," says the first, "here's good news from home. We're to have a medal." "That's very kind," is the reply; "may be, one of these days, we'll have a coat to stick it on."

It is these considerations that give weight to all genuine movements—socialistic or other—for a greater equalisation of ways and means. If such movements be perverted into a scramble for creature comforts, that is not of their essence. Rightly regarded, they rest on something far higher than the fear of missing comfort. They rest on the fact that, in missing modest comfort, a man inevitably misses much of which modest comfort is the indispensable condition—personal independence, a decent home, a healthy life, an enjoyment in deed and in truth, not in speciosity and in sound, of the rights which the Law confers. And when there is really a risk of missing these, it is imperative that this problem of ways and means be firmly faced and deliberately solved. There is a point, no doubt, at which a man does well to think no more of livelihood, and to turn his mind and energy to higher things, and among these to his duties as a citizen. But until that point is reached, it is this very possibility of turning to higher things that gives the problem of livelihood a more piercing acuteness and a tenfold significance. It is a strange blindness which leads some Radical politicians to speak, or write, as if somehow the concession of civil and political rights were all that can reasonably, in the name of Equality at all events, be demanded. The presumption lies in precisely the opposite direction. Are men entitled to civil rights? Are men entitled to political rights? Does Equality imply these things? How much more then must men seem, in the name of this same Equality, entitled to at least that minimum of ways and means, without which these great gifts, these opportunities, these instruments, political and civil rights, become shadow and not substance—like the gun without the cartridge, like the medal pinned on rags?

This is not a plea for socialism, or co-operation, or trades-unionism, or indeed for any plan by which reformers have hoped to solve the economic problem. Nor is it an assertion that the state of our own country now is such as to justify the application of these remarks to it. That is quite another question, on which it is not our present task to say one word. The point is, that in all countries and at all times, it is just the concession of civil and political equality which makes it more than ever needful to ask the question, whether the rank and file of citizens have really within their reach at any rate this modicum of competency, in default of which the genuine life of citizenship must remain for ever beyond them? So much Equality demands, if it demands anything at all.

It is equally important to note that, in the interpretation put upon it here, Equality cannot be said to demand more.

If we could suppose a country in which ways and means were equally divided, it might possibly be a happier country than the one we know. This we do not discuss. Our point is that, even were it so, such a state of things would need to find its justification elsewhere than in the principle of Equality of men. Indeed it is just in that principle, rightly understood, that it would find its condemnation.

(1) In the first place, in interpreting Equality to mean that all men have worth, we must remember that, of all possessions, worth is one of the most *un*equal. A distribution according to worth would, therefore, though likely enough to be highly revolutionary, be anything but division into equal shares.

(2) It is, moreover, one of the peculiar characteristics of worth, that, to the man who realises what it truly is, a point is comparatively soon reached at which the problem of day and way begins to recede into the background. This holds even if, with the Benthamites,[1] we set before ourselves no higher aim than that of making our citizens happy. Would it not be rash in the extreme to say that a man's happiness increases in pro-

[1] Cf. Bentham, *Theory of Legislation*, Part I., ch. vi., "Pathological propositions upon which the good of Equality is founded."

portion to his property? Even in respect of happiness, a time comes when, in obedience to a "Law of Diminishing Returns," increased "doses" of property yield by no means proportionate crops of happiness.[1] A fresh £1000 a year may give an added joy to life even to a commercial Croesus; it will stir but a feeble pulse in comparison with what a hundredth part of the sum would quicken in his clerk.

What thus holds of Happiness holds with ten-fold force of the life that is founded, not on Happiness but on Worth. Worth denied a modest competency we have called a contradiction. Let us repeat that it is one of the bitterest contradictions in human experience. But it is needful to add that, if only competency be there, it is one of the last things to wish for, or expect of, a man of worth, that his thoughts and his efforts should turn exclusively to property. There are so many other things in life to turn to—things in comparison with which £5, or £50, or £1000 added to income are of second-rate importance.

This is not a flight of ethical imagination. It is nothing more than actual fact, as it may be found in any city at this moment. There are artisans with their 40s. a week who look on at the shopkeeper with his £500 a year; as he, in turn, at his customer with his £3000. They need, none of them, be without their worldly ambitions —why should they?—and to better themselves in ways and means is probably a part, and an important part, of their plan of life. Yet they may one and all tell us, with perfect sincerity, that they do not really envy their richer neighbours, because the least fortunate among them can fortify himself in the certain knowledge that, although, in the rough competitions of industry and business, he may miss affluence or even comfort, he need not therefore miss the things that are really best in life—not health and independence, not home life and friends, not a keen and active citizenship, not education and religion, not, if he cares to have them, an unstinted share in the things of the mind. In a democratic society, and in a democratic society precisely in proportion

[1] Cf. Sidgwick, *Elements of Politics*, p. 153.

as it is leavened through and through with a true Equality, it needs something worse than a small house and a weekly wage to rob a man of these.

It is considerations of this kind that ought perhaps to make us pause for reflection in the presence of some of those more sweeping plans of social and industrial reorganisation which are a feature of our time. Upon the merits, or demerits, of these it is not here needful to offer an opinion. No opinion is worth offering, where issue has not been joined on grounds of justice, of expediency, and of practicability. But it is not arrogant at least to suggest that, on this vast and difficult question, the consistent attitude of a believer in Equality rightly understood, is this: frankly to admit that we can hardly hear too much of redistribution of wealth, so long as it can be made out that Worth is, by remediable insufficiency, denied its sphere. That done, to urge that the pursuit of a greater equalisation would but doubtfully be worth the immense task of social and industrial reconstruction which it would certainly entail. Such an attitude would undeniably leave most of us face to face with many degrees of superiority in wealth and all that wealth can buy. But as regards these inequalities it would be just those of us who had drunk deepest of the spirit of that Equality which means Worth, who could, without bitterness, and indeed in unaffected contentment, echo the words of Burns:

> "The man of independent mind
> He looks and laughs at a' that."

II

FRATERNITY

The Fraternity of the French Revolution has not been realised. Instead, if satirists and theorists are to be believed, we have realised individual competition and social disintegration. Yet the spirit of Fraternity is alive. (1) *It survives in the strength and indissolubility of the ties of family life; and also* (2) *in the vitality of the ties of friendship, of civic association, and of practical civic and even cosmopolitan philanthropy. These ties are likely to endure, as resting* (1) *on the spiritual and moral nature and needs of man: Equality and Fraternity have a common root;* (2) *on the inevitable co-operation involved in Division of Labour;* (3) *on recognition of the fact that Society is not atomistic but organic. Fraternity thus rests upon fact and not on sentiment. Yet experience tells us that though our affections begin at home they need not end there. The relation between the private and the public affections.*

MODERN Democracy, at its great inauguration a hundred years ago, was loud in professions of universal Fraternity. With its theorists, and enactors of theory, the word was "man to man, the world o'er." Not even the largest nationality was wide enough to hold its ideas and its heart. It would be idle to pretend that these aspirations, so far as Democracy has in the interval gone, have been adequately realised. "Call ye that a Society," cries Carlyle, "where there is no longer any Social Idea extant; not so much as the idea of a common Home, but only of a common and overcrowded Lodging-house. Where each, isolated, regardless of his neighbour, turned against his neighbour, clutches what he can get and cries 'Mine!' and calls it Peace, because in the cut-purse and cut-throat

Scramble, no steel knives, but only a far cunninger sort, can be employed?"[1]

These are words of invective, and to be read as such. But, in discounting their emphasis, we must not miss the reality of the facts on which they rest. Who can say, even with fullest allowance for the animosities which are never likely to be eradicated in the most fraternal of societies, that the development of Democracy in the nineteenth century has ushered in a reign of Fraternity? Rather would it seem to have gone far to enthrone the disintegrating spirit of individual competition which is Fraternity's very negation.

This disintegrating spirit can point to more victories than one.

One is the steady and immense expansion of that element in Society, the commercial and industrial element, in which more and more the principle, venerated by economists as Free Competition, and derided by Carlyle as "Devil take the hindmost," has become the recognised law. To this we must add the transference of this individualistic principle, especially by "the Manchester School" of Radicals, from commerce and industry into the larger domain of politics. Not least there is the memorable attempt of Bentham and the Benthamites to found Democracy firmly and for ever on a theory of Self-interest. Let us not deceive ourselves about Benthamism. We readily might. "Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Number" sounds fraternal; and Benthamism as advocated by Bentham, as well as by J. S. Mill, is, in the end that it proposes, so magnificently fraternal that it must needs extend the area of benevolence even to the inclusion of "the whole sentient creation."[2] And how hard Mill struggled to include in his system Self-sacrifice[3]—"taking up the cross," as he once called it[4]—every student knows. Yet this does not alter the fact that, in Bentham consciously, and in Mill logically (fight against the conclusion as he may), the ultimate tie

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. III., ch. v.
[2] Cf. *Utilitarianism*, p. 17, 6th edition.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[4] Caroline Fox's *Journals and Letters*, Vol. I., p. 138.

between man and man remains none other than personal interest, personal happiness, personal pleasure. And this is not a gospel of fraternity, unless to that not very large class of persons in whom (to use Bentham's pleasant words about himself) "selfishness has taken the shape of benevolence."[1]

Nor is this all. Biological Science, turning its latest lights on politics, comes to make the case complete. In the name of Darwin it rebaptises old facts with new names. For competition read "Struggle for Existence"; for successful self-seeking, "Survival of the Fittest"; for failure, poverty, and death, "Extinction of the Unfit." The spirit of religious resignation itself descends to brood over the troubled waters of human life, and with Mr. Spencer we lift up our hands, and even in "the cut-purse and cut-throat scramble," discern "the decrees of a large, far-seeing benevolence."[2]

And the cynic is at our elbow. "Have you seen," we can fancy him to say, "some youth setting out in life with generous aspirations and love of all mankind? You have? These things are but the stirring of the blood;

> 'If nature put not forth her power,
> About the opening of the flower,
> Who is it that could live an hour?

Go and look what he is in twenty years. Where are his philanthropic sentiments now? Has he not had rude lessons that he had better keep his benevolent affections to himself? Has he not found that, instead of tormenting his soul about the happiness of the species, he has enough to do to fight for his own hand? Such things are a parable. Democracy is but such an individual writ large. It had its aspirations, its dreams of world-wide Fraternity. But it has had its experiences; and now what can it do but smile at the sentimentalities of those French Revolutionists (who after all turned Fraternity into the 'homicide philanthropy' of the guillotine), and bring up its

[1] "I am a selfish man, as selfish as any man can be. But in me, somehow or other, so it happens, selfishness has taken the shape of benevolence."—Bowring's *Memoirs*, last page.

[2] *The Man versus The State*, p. 67.

children not on the Gospels, not even 'on the gospel of Jean Jacques,' but on Bentham and Ricardo, Cobden and Spencer?"

It is not cynics alone, or evolutionists alone, who come to similar conclusions. One powerful writer at any rate (and he doubtless speaks for many), whose utterances every reader must respect, is ready to tell us that in his judgment the individualistic drift of the century is all in the very teeth of Fraternity. "The whole tendency of modern civilisation," says Sir J. F. Stephen, "is to enable each man to stand alone and take care of his own interests, and the growth of liberty and equality will, as I have already shewn, intensify these feelings."[1] The type of society to which this forecast points is sufficiently definite—a society with abundance of vigorous individual life, and in consequence a good deal of fighting (within the limits of law and order); but a society where the relations between man and man, based on justice and possibly on respect, must take in the main the form of individual competition; a democratic society, no doubt—but one with Fraternity left out, if not denounced as cheap and nauseous sentiment.[2]

This forecast, however (despite all that may be said for it), is not to be accepted.

It is not that sentiment recoils from it, though Christian sentiment unquestionably does. At present we deal not with the *sentiment* of Fraternity but with the *fact*. For as a fact the spirit of Fraternity is anything but dead. It survives in distinct and indubitable forms.

(*a*) In the first place, it survives within the Family group.

We are much too ready to chime in with the stock saying that Society is individualistic, even to atomism. It certainly is not. It is the family, not the individual, that is still the social unit, and likely so to remain. Relations of lover and mistress, husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, are these competitive? Truth is that there is a point beyond which the tide of

[1] *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, p. 305, 2nd edition.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

individualism cannot flow. It stops, and the ebb sets in with resistless force. "You call yourselves individualistic?" "Yes." "You will then, I dare say, prefer your own interest to that, shall we say, of a Zulu or a Malay?" "Unhesitatingly, and why not?" "Why not? Shall we add, then, of the Irish?" "Yes, of the Irish, and of the British to boot. A man must look to himself." "Ah, I see you are consistent. And now one other step; there are your wife and children." "Stop there, I did not speak of them. It is not the same there." As, indeed, it is not.

Plato, in satirising the baleful spirit of Democracy, has in a celebrated passage told us how, once the evil leaven of the democratic spirit is in a society, it will not stop till it has dissolved the ties of filial respect, and set the son, in an upstart equality, against the father.[1] And we hear something to the same effect in our own day, even from those who are Democracy's friends. Do we not read of a "decline of the Family," a laxer marriage tie; a tendency to look to the State for what has come so long from the parent; a transference to the public authority of the gratitude and the trust, that hitherto have found their object in the home; and, with it all, a Family life inevitably attenuated and enfeebled?[2]

And yet, even if all this happened, it would leave us still, happily, far enough from an atomistic individualism. Napoleon is reputed once to have said that, if an empire were indeed made of dust, it would be pounded to dust by the economists. But it is not made of dust. It is made of families. "There remains something indescribably holy and serious in the conception of the household" —so says even our presager of Family decline. And he adds in words not too strong, even in one who ventures no prophecy that has not its grounds in fact: "Whatever else Science teaches us, it teaches us that the family . . . . is the one indestructible factor in human society. We may destroy its vantage ground of privilege and consideration, but, however debilitated, it will remain."[3]

It is not a large concession, but it is enough. For so

[1] *Republic*, Bk. VIII., p. 562.
[2] Pearson, *National Life and Character*, ch. v. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 254-5.

long as the Family stands, there are few facts more certain than that, within its close-knit circle, there exists the germ of a true fraternity, resting at first on blood, but cemented too by those common early memories, and old habitual associations, by those common joys, not least by those common sorrows, which even a rampant State Socialism, be it never so paternal, will find it hard to erase from the human heart.

(*b*) And we need not stop at the Family. There is another tie, sometimes even as strong, which naturally, all the world over, is its supplement, and sometimes its substitute—the tie of Friendship.

One must not say that the estranging and disintegrating spirit of individualistic competition will never invade Friendship. Friends have often enough become, and still oftener have tended to become, rivals—rivals in business, in love, in war, in letters, in public service; and oftener under the free career and competitive conditions of democratic society than at other times.[1] Yet Friendship still stands, and persists, as one of those realities of life which no one who professes to formulate facts can pretend to ignore.

But while Friendship stands—and who can foresee the time when it will fail?—it is a stronghold of Fraternity, not merely because the ties of Friendship are among the strongest we know, veritable "hooks of steel," but because too, it is the kindly spirit of friendship that, in all generous hearts, goes far to quicken and to warm the more distant relationships to neighbour, to acquaintance, to chance-met stranger. For it is only a contracted, suspicious, and jealous character that divides mankind harshly into friends and strangers. Least of all need such a spirit exist under Democracy. It is Democracy which, of all political forms, is the most fruitful of those modes of association which cement men, clubs, societies, guilds, religious and political parties. Founded for quite specific and, it may be, even narrow and matter-of-fact ends, the influence of these is not bounded by the aims of those who form, and organise, and enter them. Undesignedly they create relations of another kind. Not one member

[1] Cf. chap. viii.

of any one of them but, if he be not a churl in spirit, may at times become conscious that, even when working for commonplace ends, he has developed towards his fellow-workers ties which he has not to the outside world. So real are the fraternal instincts of men. Associated for some ordinary project, met round a table to discuss business, men find that they have gained and given confidence, esteem, sympathy, and good-will that last for a lifetime.[1]

The same law holds as we move to larger spheres. It is false to fact to represent these as a scene of unmitigated competition. Into the wider relationships we carry something of the narrower ties. From the sympathies of Family and Friendship we pass outwards to those of neighbourhood, or habitual association; and from them in turn to the ties that unite the citizens of a nation.[2] Stretch them to the widest limits of a great country, and yet the ties that bind will not snap into atomism. Why is it that men endow charities and hospitals, and give ungrudgingly time and energy to social work—gifts all bestowed on those who do not touch the givers except by the remotest claim? Why is it, when some calamity devastates a district, floods a mine, or sinks a ship, that relief pours in from the most distant cities? Or what is the explanation of the spirit of patriotism that runs through a country, and knits its citizens together when danger threatens it?

It is not even citizenship, however wide, that suffices. When this country made up its mind in 1834 to pay £20,000,000 to emancipate slaves in the colonies, this was practical Fraternity. Men gave their lives to that cause; as some perhaps now are ready enough to give them for the cause of savage races. And is it not a fact of ordinary observation that, when foreign nations come to blows, or when a civil war breaks out abroad, onlooking nations are apt to take fire, and to show their fraternity in ways so practical that politicians almost despair

[1] Cf. chap. viii.

[2] Cf. Burke, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 320, "Reflections on the Revolution." "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ, as it were) of public affections."

of holding them back? And how are we to interpret our missions (our religious, not our diplomatic missions)? Regard them how we may, they are an actual part of our religious system. They have from the first been part of the religion of Christendom. What can they mean but that men have included in the range, not only of religious sentiment, but of fraternal benevolence, even the most distant savages?

To facts like these one can point as proof that Society, if individualistic, is not atomistic. As matters stand, the individualistic tendencies, begotten of the pursuit of Liberty, are but one aspect of the picture. They must find their complement in the fraternal tendencies which, beginning in the "little platoon" in which we are born, may be traced thence outwards, even beyond the frontiers of nationality.

It is, however, not enough to point out that these fraternal tendencies exist. They might exist, and yet (as in truth many believe) be little likely in the future to stand against the strong, persistent, definite forces of individualism. It is needful therefore to ask if they have roots.

They certainly have.

(1) For Fraternity is no mere empirical fact. It is rooted in that necessary recognition of the moral worth of the individual man, which we have already seen to be the presupposition of a true and reasonable Equality.

Respect, we said, and nothing less is due to Worth, and in being due to Worth becomes the parent of Justice and Equality. Is it extravagant to think that it is, for the same reason, also the parent of Sympathy?

Let us ask an abrupt question: Why do we sympathise with a man, as we do not, cannot, sympathise with a machine? "An absurd question," replies some one, "of course it is because of our common humanity." And this is the answer, if we clearly realise what "our common humanity" means. We see, let us suppose, some one in trouble. We do not know who, or what, he is. Only we see that he is in bodily pain, or mental distress. And the instinct of sympathy in a moment asserts itself. Why

should it? It certainly would not assert itself were there as little in common between us and him, as there is in common between us and a cunning piece of mechanism that has got out of gear; or as little in common as between us and an animal, though we need not forget that thinkers and poets are quick to bespeak our sympathy for those whom Burns has called "our poor earth-born companions and fellow-mortals." Yet these sympathies for our humbler fellow-mortals, strong and lasting though they be, are weak and transient in comparison with those we experience towards men. And is not this the ultimate reason, that in the man, even though he be a poor waif or wastrel, we discern the quiverings of the same moral spirit of which we are conscious in ourselves—that moral spirit which is the ultimate basis of a reasonable Equality? Differences, be they deep as human life can draw them, do not, and cannot wholly, freeze up our sympathies; because they cannot obliterate the fact of moral identity —the cardinal fact that all men participate, at least in some feeble measure, in that moral spirit in virtue of which the whole world of humanity is kin. Therefore it is that the man is not alien to us as the machine is. He may be rich or poor, high-born or low-born, more worthy or less worthy. But these things do not cut us off from him. For the time, we are that poor man, that rich man, that noble, that beggar. As the phrase goes, we "identify ourselves with him." And what is this but a way of saying that we own the indissoluble tie that binds us?

So that, as would seem, our alternative is clear. If we repudiate Fraternity, or brush it aside as sentimentality, we must be prepared to repudiate much else—even the very basis of Equality, and the rights Equality brings in its train. If we cannot give up Equality, and the fruits of Equality, then we must go on to Fraternity. One fails to see how it is possible to yield men the Respect that is due to Worth, without to Respect adding Sympathy—not the Sympathy that floats in the winds and flaws of natural feeling, but that which has its roots in moral fact. For Sympathy, thus understood, is not a decorative emotion which we may or may not feel, according as we are highly-strung or otherwise. It is that attitude to our

neighbour which asserts itself as soon as one man discerns in another that common moral spirit which is, and ever more becomes, the most real thing in man.

"With other eyes, too, could I now look upon my fellow-man: with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the royal mantle or the beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave. O, my Brother, my Brother, why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thy eyes!"[1]

These are words that touch an even deeper note. For they are meant to tell us that when a man, it may be after many a doubt, has come to be possessed by a conviction of the reality and the indestructibility of the relation of Man to God, he must needs look upon his fellow-men with a love and a pity, such as are due only to beings in whom the divine spirit, through which all are one, is for ever doomed to the sorrowful, heroic struggles of our strangely obstructed, partially unintelligible, life on earth.

(2) Fraternity, then, stands on spiritual fact. It stands also on fact of a different order.

It is one of the lessons of economic analysis that, however intensely competitive the relations of man to man may become, this very competition, with all its exigencies of Production and Exchange, is calculated, if anything is, to convince man of his dependence on man. Even if men should come to look on one another with the dull uninterested eye of mere workers in one vast national factory, they could not get rid of the fact of their mutual indebtedness; and one might well preach a sermon on Industrial and Commercial Fraternity, not on the text of Co-operation or of Trades Unionism, or of Socialism (though all these are pertinent illustrations of it), but on that text to be found in one of the chapters where Adam Smith discusses the Division of Labour: "In civilised society man stands at all times in need of the co-operation and assistance of great multitudes, while his whole life is scarce sufficient to gain the friendship of a few

[1] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II., ch. ix.

persons."[1] It is well said. On no other condition could we be housed, clothed, and fed. It is this practical Fraternity that keeps us alive.

And, be it noted, the principle applies far beyond the industrial or commercial sphere. It holds wherever there is Division of Labour of any kind. Be our sentiments what they may, even if there be no sentiment at all, the relation of man to man is not hostility but mutual serviceability. "This man is a scholar, and I am not. This man is a political leader, and I am not. This man is teacher or preacher, and I am not. This man has social gifts, and I have not"—these are not grounds of hostility. The true inference lies in the words of George Eliot, "I have the more need of him, because his treasure differs from mine."[2]

The same law extends far beyond the limits of nationality. It has become a commonplace to say that Free Trade is but international Division of Labour. If so, the attitude of the citizens of one country to those of another is, at its best, not one of inevitable rivalry, where the gain of the one group is the loss of the other. The contention has never been, nor can it be, overthrown. Slow as political antagonisms are to yield, and however living the spirit of war which parts men into hostile national camps, the proof is there for those who can look for it, that self-interest itself dictates the obliteration of industrial and commercial barriers, and the union of nation to nation in the fraternity of one vast and peaceful international Division of Labour.[3]

(3) The familiar social analysis of our own day does but make the same truth clearer. For does it not tell us that civilised, and even savage, man stands bound to man by bonds and ligaments so complex, so interwoven, so subtle, so living, and so growing, that to convey an adequate idea of what they are, nothing can suffice, short of the intricate and cunningly fashioned relations which Life weaves amongst the organs and the functions of the body physiological? This may, of course, be but analogy. We

[1] *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. I., ch. ii.
[2] *Daniel Deronda.*
[3] Cf. Cobden, *Speeches*, p. 187, Macmillan, 1878.

need not stop to debate the point. It is enough that, in every use of the analogy, there lies for the individualist the reminder that men would not be what they are, still less could hope to become what they wish to be, if it were not that it is their very nature to live and move and have their being in what we have come to call, perhaps for lack of a better word, the "organism" of society. "Members one of another," said the old doctrine, so rich in practical applications. And we may repeat it, in all the confidence that comes of having analysis behind us.[1]

One point remains. We have been insisting that, in these various ways, on grounds of moral fact and of economic and social analysis, Fraternity stands upon something more than sentiment. And it has seemed needful so to do, because the case for Fraternity has so often been prejudiced by a tendency to gauge its reality, and measure its range, according to the presence, and the expansiveness, of our fraternal affections. There are those to whom Fraternity is nothing if not an emotion, and whose language is at times such as to suggest that, to be faithful to the idea, we must needs love the distant savage even as we love our own flesh and blood.

It is an impossible demand. Our affections begin at home. How else can they begin? They have their roots in common memories, in habitual association, in mutual knowledge, in well-tried sympathy and fidelity. And where these things are not, it is idle to ask for the deep and tender feelings that enhance the private and personal relationships of life. So truly so, that should it befall us to meet in life some one who tells us that he means to love the remotest alien even as he loves his own brother, we may well be pardoned a suspicion (which experience has at times justified), that in his eager haste to give an easy love to the alien whom he has not seen, he has forgotten duly to love his brother whom he has seen.[2]

[1] Cf. *e.g.*, Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, Part II., ch. ii.

[2] "This Friend of Men was the enemy of almost every man he had to do with; beginning at his own hearth, ending at the utmost circle of his acquaintance; and only beyond that, feeling himself free to love men."—Carlyle, Essay on "Mirabeau."

One remembers that bitter phrase of Burke about Rousseau, "a lover of his kind but a hater of his kindred."[1] Therefore do we need the reminder that fraternity is no mere sentiment, nor such as would vanish from the world even if the heart had ceased to feel. It would remain as a moral and political fact. Well for us that it is more than sentiment, that thereby we may be enabled to enjoin it as a duty.

And yet, in a natural reaction against an overstrained and sentimental philanthropy, one might easily fall into a too narrow limitation of the range of human affections. It may be that Sir James Stephen is right when he says that it is not love one wants from the great mass of men, but respect and justice.[2] And that is no doubt what they want from us—and do not always get. Respect and justice must come first at any rate. Yet we must qualify this by the doctrine, so constantly recurrent in the pages of Burke and Mazzini, that one of the considerations which give dignity and significance to the private affections, is that, if genuine, they cannot spend themselves wholly within the lesser circles of Family or Friendship, but pass onwards with a spontaneous generosity to the remoter relationships; like waves that break in unexpected music upon shores that know nothing of the winds that raised them.

This is not, indeed, the only doctrine on the subject. There is another, ascetic, heroic. It has been said that the forlorn hope in the cause of mankind, as in battle, must be led by those who have no narrower ties to divide the allegiance.[3] It may be true—true at any rate of the Fraternity of dedication and work. Nor need we let fall a doubt as to the possible advent of divinely-gifted natures in whom there burns an enthusiasm of humanity, even though they have renounced the narrower ties. But with the mass of men it cannot be true of a Fraternity that is emotional. For it is just the narrower ties that divide the allegiance which most surely foster the wider affections.

[1] Burke, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 538, "Letter to a Member of the National Assembly," and cf. context.

[2] *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, p. 274, 2nd edition.

[3] Cf. *Frederick Robertson's Sermons*, "Marriage and Celibacy."

III

"THE RIGHTS OF MAN"

The Revelation of "the Rights of Man." A radical criticism of a radical gospel: Bentham's denial that man has any "natural rights." Is it true to say that there are rights (a) *other than those enacted by Law;* (b) *other than those which ought to be enacted by Law? What is a right? Three practical propositions about rights:*—(1) *Rights are not self-evident: their reality must be proved.* (2) *So must the expediency of their enactment under given conditions of place and time. Practical dogmatism of Paine and the French Revolutionists. Revolution and Evolution.* (3) *In formulating man's* rights *we must not forget his* nature: *Malthus and Paine.*

"The Rights of Man" as an ultimatum and as a watchword; and as resting on a just sense of the worth and dignity of the individual man. Burns and Paine—a parallel.

IT is something of a contradiction that, towards the end of last century, in the very circles in which revelations were being doubted and discredited, Nature, becoming unprecedentedly articulate, was vouchsafing a new one, the revelation of "the Rights of Man." One can call it nothing less. For these "rights" had no history. They were not created by Law, nor begotten by Custom, nor generalised from Experience. As in apocalypse, Nature revealed them to Man. Never was there such a union of scepticism and credulity. The author of *The Age of Reason* himself accepted "the Rights of Man" with an implicit faith which would have done credit to the orthodox believers in whose eyes, one suspects, he was not averse to play the infidel. Nor can one wonder that these "rights" were taken upon trust. The emp

with which they were proclaimed and enacted was quite enough to silence doubts as to their origin, such as may seem inevitable to our own more critical age. Were they not written large on the face of two continents? And may they not still be read in the Declaration of American Independence, and in the French Assembly's Declaration of Rights: Life, Liberty, Pursuit of Happiness, Property, Security, Resistance of Oppression?

It was by the Rights thus revealed that the men of the Revolution set themselves to judge the world. Nothing else would satisfy them. To the teachings of past experience they had shut their eyes, except, by an ingenious inversion of the argument from prescription, to find in the antiquity of an institution only a proof that it was the more likely to be out of harmony with existing needs. Nor did they, like the Utilitarians, dismiss antiquity to make room for utility. Never by mere utility, however final, did the true apostle of "the Rights of Man" judge either act or institution. He judged not by utility to end with, but by conformity with code of rights to begin with. Hardly could even the demonstration of inutility daunt him. Bentham has well said, "there is no reasoning with fanatics armed with natural rights."[1] There can never be reasoning with any man who holds his creed by immediate revelation.

The results we know. With those Marats of political philosophy it was a Reign of Terror for every view but their own. To theories of government, to institutions, to customs, to traditions, they gave but a short shrift. They employed that summary procedure which afterwards distinguished their followers in Paris. "In the groves of *their* Academy," said Burke, "at the end of every vista, you see nothing but the gallows."[2] He said it of the politicians. It is equally true of the theorists.

Radicalism, however, is so radical that from time to time it sets itself to subvert its own foundations. And so it happened that it was reserved for Bentham to direct against the natural rights of man a criticism, so incisive

[1] Bentham, *Theory of Legislation*, p. 85, Trübner, 1876. Cf. context.

[2] *Works*, Vol. II., p. 350, "Reflections on the Revolution."

and derisive, as to be only less deadly than the reasoning passion and studied invective of Burke.

Bentham's criticism of the Rights of Man was not brief. But in substance it may be condensed into three words: "Man has none."

His arguments were, moreover, indubitably clear. Legal rights we know, and legal rights we can understand. We can trace their source: we can specify the laws that confer them: we can define the claims they recognise and the exact obligations they entail. But as for natural rights, these Rights of Man, "imprescriptible, indefeasible, inalienable," whence are they? It is true that Nature does much for men. She endows them, even to lavishness, with desires, capacities, potentialities, hopes. But is there any intelligible sense in which she can be said to give men *rights*? And if, fresh from the strident dogmatism of Paine, the believing Radical answers, emphatically, "Yes," this, the Benthamite would remind him, proves nothing except that he is a person given to strong assertions. "I have a right to be happy," says some one. "Not so fast," would be the needful rejoinder; "you have a desire, an overwhelmingly strong desire, it may be, to be happy; but not a right, in the one definite and rational meaning which that word can bear." "The assassin," says Bentham, "pursues his happiness, or what he esteems such, by committing an assassination. Has he a right to do so?" If we answer "No," as presumably we must, then we must delude ourselves no longer by the supposition that we can justify our other desires, no matter how respectable, simply by dubbing them "rights." Rather ought we to wait to see what desires society may, in the name of the public good, see fit to acknowledge as tendencies whose exercise is to be legally safeguarded and protected; and, we may add, what desires society, for the same reasons, may find it prudent to suppress, if need be, by hanging. "Rights properly so called are the creatures of law properly so called; real laws give birth to real rights."[1] Such is the line of criticism which led Bentham, from the first, to denounce the "Rights of Man" as an "anarchic fallacy"; and, before he had done, to lead

[1] Cf. *Theory of Legislation*, p. 84.

Radicalism out of the dogmatism of "natural rights" into the philosophy of "greatest happiness."[1]

There is a weak point in Bentham's refutation. It is not reasonable, and it is against almost universal usage, to insist that there are no rights but legal rights. Men have for generations talked of rights *as they ought to be*, and, Bentham notwithstanding, they will probably continue so to talk. It is the business of the thinker, at any rate in politics, to explain the distinctions of ordinary language, not to ignore or erase them. Moreover, when a reformer urges claims and calls them "rights," and does so with such reasonableness that in a few years these claims become rights in strict Benthamite acceptance, it seems a sacrifice of substance to form to insist that the mere legal imprimatur—the act by which the expediency of the right is, not created, but recognised—should *constitute* the right. Surely the substance of the right was there, though enactment in law was still pending? Real laws do *not* give birth to real rights. They inscribe them on the statute book: they provide machinery for their enforcement; but they do not create them. For rights do not emerge, Minerva-like, from the brain of the legislator. This is to invert the true order of things. They have a prior history. They enter his mind because he is able clearly to see that there are certain conditions of life which, in the name of justice and expediency, society ought to enforce. And if these conditions really ought to be enforced, they are virtually rights, though they may have to wait for enactment for a generation, or for ever.

For in truth it is merit and not defect when a reformer is able to come to his work with a programme of rights such as goes far beyond the inevitably halting steps of legal enactment. It is hardly in his power, if he be in earnest, to hold his hand from framing some scheme of the claims which he believes *ought to be* enacted. He cannot rise from a perusal of history, from a study of the lives of nations, least of all from an anxious consideration of his own country's future, with his mind as empty of

[1] Cf. *Theory of Legislation*, p. 82, "An imaginary law is not a Reason." And cf. *Works*, Part VIII., pp. 497-507, pp. 520-524, Edinburgh, 1841.

ideas as when he went thither. He will have learnt the lesson that there are certain conditions of well-being which can be ill-dispensed with, at least in any country laying claim to civilisation. Nay, so essential may he come to believe these conditions to be, that he will not find it in him to repress the conviction that the safety of society, in the days that are to come, demands their effective enforcement.

About many obvious conditions of human well-being, such thoughts will not arise. No sane man would dream of the dawning of a day which would see the enforcement, even by the mildest of sanctions, of a claim to be rich, or gifted, or socially influential. As well might he justify a claim to be handsome. Into any reasonable scheme of rights such things will not enter.

There are likewise a multitude of other advantages, in respect of which even the most ardent may well pause in doubt. Thus he may believe that freedom from excessive work is one of the most reasonable of aspirations, and yet he may hesitate to inscribe, in his scheme of things which ought to be enforced, the "right" to be secured by law from having to work more than eight hours a day. He may believe this to be a boon if it can be had, but he may also be unable to stifle the misgiving that the boon to some might be a scourge to others. And obviously there are many conditions of well-being of this kind, in respect of which doubts will deepen or dissipate themselves, according to the circumstances of this country or that. Only the simpleton or the fanatic is likely, now a-days, to fall into the naïve illusion that he can frame a perfect scheme identical for all communities.

But we cannot always entertain such hesitations. As we think of security of Person, of Property, of Contract, of Reputation; or again of the inviolability of Family life, or of freedom of Speech and freedom of Worship; we need not long cast about to find reasons why these, and such as these, may be placed in the category of things that ought to be enforced. Not only can they with benefit to each be enjoyed by all; they also seem to lie, though not equally, so close to the very threshold of man's moral and social development, that it would be folly to leave

them to the precarious adjustments of private arrangement. It is these advantages, and such as these, that we may well call "rights" even before they are legally enacted. For though doubtless some of them pass into the law of the land while civilisation is yet young, so that many rights of man are also legal rights, there will still remain others, the claim to the parliamentary vote for example, to which the name of "right" cannot be reasonably denied, even although the division bell that is to secure its enactment has yet to be rung. A right whose enactment is only deferred is not a right non-existent.

Nay, we may even venture to doubt if the term "rights" can be confined to those rights that either are, or that ought to be, enacted *by law*. Is it false, or unnatural, to say that a child has a "right" to a careful up-bringing from its parents, even when we are convinced that the law neither enforces, nor ought to enforce, more than humanity? Is it false to say that a householder has a right to honest work from his tradesmen, even though Local Boards and Inspectors can but very imperfectly enforce his right? And though such instances, like many others, accentuate the warning that, when we leave the solid ground of legal rights, we must be prepared for doubt and controversy, it remains impossible to deny that there are rights, both actual and desirable, whose enforcement lies not with law but with custom and, not least, with public opinion.

It is for these reasons that we may well hesitate to echo the derision which Bentham flings at the framers of codes of rights that ought to be. His theory of rights is too narrow for the facts.

And yet, in his attack upon the Rights of Man, Bentham made one of his greatest contributions to Radicalism. Be his own theory what it may, he told reformers a home truth in the reminder that to claim "rights," however vociferously, is not to justify them. He put his finger upon the flaw. He asked for proof, and insisted on the need for proof, before a single claim, however elementary it seem, can be suffered to find its way into any scheme or code of rights whatever. For rights are not mysteries; not gifts from a higher Source, of which we can tell no

more than that we have them; not commandments which have simply to be first written, as from supernatural dictation, in some theorist's code, and then transcribed in the laws or customs of our country. Rights are certain advantageous conditions of social well-being, indispensable to the true development of the citizen, enjoyable by all members of the community, and of which we are prepared to say that respect for them ought (in one way or another) to be enforced. And so defined, they stand not only in need of proof, but of double proof—proof before they take their place in the reformer's code, and proof before they can justifiably descend from the reformer's code to the citizen's life.

(1) Hence, in the spirit of Bentham, though, it may be, without holding his creed, we may confidently join issue with the doctrine of Natural Rights, first of all on the ground, not that it framed a code but that its code was dogmatic. The defect betrays itself. There was always a certain haziness as to what these "Rights of Man" precisely were. How many were they? Why so many? Which were most important? Which least important? It is not to be wondered at. If Rights are revealed, and not proved, there will be mystery and dogmatism from first to last. To call aspirations 'rights' explains nothing, justifies nothing. There is no magic in the word. Nor does it in the smallest degree strengthen the position to say that Nature or God has given men these Rights. Be it so. We are hardly in a position to hazard a denial; but we may modestly ask for some reason for thinking so. God and Nature are vast treasuries to draw from; and if we permit reformers, without call for proof, to say that God or Nature has given them this and given them that, who can see an end to what insatiate human nature may clamour for in these great names? "Right to the land," "right to work," "right to a living wage," "right to an old age pension," "right to the instruments of production"—we have heard of them all. Possibly they exist, and in any case it is worse than useless to think that they are to be disposed of by the lie direct, which, instead of converting one dogmatist, would create two. But let us not forget the truism that

a claim is one thing, and a justified claim another. Yet it was precisely this that was forgotten. Radicalism framed its code of Rights, and when challenged for reasons, it had none to give except the dogmatist's reason, "So it is written."

(2) The same substitution of assertion for proof is no less obvious when we pass from Rights to the manner of their enactment. The Radicals, both of England and of France, almost seem to have fancied that, by reciting the Rights which man ought to have, they somehow proved that Englishmen or Frenchmen in 1793 must needs have them then and there. They dealt with an abstract code as if it were a political programme, and this forthwith they proceeded to realise, in the spirit of men to whom it was treason to their convictions to abate one jot or tittle of their claims. As Burke put it, "they argued in ultimatums." The result was inevitable. When opposition came they had said their last word, and could go no further—except by pike or guillotine. When they ought to have been proving the justice and expediency of their claims, they were busy in demonstrating the violence of their methods. We sometimes laugh at the pedant of society with his foolish unbending ways, and his parchment-code of a life; but it is no laughing matter when pedantry, reared upon a diet of Rousseau, comes to sit upon Committees of Public Safety.

There was, however, a reason for this want of reason. It sprang from the revolutionary illusion that it was possible to cut history in half, to fling the past aside, and to begin the world anew. "We have it in our power to begin the world over again,"[1] are Paine's actual words to the American colonists in revolt. It was what he and all his school were, all their lives, saying to everyone. "The world is as new to every child born into it as it was to the first man that existed."[2] "Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself in all cases as the age and generation which preceded it."[3] "Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a

[1] Paine, *Common Sense*, p. 49, London, 1819.
[2] Paine, *Rights of Man*, p. 50, 5th edition, Jordan, London.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

property in the generations which are to follow."[1] This kind of teaching made all things easy. "My path," said the same arch-revolutionist, "is a right line, as straight and clear to me as a ray of light."[2] And of course a man's path will always be so, if he has sufficient audacity to ignore the circumstances into which he is born.

In this doctrine the Radicals of that day saw the death-blow of all Conservatism. And the men who proclaimed it were too much wedded to their creed to be shaken, even by the reasoning imagination and reverent spirit of Burke, which caught up and uttered the whole great argument for the organic continuity of national life, and against the sacrilege of wrecking 'experimented' institutions for the sake of untried theories.[3] But had they lived for a hundred years longer, they would have had to encounter a criticism less easy to evade and more difficult to deal with.

The nineteenth century has a Radicalism of its own, not less determined in its purposes, though, it may be hoped, less violent in its methods than that which, a hundred years ago, created the Revolution in France, and "diffused the terror" in England. But it is too wise to dream of "new beginnings." It has grown more tolerant.[4] It reads history, and sometimes even writes it. It studies science. It deals much in biological categories: it speaks of Evolution. And, with vision thus clarified, it has ceased to find an instrument even of radical reform in that ignorant invective against the Past which disfigures the pages of Paine, or Godwin, or Bentham. It has even begun to preach and to teach the latter-day doctrine that no reform is so irresistible as that whose roots are set deep in the Past, because, in truth, innovation itself is the inevitable fruit of historical development. It is so that Mazzini pleads for Radical Democracy.[5]

[1] Paine, *Rights of Man*, p. 11.

[2] Letters to the Citizens of the United States, Letter IV.

[3] For Burke's criticism of the doctrine of "natural rights," see especially, "Speech on American Taxation," "Speech on Conciliation with America," and "Reflections on the Revolution in France." Cf. *Works, passim*, and especially Vol. I., 432; I., 479; II., 282, 331.

[4] Cf. ch. viii.

[5] *The Duties of Man*, ch. vii.

It is so that Lassalle argues for democratic Socialism.[1] And thus, beneath many a divergence, both alike, to borrow Spencer's phrase, constrain Revolution to be Evolution, and seek to graft the Future on that Past which the men of '89 would fain have swept away into a dishonoured silence.

If this creed is to prevail (and Radicalism is not likely to be so conservative as to resist it), the results are plain. It will be no longer possible for the reformer to trample on existing fact with the rough-shod ruthlessness of Paine. It will be needful for him with Burke "to see the things, to see the men,"[2] and however passionately he may cherish his scheme of Rights, to satisfy himself before proceeding to enactment, that in instincts, habits, capacities, and traditions, his countrymen are ripe for receiving it. Otherwise, he may find arrayed against him not only the arguments of conservatives, but the less vulnerable forces of national evolution.

(3) A further point remains. "This sort of people," said Burke in one of his most luminous sentences, "are so taken up with their theories about the rights of man that they have totally forgotten his nature";[3] and, even as he wrote the words, an English parson was busy upon a book which was to prove the justice of the taunt. For though it was undeniably the task of Malthus to make plain to the world some of the gifts that Nature had bestowed upon man, it was not of "natural rights" that he had most to say. More obvious far, in his eyes, were the facts that Nature had given to man, appetites; to the race, the capacity of an accelerating increase; and to the earth, man's dwelling-place and pasture-ground, a limited, and, at last, a diminishing fertility. These were commonplace facts. But never has there been a more memorable instance of the significance which ordinary things disclose to the scientific eye. For to Malthus they spoke of a possible ever-darkening Future, in which lavish Nature was to send mouths to which niggard

[1] Cf. *Arbeiterprogramm, passim.*

[2] *Works*, Vol. II., p. 549, "Letter to a Member of the National Assembly."

[3] *Works*, Vol. II., p. 337, "Reflections on the Revolution."

Nature was to refuse meat. While the revolutionists were dogmatising about Rights, he was beginning to have doubts about Subsistence. While they were invoking Nature as the source of Rights, he was indicting Nature as the reckless progenitor of an overcrowded world. When they were dreaming of the Perfectibility that Rights were to bring in their train, he was reminding the world that, even were rights given to it in codefuls, one of the most inexorable of all problems would still have to be faced, and the cloud remain unlifted from the Future.

This was a message more fatal to the pretensions of the exponents of the Rights of Man than even the assaults of Bentham and Burke. After all, it is not direct refutation that disconcerts us most. It is to be told, in the very zenith of our self-confidence, that we have missed the point; and that, in our preoccupation with our own panacea, we have failed to see the deeper social dangers that rise to sting us under our very feet. It was nothing less that Malthus had to tell the Eighteenth Century Radicalism. If he was right, they were wrong in their diagnosis, and wrong in their remedy; wrong when they fastened the woes of the world upon the vices of Governments, and wrong when they fancied they could cure these woes by a programme of Rights. "Man," said Paine, "has the Right to subsistence." Yes, is the reply of Malthus, he has the Right likewise to live a thousand years if he can.[1] It is not a question of the Right but of the Power; not whether, on the assurance of Paine and his friends, he has the Right to subsistence, but whether, in a world like this, subsistence will be forthcoming.

On a superficial view it might seem that this message had failed of its effect. The appeal of reformers is still to "rights," not perhaps to the Rights *of Man*, but still to the "rights" of the citizen or of the labourer. And it is reasonable that it should be so. There are many rights which men do well to claim. But the influence of Malthus has not spent itself. It still appears in the very nature of the "rights" that are claimed, and more especially in two conspicuous respects. (*a*) One is that the "rights" we hear of now are no longer

[1] *The Principles of Population*, p. 421, 8th edition, London, 1878.

so political as those which played their part a hundred years ago. The reason is partly that the battle for political rights has been for the most part fought and won, but partly also that now, when our problems have become social and economic, the claims which press for discussion are naturally those—such as the "right" to the land, or the "right" to labour—which touch wants that the old "Rights of Man" could never satisfy. (*b*) To this we must add the growing conviction that, whatever be the "rights" which, in the future, Radicalism may demand, they will, one and all, be as futile as the claim to live a thousand years, unless a patient study of fact can show them to be just, expedient, and practical.

A point of interest remains. In any discussion of these "Natural Rights of Man," and especially of their influence upon the world, we must remember that they can be viewed and estimated in other than a theoretical light. Justifiable or unjustifiable in theory, they may still remain a convenient form in which to couch the ultimatum of determined men. When, in practice, reformers claim "rights," it often means no more than that there are certain political ends, on which, come what may, they have set their hearts. To call these "rights" is only a way of saying, "Our minds are made up; we will take no less; this or Revolution."

Nay, there may be less theory in the claim for rights even than this. "Rights of Man" may be simply a watchword. Students of political movements are at times apt to exaggerate the practical influence of theories, because they find what sounds like a theory everywhere on men's lips. They forget that, when a theory descends into the streets, it often ceases to be a theory. As happens to the cry of "No Monopoly," or "Religious Equality," or "Free Land," or "Church and State," or "Throne and Altar," and many another watchword, men with political passions seize the formula and invoke it, without pausing to press its meaning. In reality there is no more theory in these than in "Up, guards, and at them!" So is it with this great theory, which is also this great

watchword, "The Rights of Man." It acted on men, it may still act on men ripe for reform, not much otherwise than did the bells in the towers which sent the Sansculottes to the barricades.

Nor would it be fair to it, viewed as a doctrine, to fail to recognise that, in its best exponents, it sprang from a right noble root. Its theoretical insufficiency, its historic groundlessness, its dogmatic enunciation, its rash enactment, its sanguinary results, all put together must not hide the fact that there was bound up with it what is at once beginning and end of all true Democracy—the conviction of the worth and dignity of the individual man. Of this there is an illustration which has a literary as well as a political interest. It appears that not a few copies of Paine's works came to Scotland, and readers of Chambers's *Life of Burns* will find the poet in 1793 anxious—for fear of trouble with the authorities—to get rid of the celebrated pamphlet, *Common Sense*, and also of the well-known *Rights of Man.*[1] Fortunately for us this was not until he had read them; as we may confidently infer from the fact that what he modestly calls "two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme,"[2] suggest not only the sentiments but the very words of Paine. The parallel is interesting.

"The patriots of France," says the prose of Paine, "have discovered in good time, that rank and dignity in Society must take a new ground. The old one has fallen through. It must now take the substantial ground of character, instead of the chimerical ground of titles."[3] "The artificial Noble shrinks into a dwarf before the Noble of Nature."[4] "Through all the vocabulary of Adam there is not such an animal as a Duke or a Count."[5]

Do we not know well something like that already?

> "A prince can mak' a belted knight,
> A marquis, duke, and a' that;
> But an honest man's aboon his might—
> Guid faith, he maunna fa' that!

[1] Chambers's *Burns*, Vol. IV., p. 45.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[3] *Rights of Man*, p. 72, Jordan, 1791.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that."

Again Paine's prose: "The French Constitution says, There shall be no titles, and of consequence, all that class of equivocal generation, which in some countries is called 'aristocracy,' and in others 'nobility,' is done away, and the peer is exalted into man."[1] "It (*i.e.*, love of titles) talks about its fine blue ribbon like a girl, and shews its new garter like a child."[2] "The genuine mind of man, thirsting for its native home, Society, contemns the gewgaws (*i.e.*, titles) that separate him from it."[3]

And now "another of the same," yet not the same:

"Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
His ribbon, star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that."

Once more Paine's prose: "For what we can foresee, all Europe may form but one great republic, and man be free of the whole."[4] What is this but a feebler version of

"For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brithers be for a' that"?

Can we help wishing that all political philosophers could find their poets?

[1] *Rights of Man*, p. 70. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 70. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 70.
[4] *Ibid.*, 2nd Part, ch. iv. (end).

IV

CITIZENSHIP

Not the possession of rights but the energetic use of rights makes the citizen; the real freeman is he who finds fulness of development in and through active civic life. Freedom is therefore only to be found in Democracy in so far as Democracy brings the conditions of such development. These conditions are in the main as follows:—(1) *The opportunity to earn adequate Livelihood: this has moral and political as well as economic significance.* (2) *The conditions of physical Health necessary for industrial efficiency, military service and self-reliant independence.* (3) *The possibility of a sound Family Life: the family as the nursery of the citizen.* (4) *Participation in political duties: to teach men to do their duties to the State the only effective plan is to give them duties to the State to do.* (5) *The Religious Life: some reasons why democratic citizenship especially needs the alliance of Religion.* (6) *Education and living contact with the things of the mind.*

Citizenship is not real till all these influences have, not in name but in substance, entered into the life of the citizen.

IT has become something of a commonplace to say that 'the democracy" is insatiable. But the wonder rather is that it is so easily satisfied. Eager enough to get its rights, whether civil or political, it would seem as if it has no sooner won them, than, in strange disregard of opportunities, it settles down as though it had made an end, when in truth it has only made a beginning. For though to be a citizen is to possess rights—in any case, civil rights, and, in a democratic country, political rights as well—to possess rights is not to be a citizen. It is to be merely on the way to become one. Never can it enough be realised, in democracies especially, that men become citizens in truth and in substance, only when they

use their rights. We do not make a man the owner of a plot of land by presenting him with so many yards of wire fencing, however carefully barbed; nor do we make him a sportsman by the gift of the best of breech-loaders. No more do we make him a citizen by conferring upon him rights. Rights are not rewards, nor decorations, nor ends in themselves. They are advantages, they are opportunities, they are instruments. And when any man has won them, this means simply, that henceforward he is set on a vantage ground, from which, secure from aggression and unrepressed by tyranny, he may begin to do his duty.

Yet it is just this that seems so often to be forgotten. Men are so enamoured of their rights that they forget that the real value of every right must rise or fall with the use to which the right is put. If the average citizen is quick to remind us that in a free country he is free to say what he pleases, he is not so quick to assure his neighbours, or even himself, of the value of what it pleases him to say. Yet, however priceless this right of free speech may be, when it is the condition of words of independence, wisdom, or consolation, who can doubt that it assumes at most a questionable garb, when degraded into the occasion for unlocking the lips of the babbler and the bore?

So with the right of freedom of worship, none daring as in old ferocious days of persecution to make us afraid. How can we help feeling that even it, supreme opportunity though it be, is but a doubtful actual boon to men who too manifestly, neither in churches nor out of them, neither in desire nor in act, appear to be likely so much as to think of worshipping anything? Persecution being now some time below the horizon, what is the substantial value of the right to such as these? The most abject of cowards may brandish a sword, and even in his hands we may recognise the excellence of the weapon; but, if we wish to know what a sword really is, it must find its way into the grasp of a man.

What thus is true of civil rights may be said, and in some respects more emphatically, of the rights we call political. That a citizen is enabled to vote, or even that he actually records his vote, this is but a beggarly result

of the extension of the franchise. The very pith and substance of political citizenship would be gone, were its reality to be measured by the occasions, few and far between, upon which the vote is solicited or recorded. The suggestion is on a par with the doctrine of Rousseau, that Englishmen are truly free only when they are engaged in electing members of Parliament.[1] It is equally false, equally absurd. Men do not live the real life of political freedom in polling booths. Rousseau's paradox is the opposite of the truth. For the stuff and substance of freedom we must look to the weeks, months, years, that lie in the intervals when we are *not* electing members of Parliament; to the use of these intervals that makes a vote given the outward sign of political conviction, character and work, or to the abuse of these intervals which levels it down to the meaningless, or mischievous, scratching of a ballot paper. The name and the legal status of citizenship are but an empty inheritance, if they be not the preliminaries to a life which is "free," not only in the sense that it is encompassed by the Law's protection, but because, within the charmed circle of rights, it achieves that actual well-being in which lies the real deliverance from bondage. For it is fulness of life and not merely immunity from aggression, which is the test of real freedom. The real freeman is the developed man. Nor can all the rights in the world do more than tell us what we *may* do. Strenuous civic life alone can translate possibility into fact.

One may see this from the nature of certain attacks, which, in our own day, have been made upon what we may call the radicalism of Rights. And it is doubly significant that these attacks are delivered from two most diverse sides.

If, on the one hand, we are to believe some socialists, this radicalism of political Rights is an illusion, if not a fraud. It has given the democracy votes, no doubt, and to votes it has added eligibility to office, if to a hard-driven artisan this be anything? But it has ignored that

[1] "The English are only free during the election of members of Parliament; the members once chosen, the people are slaves, nay, as people they have ceased to exist."—Morley's *Rousseau*, p. 334.

more vital question of redistribution of ways and means, apart from which, to enfranchised poverty, the right to take its place in public life is but too surely shadow without substance.[1] So runs the one indictment.

The other comes from a man who was so eager and so resolute to give all things to the people, that he had it not in him to deny to them what, in his heroic scheme of life, was the greatest gift of all—the privilege and the obligation to do their duty.[2] It was not that Mazzini set light store on rights; these indeed he knew how to value better than many from whose lips the word was seldom absent. Simply it was that with him it had become a central conviction, central in his creed, and still more eloquently central in his dedicated life, that all the blood shed for rights would be water spilt on sand, if, stopping short in a fancied success, men failed to fill their lives with those great positive ends of life to which rights are but precursors.

These are diverse indictments. They are as different as the socialists' pre-occupation with the economic problem is different from the glowing democratic pantheism of the great political saint of Italy. All the more significant is their independent agreement in the conviction that Democracy has missed its mark, till it has brought to the citizen something more substantial than his rights.

It remains to indicate, at least in outline, the chief ways in which this can alone be done.

I. And first—first in urgency if not first in importance—through the earning of an honest livelihood.

It is the lot, and is likely to remain the lot, of the vast majority of men, to make their first serious acquaintance with the facts of national life by this way of livelihood. And, for certain definite enough reasons, it is vital that such livelihood should be what, without attempting specific definition, we may style 'adequate.'

(*a*) One such reason is that the workman, handworker or headworker, who just escapes starvation is a bad bargain. By wide consensus of economists, cheap labour is dear labour; and bare subsistence, ready on the pinch

[1] Cf. p. 13.
[2] Cf. Mazzini, *Duties of Man*, ch. i., and *passim*.

of distress to drop into the jaws of destitution, is an economic mistake.[1] The man, therefore, who, for whatever reason, cannot raise himself above bare subsistence, will fail to serve his country aright even as one of its industrial rank and file.

(*b*) A second reason is that adequate livelihood is the one sure foundation of that honest independence which is not only one of the greatest of virtues, but the fruitful mother of virtues—of courage, tenacity, endurance, self-reliance, thrift, cheerfulness, hope. There is a defiant independence bred of hardship and want; and who does not respect it? But we cannot wisely count upon this. For one example of it are there not twenty or a hundred who will miserably fall before that slow sap of penury which ends in meanness, servility, shiftiness, perhaps dishonesty? The democratic Burns has the truer philosophy:

> "To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,
> Assiduous wait upon her,
> And gather gear by every wile,
> That's justified by honour;
> Not for to hide it in a hedge,
> Nor for a train attendant,
> But for the glorious privilege
> Of being independent."

(*c*) A third reason is that, where Livelihood is not adequate, Life not only begins—as to the last of time it must for most begin—in Livelihood, but ends there. When a labourer just drudges through life on a bare subsistence, it is idle to think that all that he and his family miss is comfort. In a most sober sense, they miss their lives. They miss nothing less than every higher aspect of citizenship. What is family life without its decencies; or political interests without education and leisure; and what is religion itself, though it has its message for the poor, when it speaks to the deaf ears of the drudge?

(*d*) Nor must we forget that there are ways in which men really serve their country, even when they are far enough from doing so in conscious intention. They serve it in the ranks of industry and commerce. For there is a truth here that is hidden from us in great measure by

[1] Cf. Walker, *Political Economy*, p. 49, Macmillan, 1883.

a phrase. We speak of our "accumulated wealth," and to ninety-nine minds out of a hundred the suggestion is that there is a vast national hoard or treasury, on which society might securely draw and live at ease for many a year to come. This is an illusion. The fact, as certain statisticians have it, is that the entire "accumulated wealth" even of our own rich country, when one comes to strike the average between the products that last for years and the products that perish in an hour, is no more than five or six times our annual production.[1] What does this mean? What else but that, standing thus for ever face to face with the colossal task of creating afresh this perpetually perishing wealth, it is to the Labour and the Enterprise of our country—not to its fancied "accumulated wealth"—that we owe our victory in this never-ending conflict of Production with Consumption. We must not, of course, expect of men that it is in this reflection they will do their work. The motive, even if they could realise it, is too abstract. Men think first of all of day and way for themselves and for their children; and no one will blame them if they think of little else. None the less, the thought and the fact are there, and must be there for everyone who would do full justice to the significance and the dignity of the life of work.

It is for these reasons we may truly say that, however otherwise lacking, a man has realised no small part of the substance of citizenship, if he has done no more than, by honest work, maintained himself and those dependent upon him, in "adequate" livelihood.

II. And yet, of course, Livelihood is not Life. It is but a condition of Life, and its value will depend on the nature of the superstructure which upon it can be built. Nor is anyone likely to deny that Livelihood is a poor thing at best, if it do not bring with it, as essential concomitant, the conditions of physical health. Livelihood itself demands these; and those who wish to see how substantial are the gains—gains to the citizen, and gains to the national industry—which flow from the common (yet not too common) blessings of air and food, decent house-room and cheerful surroundings, may find the facts

[1] Cf. Walker, *Political Economy*, p. 299, Macmillan, 1883.

written, with convincing cogency of figures, in the economist's analysis of Efficiency of Labour.[1]

But physical health has a yet deeper significance, and in two respects especially.

(*a*) One is that, so long as War plays the part it does, and is likely to continue to play, and especially when standing armies tend to give place to conscription, a great nation, particularly if its people gravitate to towns, must take care that it has men fit to stand the work of War. And so it must remain, so long as it is, perhaps, the greatest act of citizenship for men to lay down their lives on the field.

(*b*) The second is that, in the simple fact of physical health and strength, many a man has found, or at least been helped to find, the unenvious and uncovetous spirit that "looks and laughs" at the inequalities of wealth. There was a class of persons last century who had fallen into the patronising cant of their generation, and talked much of the "labouring poor." Burke turned round upon them. "I do not," he said, "call a healthy young man, cheerful in his mind, and vigorous in his arms, I cannot call such a man *poor*; I cannot pity my kind as a kind, merely because they are men."[2] The retort was just. Bodily vigour and a light heart are but part of what health has to give. With them there comes a sense of security against the future, such as even affluence will fail to purchase for lowered vitality and unstrung nerves.

III. To Livelihood and Health we must add participation in the influences of Family Life.

In days post-Malthusian, when men's eyes are open to the existence of families, enough and to spare, such as are not fit to be even the seed-plot of food for powder and shot, we can no longer delude ourselves with "the recruiting sergeant's theory of population," which measured a man's service to his country by the number of his children. And yet when the worst is said—even when it is granted that there is many a family which, to all appearance, had better never have been born—it is still the family that remains the pathway to citizenship. Does

[1] Cf. Walker, *The Wages Question*, ch. iii.

[2] Burke, *Works*, Vol. v., p. 322, "Letters on a Regicide Peace."

it not stimulate and steady industrial motive? Does it not, by its homely joys, foster political contentment? Does it not furnish an unsurpassed instrument of education? Hardly can we invoke Malthus to check the formation of families that can do this, unless, indeed, we can think it sound policy to condemn the thrifty and the conscientious to celibacy or childlessness, and to leave those who are neither to people the country, released at once from the fear and the fact of the competition of the sons of better homes. And although it would be rash indeed to deny that some of the world's best work is done by those who have "no domestic relationships to divide their devotion,"[1] the central fact remains that no man can miss this relationship without sacrificing one of the great formative influences of citizenship. No other thing can happen, so long as in its ready obedience, its affectionate discipline, its common interests, in its ties to the past, and in its hostages to the future, the home is the recognised nursery of the public virtues and the public affections, or, as Mazzini has it, in characteristic words, the place where "between the mother's kiss and the father's caress, the child's first lesson of citizenship" is learnt.[2] There is a striking chapter in Pearson's *National Life and Character*, in which the writer forecasts a future when the decline of the Family will have transferred the sentiment which at present attaches to it, to a beneficent and socialistic State. The grievous reflection is that, if such a day comes, so much will have been lost in the transference—so much of discipline in duty and in obedience, so much of habitual sympathy, and unconstrained affectionate service.

IV. But though thus citizenship begins at home, it is vital that it do not end there. From workshop or office, and home, we must pass to the wider relations of political activity.

Doubters about democratic franchises are apt to insist that no man should have a vote till he is fit to use it. The necessary rejoinder, however, is, that men can only

[1] Robertson's *Sermons*, "Marriage and Celibacy."

[2] "Thoughts upon Democracy in Europe," in *Life and Writings*, Vol. VI., Section 6.

become fit to have votes by first using them. There is no other way. Preparation there may be, in home, in school, in industrial organisation, in the conduct of business. But these will not suffice. Not so easily is the citizen made. It is as Aristotle has it; the harper is not made otherwise than by harping, nor the just man otherwise than by the doing of just deeds.[1] How can it be otherwise here, how can the capable voter be made except by voting capably? Citizenship is, after all, but a larger art; and to teach men to do their duties to the State, the only finally effective plan is to give them duties to the State to do.

It is for this reason that many a believer in Democracy is ready, with an equanimity wrongly construed by his critics as levity or simplicity, to sit unmoved under the warning that a raw Democracy may mismanage; or that even an experienced Democracy may not be the best machine for governing. No one need neglect the warning. But there are, at worst, compensations. And they lie in two considerations. The one is that the end of national existence is not solely, nor even mainly to exhibit to the world the spectacle of the most perfect machine of government; but to develop human beings. And the other is that for this purpose there is no school to equal the arena of active public life—none, at any rate, so varied in its interests, so impersonal in its ends, so stimulating in its issues, so powerful in its attractions. Better surely that men should learn the lesson of political citizenship, even at some cost of blundering, than that they never should learn it at all.[2]

V. The strongest advocates of Democracy have so often been cold, if not definitely hostile, to Religion, that it may well appear a wide step to pass from a citizen's public duties to what is apt to seem so far removed from them. Yet if we are to believe some of our greatest, it is a step that must be taken. It was Carlyle who declared that the conflict of the future lay not between Tory and Radical but between believer and unbeliever.[3]

[1] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II. i. 6. [2] Cf. p. 9.

[3] Froude's *History of the first forty years of Carlyle's Life*, Vol. II., p. 308.

And if Mazzini had anything at all to say to our generation, it was to insist—in every word he wrote—that not till Democracy became a religious movement could it hope to carry the victory.[1] It is beyond our limits to enter on an issue so large as this. Enough to point out that at any rate there are certain respects in which, of all forms of social existence, a democratic citizenship especially seems to need the alliance of Religion.

(1) One is that Religion can bring to men, in a form which can enter in alike at lofty and at lowly doors, that sense of personal responsibility in the exercise of political rights, which is apt to be so fatally sapped, whenever power is cut up into minute fragments and parcelled out in wide franchises. "A Perfect Democracy," says Burke, "is the most shameless thing in the world."[2] Not because men are worse under Democracy than under any other form of society; but because the very massiveness of collective power, which makes a Democracy irresistible, is so apt to dwarf to nothingness the responsibility of the individual.[3]

(2) Further, nothing else has such power as Religion to strengthen the individual against that tyranny of the majority through which, as the very apostles of Democracy —De Tocqueville, Mill, Spencer—warn us, freedom itself may impose a yoke none the less grievous because "held out by the arms of a million of men."[4] And Religion can do this because, behind all differences of creed, ritual or church government, it brings the perennial message that there is a Power, with which the feeblest can ally himself, in comparison with which all the forces that can be arrayed against him are as dust in the balance. It is as De Tocqueville has it, "If man be free, he must believe."[5]

(3) Not least it is Religion that can habituate even the

[1] Cf. *The Duties of Man*, ch. ii., "We must either obey God or serve man."

[2] *Works*, Vol. II., p. 365, "Reflections on the Revolution." "As it is the most shameless, it is also the most fearless. No man apprehends in his person he can be made subject to punishment."

[3] Cf. ch. v.

[4] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Part II., Bk. I., ch. ii.

[5] *Ibid.*, ch. v.

ordinary citizen to live for unseen and distant ends; thereby counterworking that impatience for quick results, and that fatal proclivity for legislative short-cuts, which too surely brand the ill-starred union of democratic materialism and democratic power.

It is sometimes said that as a political force Religion must, before the assaults of Science, of Criticism, of practical Worldliness, inevitably decay; and Mr. Pearson, to whose forecasts allusion has already been made, offers us in its place, a religious devotion to the State.[1] Let no one scoff at the substitute. In the glorious annals of patriotism, deeds have been done and lives lived which the records even of martyrdom cannot surpass. And it would be rash to set limits to the strength of the sentiment which, in days to come, might gather round a State in which the natural love of our dear native land was wedded to the gratitude and the veneration due by the citizen to the beneficent authority that had shaped and regulated his life. But our thoughts go back to the God of our Puritan and Covenanting forefathers, the God of Knox and of Cromwell, and to the things that were done in His Name; and we wonder how the mastery of that awful Presence over the human heart and conscience is to be won by the noblest State that is likely to be fashioned by human hands and minds.

VI. Finally, we cannot regard citizenship as complete without at least some living contact with the things of the mind.

In a sense this is already recognised. Even the man who reads nothing but the newspaper contrives to feel some pride in our national literature; and is ready, with an irritable patriotism, to hold a brief for it against all comers. The pathetic (and partially humorous) fact is that so many are on such very distant terms of acquaintance with what they thus extol. National this literature is: it is national in language, in spirit, in history, declared by its students to be the express image of the national, and often of the popular national life. But national it is *not*, if by that we mean that it enters as an appreciable and strengthening element into the lives of the vast majority

[1] *National Life and Character*, p. 266.

of those of whom the nation is made up. Men boast of it as their literature, but it is not really theirs, for the simple reason that they do not know anything of it.

One would not advance demands that are Utopian. And it is not to be forgotten that citizenship, like all other modes of effective action, is inexorably ruled by Division of Labour; so that, perhaps to the furthest future, one man will serve his country mainly in the workshop, another in the public service, a third in his parish, a fourth in his study. "Everything for all" would be the craziest of aspirations, if it meant *for all in equal proportions.* Nevertheless the fact remains that, without some participation in the things of the mind, citizenship, as we have spoken of it, will remain a stunted thing.

Thus few are aware how strong a case can be made out for Education, liberal as well as technical, simply as an instrument of livelihood. It is Education that guides the learner's hand, that obviates waste alike of time and of material, that economises the grievous cost of superintendence, that creates the labour-saving, which in the long run are likewise the labour-stimulating, inventions.[1] Not least, in days when labour can only by organisation fight its battle, it is Education that has to make not only workmen but the leaders of workmen; just as, in the complicated dealings of modern business, it is Education that helps to fashion the master in industry, or the leader in commerce.

What holds of livelihood holds likewise of Public Life. Beyond controversy, the problems which confront the citizen of a modern State are of unexampled difficulty. Unexampled urgency is in them united with unexampled complexity. Nor is it cause for wonder. For these problems are social problems such as go to the roots of our national life, in a way without parallel in the more purely political struggles of our forefathers. To these add the crop of questions, ever likely to increase, which springs from the rule of great colonies and dependencies: and to them in turn, the issues that arise in a complicated, and often a precarious, international system from which not even the most fanatical of non-interventionists can shake

[1] Cf. Walker, *Political Economy*, p. 52, Macmillan, 1883.

himself free. It is fortunate that the solution of these problems is not left to the rank and file of Democracy. Happily, their business is mainly limited to two sufficient tasks: the first to choose men who may be able to solve these problems: the second to pronounce upon broad issues, as these are from time to time threshed out and submitted to them by platform or press.[1] But even thus, who can hide his eyes from the fact that without some real instruction—instruction in the rudiments of economic law, in the precedents of recent history, in the outlines, at least, of local and national institutions,—government by Democracy will too surely become misgovernment by ignorance?

Nor is this all. If it be reasonable to ask a citizen to reverence and to love his country, does it not hold true that he will never do this with adequate devotion, till he can appreciate, not by hearsay, but by living contact, something of the value of all the things that have made it great? For many of these there is no need to go to books. Experience, even an ordinary experience, if it be laid to heart, is enough to assure us that our country is industrious, rich, peaceful, powerful, religious, free. But when it comes to Literature, or Science, or Art, there is no real experience except the way of personal knowledge. To be able, uncritically enough, but with unaffected appreciation, to admire a great picture; to understand something of the vastness of the intellectual revolution which taught men that this little earth was not the centre of the Universe, or which marshalled facts under the new idea of Evolution; or simply to enter into some chosen corner of the heritage of great books—is it too much to hope for these things, even for the mass of an educated nation? Nor need it be forgotten how much even the most practical citizenship has to gain, how much in wisdom, how much in inspiration, if it has learnt to turn to the written record of our country's past.

> "We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
> That Shakspeare spake; the faith and morals hold
> Which Milton held."

[1] Cf. ch. v.

How much more will it gain, if by tradition, and by reading, we have fed our patriotism on our country's history, and on the lives of its poets, its statesmen, its heroes, and its saints.

Such, at any rate, are the ways in which we may venture to think that citizenship can alone become a real thing. It is not enough that a nation should gather within its borders industries and commerce, political institutions, schools, universities, churches, a rich inheritance in Literature and Science and Art. It does not even suffice that men should be able, with a just and patriotic joy, to know that such achievements have made their country great in the eye of the world. The day of satisfying citizenship, and of realised progress and freedom, is still in the future, so long as the ordinary citizen has not yet learnt to number these things among the influences that actually quicken, strengthen, enrich, and elevate his life.

For what the democratic citizen, truly so-called, longs for, hopes for, strives for, is that up to the full measure of his powers of body and mind, he should participate in all those things, all those elements of civilisation as we may call them, which have made his country free, wealthy, cultured and great among the nations. Nor is he likely to pause, so long as the democratic spirit is alive within him, till this reasonable claim for Participation has taken many a further stride towards that fulfilment which will make these islands at once more truly democratic and a better place for all its citizens to live in.

V

THE RULE OF THE MAJORITY IN POLITICS

I. A PLEA FOR THE RULE OF THE MAJORITY

Democratic writers are remarkable for their distrust of majorities. Nor are their justifications of rule by majority convincing. Yet repeated extensions of the franchise demand at least a presumption in its favour.

The direct argument from historical experiment is not here satisfactory. It is better to enquire if the average citizen under representative democracy is likely to be equal to the decisions he has to face. (1) *There are reasons for thinking that the average citizen is equal to the choice of* men *to represent him.* (2) *Is he equally fit to decide upon* measures? *The present plea rests on the belief that the average citizen may presumably be trusted* (a) *to recognise in sufficient measure the value of the main ends of national well-being;* (b) *to form a sufficiently sound judgment upon the concrete measures by which these ends are secured (this ceases to be true if Democracy becomes delegative and not truly representative);* (c) *to be sufficiently free from the selfish and sinister interests which warp the political judgment.*

Two dangers must be recognised:—(1) *When the issue involves a redistribution of wealth, and the majority is poor.* (2) *When diffused and subdivided power begets individual irresponsibility and indifference. The individual independence which is ready, if need be, to withstand a majority however large, is a condition apart from which no plea for the rule of the majority is reasonable.*

Now that we are so well agreed to settle our political controversies "by counting heads instead of breaking heads,"[1] it is reasonable to enquire what grounds there are for the faith that this appeal to the majority will be justified by its fruits.

[1] Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, p. 31, 2nd edition.

The question presses, not only because the unbelievers in Democracy, like Carlyle or Sir Henry Maine, tell us, with much fertility of forcible phrase, that this method of counting heads is the road to perdition; but also because there is but cold consolation to be found even in the democratic camp itself. Is that most aristocratic of radicals, John Stuart Mill, ever seemingly surer of his ground than when, catching up the note of alarm from De Tocqueville's brilliant analysis of American Democracy, he scares us with the terrors of the majority's tyranny? "For where the majority is the sole power, and a power issuing its mandates in the form of riots, it inspires a terror which the most arbitrary monarch often fails to excite. The silent sympathy of the majority may support on the scaffold the martyr of one man's tyranny; but if we would imagine the situation of a victim of the majority itself, we must look to the annals of religious persecution for a parallel."[1] Is Mr. Spencer ever more unphilosophically vituperative than when, fearful of a coming slavery of his pet protégé, the individual, he lifts up his testimony against "the great political superstition of the present," "the divine right of parliaments, and the implied divine right of majorities"?[2] And if, in Mazzini, we hear a different strain, and find, indeed, nothing short of a glowing religious faith in collective humanity, as incarnating the very will of God; still, what we get in Mazzini is, after all, dogma, —lofty, reassuring, heart-stirring, but still dogma; whereas, what we naturally crave for—if only for the sake of silencing our enemies—is proof. Is there then any proof, nay, is there any presumption, that in a country of wide franchise like the England of to-day, the majority will go right, or even be saved from going disastrously wrong? This is the question that must be put and answered.

Answers have, of course, been attempted. Bentham, and his grand vizier, James Mill, may be said to have made the attempt; but these two mighty men of Radicalism made it only to fail. Setting out from that first article of their creed, that the end of all political effort was the

[1] *Dissertations*, Vol. II., p. 39. Cf. De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Part I., ch. xv.

[2] *The Man v. The State*, pp. 78 and 104.

greatest happiness of the numerical majority, they went on to argue that, as every individual pursued his own happiness, and could do nothing else, a majority of these individuals, if only they could find the right machinery for the expression of their will, would by consequence realise this supreme political end of greatest happiness. But who does not see the flaw? "The true interests of the majority of individuals told by count of heads is the end of politics." Suppose this be granted. "Men pursue what they think their true interests." Suppose this be granted too. But where, in a world in which, on any political theory, short-sightedness, fallacy, lethargy, ignorance, stupidity, prejudice, are considerable facts, is the security that what men *think* their true interests will *be* their true interests? It would be rash to assume that security is not forthcoming; but rasher still to take for granted the very matter to be proved, namely, that the average head to be counted is not a worthless wooden head. And yet this is the very point where Bentham deserts us. He is, in fact, much in the position of a politician who is ready to tell us that, if we polled a great city to-morrow on some burning question and united the majority upon it, we might rest assured that such majority would certainly promote the public good, because every man in it could be depended upon to be pursuing his own interest. Whereas, there is the possibility that of such a majority, so united, nine-tenths might be ignorantly or fatuously pursuing a folly or a shadow, as, indeed, according to some great men, as well as many little men, they are habitually doing over the length and breadth of England.

Nor did Mill the younger much mend matters, great as his genius and his services to Radicalism were. Firm in the Benthamite credo that every man is the best guardian of his own interests, and quite prepared (though not without taking certain large securities) to enthrone the majority, he has no sooner done this than he turns round, and in language, as strong and bitter as we might look for in an old high Tory, reviles "the herd." There are said to be some savages who beat their gods. Perhaps it is on this principle that this great philosophical radical

is never himself fuller of life than when he is castigating English society of all grades, or laying bare not only its intellectual incapacities but its moral obliquities. We see this in his essay *On Liberty*, well styled by Mr. John Morley "one of the most aristocratic books that ever was written;"[1] and in certain pages in the *Autobiography*, with its shocking candour upon "the low moral tone of what in England is called society"—England, where "everybody acts as if everybody else (with few, or no exceptions) was either an enemy or a bore."[2] Most of all is this evident in the passage, in the *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, in which the "lower classes" are with a judicial calmness swept to condemnation as "mostly habitual liars."[3] A democratic writer who speaks of "the herd" must remember that "the herd" suggests Gadara.

The wonder is (and the credit) that, thinking thus of men, he remains not only a radical but an optimist. Sometimes he sets his hope on checking the majority; checking them by his favourite specific, representation of minorities;[4] or by "greater weight to the suffrage of the more educated voter";[5] or by the initiative of the few, who, he thinks, are alone capable of leading;[6] or by the growth of the historical spirit in politics, which may abate the rashness of reform.[7] Sometimes, with the true and noble instinct of his school, he trusts to education in the wide sense of the word, and looks for the days when the multitude may become as enlightened, truthful, and prudent as they are in our own day (in his view) ignorant, lying, and improvident.[8] Yet he gives us no distinct or direct proof that, even in that indefinitely remote future when

[1] Cf. Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, Preface, xv., 2nd edition.

[2] *Autobiography*, pp. 58-60.

[3] *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III., p. 44.

[4] *Representative Government*, ch. vii.

[5] *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. III., p. 21.

[6] *On Liberty*, ch. iii., p. 39, People's edition.

[7] Cf. "Essay on Coleridge," *Dissertations and Discussions*, Vol. I., p. 424. "No one can calculate what struggles, which the cause of improvement has yet to undergo, might have been spared, if the philosophers of the Eighteenth Century had done anything like justice to the Past."

[8] *Political Economy*, Bk. II., ch. xiii., § 3.

education and experience of self-government have done their best for him, the average man will possess the qualities which will enable him to go right on the issues he will have to decide. There is not even enough to reassure us that this average man will not disastrously go wrong, in that interval when he has received power, but not yet education and experience of self-government.

It is in truth one of the most fatal paradoxes of the school of Philosophical Radicalism, that some of its greatest thinkers had too much contempt for ordinary men. John Stuart Mill was deeply dipped in this aristocratic dye. Whence it may happen that the pious radical who goes to his works to have his faith confirmed, may stumble on the commination part of the service, and having gone to pray, remain to scoff. Unless, indeed, he may think it a fair *quid pro quo* that that form of radicalism that disbelieves in men must expect that men will disbelieve in it.

It would seem, therefore, that in the philosophy of Radicalism there is still a want. In the face of a franchise, in this country twice[1] vastly broadened since 1832, and, we may add, in the absence on any great scale of those safeguards on which Mill laid such stress, there is need of a closer examination of the pleas that may be advanced in favour of the majority. We do not, of course, expect to prove that the majority must go right (no one would claim for it the superhuman attribute of infallibility), but we may expect to make out at any rate a presumption in its favour. Some plea for the majority is at all events necessary, if that Representative Democracy, on which some of us build great hopes, is to be more than a leap in the dark, and more than a slavish acquiescence in that tyranny of a multitude, which, if the issue be one of numbers only, is but (in Burke's phrase) a multiplied tyranny.

It makes the handling of this question none the easier that we are here, in great measure, debarred from the direct argument from experience. With the exception of the United States of America, it is evident, as Sir Henry Maine so forcibly points out in his hostile book on *Popular Government*, that the government of large and populous countries like ours, by an electorate like ours in size, is after all but a recent experiment—too recent, therefore,

[1] Written before women won the franchise.

and still too much of an experiment in process, to build conclusions upon, whether with Radicals for it, or with Sir Henry Maine against it. Democratic government in fact is here much in the same position as Pitt when twitted with his youthfulness: it cannot possibly reply by the argument from age. It stands to reason that, before it can be really tested, it must, like a young man who has just come into a fortune, be given time to realise and use its power; and who will say that the artisans who received votes in 1867, or the agricultural labourers, who have received them since, have had time to prove that they can use them well? We may argue from America, no doubt; and cite the United States, not only as, in Maine's own words, "a political fact of the first importance;"[1] but as one which has exercised a vast influence, both on Europe generally and upon our own land. Yet even this is not enough. To cite the United States is so often the signal for controversy to begin; there is so much debate about the actual value of the results which have been there attained—and not least since Mr. Bryce has supplemented De Tocqueville by his graphic picture of "The Boss" and all his works, and the working of "the Machine"[2]; there are, moreover, so many reminders that the conditions of America, economic and other, are exceptional, that it augurs no timidity to leave this uncertain ground of actual historical experiment to those bolder spirits who can gird their loins for such a task.

A less ambitious, possibly a less doubtful course is to put the issue thus: Taking an electorate such as that of our own country, is there reason to think that the average man possesses faculties and qualities, on the whole, adequate to the decisions, which, as a citizen, he has to face? And the plea for the rule of the majority here urged is that there *is* reason so to think.

Of these decisions, under Representative Democracy (and all Democracy on a large scale must, of course, be representative), one of the most important must always be the choice of men. Is the average man equal to this

[1] *Popular Government*, p. 18.

[2] *The American Commonwealth*, Part III., especially chs. lx.-lxvii., 2nd edition.

choice? "If we provide the country with popular institutions," said Macaulay, "those institutions will provide it with great men."[1] This was said in face of a Whig franchise. Can we say it in face of a Radical franchise —even if we are content to look for men, not great, but only capable? Can we say it after making full allowance for gullibility or indifference, on the one side, and charlatanry, demagogy, wire-pulling, and corruption on the other?

One must not dogmatise. But there is this at least to reassure us; the qualities that make a good representative are not occult. They are, on the contrary, just the qualities which, next to physical ones, lie most on the surface, and openest to observation. Power of speech, and power of silence, energy, capacity for business, the practical shrewdness that is tested in every-day life, clearness of head, straightforwardness, incorruptibility; the diagnosis of these is surely not beyond the average man. Much that is to be found, in Carlyle and elsewhere, about the incapacity of the "rotten multitudinous canaille" to know a man when they see him, is doubtless true enough. Spiritual qualities, intellectual attainments, unassuming moral worth, refinement, genius, professional skill; suppose we grant that the multitude is as insensible to these as to severe art or classical music. It is much too extreme a concession, but it is not to the point. The issue here is solely as to political qualities. And when we bear in mind, first, that these are the qualities that most readily come out in every-day life; and second, that the men who claim our votes are usually either local men who have perhaps for a life-time gone in and out among us, or strangers who come with credentials from those who know them; is it rash to believe that public spirit, and our national passion for politics, will guide us, not only how to elect, but how to select our representatives?

Of course there are qualifications. It is the A B C of political thought to understand that to every general proposition that can be framed on political matter, there are multitudes of qualifications. It is so here. The best men often do not offer themselves; sometimes they do not

[1] "Speech on Parliamentary Reform," *Miscellaneous Writings and Speeches*, p. 490, Popular edition, 1889.

care to do so; sometimes, under stress of circumstances, they cannot when they would; and of course local connection and party exigencies may patronise incapacity. But after all, these qualifications do but qualify; they do not invalidate. Nor will Carlyle himself, believer in the ineradicability of Hero Worship, deny wholly, even to "the twenty-seven million gods of the gallery," the redeeming instinct to recognise and to follow "the man who can."

And yet all this is of significance only on one proviso —the vital proviso that the men chosen be not delegates but representatives. The degradation of the representative into the delegate is a twofold danger and damage. (1) It lowers the level of the men available. "Depend upon it," once said Burke, "that the lovers of freedom will be free."[1] Invert the proposition, and we have the corollary: the men who are not free—the men who go to the House slavishly bound by pledges, there to serve constituencies with tongue or vote, but not with their judgment—these will not be the lovers of freedom. (2) The second, and an even greater evil, is that, with this scourge of delegative democracy, there would devolve on the constituencies a task for which they will perhaps for ever remain unfit. No one would plead for *carte blanche* to representatives, or ask that the burden of deciding the broad issues of policy should be lifted from the shoulders of the Electorate, where in true Democracy it must always remain. But assuredly the case for Representative Democracy is sapped, if not subverted, the moment the Electorate (which is ill-fitted indeed for the actual work of legislation) begins, with the public meeting or local caucus as its organ, to dictate details, and turn representatives into local agents. It is of the very essence of Representative Democracy that its representatives should be far above the average; picked men; men of judgment and affairs; and that into their hands it should, with something of a just confidence, resign the decision of much, of which it is itself, by reason of its size, its inexperience, its want of knowledge, its want of time, its impatience of opponents, and its passions, inherently incapable. This is the very meaning of choosing representatives.

[1] *Works*, Vol. II., p. 130, "Speech at Bristol." Cf. context.

Granted, however, that the representative be preferred to the delegate, difficulty remains. We do not choose our representatives simply on grounds of political capacity. Few of us in this land of Party Government would vote even for a political genius, if we knew that he intended to "sit on the wrong side." Nor could the most long-suffering of constituencies endure a 'rogue-elephant' representative, trampling down its cherished convictions in the name of freedom of representatives. Evidently, then, the electorate must come to its choice of men with its mind already made up upon measures.

The next question therefore is obvious: Will our average citizen be fit to judge of the measures or policy on which his representative must be chosen? And this question does but raise another. To make him fit, what conditions must he satisfy what qualifications must he possess?

These appear to be as follows:

(1) The first is a sense of the paramount importance, and desirability, of the great permanent elements of national well-being. The words may sound big. But the things—the elements in question—are after all familiar enough; security for person, property, and reputation; freedom of speech and of action; sanitary conditions of life; good and cheap education; religious toleration; light and fair taxes; good times in industry and commerce; efficient administration; decency of life in all ranks and classes; national defence and honour; just rule of dependencies. It is of the very rudiments of citizenship that an elector who is fit for his vote should be able to say, not only that he knows of such ends, as a man might know them who had read about them in text-books, but that, by experience of life, he has come to believe that they are things worth living for.[1]

(2) To this must be added a certain modicum of that practical shrewdness or good sense, by dint of which men seem able best to solve the concrete and urgent problems of daily life; a quality, we may add, that may exist in high degree even where there is little theorising power and scant faculty of scientific analysis.[1]

[1] Cf. ch. vii.

(3) And with this in turn we must have, in closest union, sufficient public spirit to save its possessor from that selfish and sinister interest, which not only drives men on in their actions to a reckless pursuit of personal or class advantage, but which goes deeper far, even to the distortion of the entire political judgment of those who fall under its penetrating and insidious influence.[1]

And here, with reference to the second and third of these conditions it is needful to hazard a remark. The fitness of men for the franchise has been treated too much as if it were a question merely of political intelligence and political information; as if, in short, no man could be fit to enter the electorate of his country till he felt competent to answer a searching examination paper on History, Political Economy, Constitutional History, Political Philosophy, and one knows not what.[2]

This raises a false issue. The question is not one merely of intelligence and information. To think it is so is glaringly to fail to see the depth of the distinction between the nature of a political judgment and a scientific one. The latter is framed in a region which is, by the very conditions of theoretical enquiry, remote from interests and passions; the former must, like all our practical decisions, be framed in the very atmosphere of urgency, in the very vortex of strong feeling and partial affections. Information, of course, is much, and a good intellect is more. Those who would play their part in enacting facts must take some pains to know their facts. But never, in political decisions, is it enough to *know* our facts. Where every question involves a multitude of conditions, of interests, of tendencies, we must do more than know. We must weigh, we must emphasise aright, so that every condition may not only be known, but have its just and proper value set upon it. It is here that the need for something more than intellectual quality comes in. Intellect is no security: what is ordinarily called culture is no

[1] Cf. ch. vii.

[2] Cf. on the whole subject of the fitness of men for the franchise Gladstone's *Gleanings of Past Years*, Vol. I., in which the views of Mr. Lowe (Lord Sherbrooke) are controverted. Also cf. Maine's *Popular Government*, pp. 88, 97, 166.

security; far less birth or wealth. The most intellectual, the most acute, the most excellently informed of men, the best born, the richest, if he comes to his problem with a bias of selfish or caste feeling, will not be saved, in the hour of decision, from judging judgments that are hopelessly distorted and awry. Acute he may be, but none the less his emphasis will be wrong; his values will be out; his weights will be false. It may well happen that he will—it may be unconsciously—fly far wider of the mark than his neighbour, who more than atones for imperfect knowledge by good sense and public spirit. And it is for this reason that stress must be laid on that last, not least, of the three qualifications, the absence of sinister interest, the presence of public spirit.[1]

It is one thing however to enumerate qualifications. It is another to show that the average man possesses them. Here lies the crux. We may best deal with it by taking the three foregoing qualifications in order.

(1) Can it be said that the broad ends of national well-being have so laid hold of the average man that he can be counted on to strive for them? It is a large question, only to be answered with confidence by those who have much habitual intimate contact with all ranks of life. But there is at least this to reassure us—the ends enumerated are not such that the majority cannot realise their value. Security of person and property, free speech, health, education, low taxes, efficient government,—can men not learn the value of things like these in the ordinary experiences of daily life? The fastidious aristocracy of refinement, and the self-satisfied plutocracy of comfort, treat the idea sometimes as preposterous that poor men should, on political issues, be consulted at all. The reply is at hand. The ends for which after all a nation exists are not the monopoly of cultivated intelligence. They are in great measure ends that stare every adult man full in the face every day he lives.

We may even go a step further. In presence of the indubitable fact that much legislation is concerned with redress of grievances, or removal of hardships, bad drains, adulterated food, neglect of children, ill-ventilated work-

[1] Cf. ch. vii.

shops, dangerous occupations, drunkenness, pauperism, ignorance (and others could be easily added), it is a positive political disability for any man to be, by a recluse, or a luxurious, or a care-free, or an idle life, too far removed from the opportunity of realising, by personal contact, what such things mean. Such a person may read of these evils and look on at them as an interested spectator, and even discuss them; but if he have not besides a sympathetic insight rarely to be reckoned upon, he will fail on the threshold. He will neither do justice to the magnitude of the problems, nor to the urgency of remedy and redress.[1]

So long, indeed, as it remains a prime end of legislation to deal with hardship or grievance, ordinary prudence, if nothing higher, would, in the distribution of political power, seem to dictate an avoidance of either of two extremes: one, the committal of power only to those who labour under these disabilities of ease and luxury; the other, its committal to those who suffer so acutely that they do not care what they do, if only they can get rid of their present miseries. But the great majority in a country like ours are neither at the one extreme nor the other. They feel hardships, yet not so acutely as to be driven desperate. And it is, not a little, in that fact that there lies a hope that they will move towards the broad elemental ends which have been named. Not equally, however, towards all. A country's foreign policy, and the rule of great and distant dependencies—who will venture to say that the average member of a great Democracy will find it easy to do justice to these? He may hear of such questions. He does hear of them in political speeches, in pamphlets, in newspapers, even in schoolbooks. But by their strangeness and remoteness they are not brought home to him, and do not, like other ends, enter familiarly into his life. Did not Cleon himself declare, if Thucydides is to be believed, that a Democracy is unequal to the rule of an empire?[2] We have made the venture, and hitherto no one can say we have failed. But it is idle to deny that we have succeeded

[1] For opposite view cf. Maine's *Popular Government*, p. 78.
[2] Thucydides, Bk. III., ch. 37.

in the presence of an indifference on the part of our electorate to the affairs of India, which would be wholly lamentable were it not that in this indifference we can find the seeming compensation of escape from the dangers of interfering in matters where information is as scant as interest is weak.

(2) But even granting that the masses care for these wide ends, it is not on them that they are asked to pronounce when a general election comes round; it is on the best measures for securing them. The question is not, for example, Is Education a good thing? but, Is Free Education the way to secure it? not, Is prosperous industry a good thing? but, Is an Eight Hours' Act the way to make industry prosper? Are the majority likely to go right upon issues like these? It depends upon what we expect of them If we expect of them, upon any issue, what we have a right to look for in a student of Political History, or even in a public man, the issue is a foregone conclusion. But this is not the issue. There is a remarkable sentence in which Mr. Gladstone, arguing against Mr. Lowe for the extension of the franchise, said: "It is written in legible characters, and with a pen of iron, on the rock of human destiny, that within the domain of practical politics the people must in the main be passive."[1] It was well said. Never can the average man be reasonably called upon to think out measures for himself in all their baffling detail. The utmost we can ask is a much less thing. When politicians have argued; when speakers great and small have exhausted rhetoric in serving up anew the same old story; when political associations have debated, and editors have written; it is then, and not till then, that the decision has to be made and the vote cast. And the sole question is: Will the average man be equal to the issue then? It is well to avoid a dogmatic answer, unless it be dogmatic to point where hope lies; and that is in the nature of the quality that is required. When men select an adviser in some practical undertaking of private life, to whom do they, by preference, betake themselves? Not surely to the best born; not to the richest; not to the most polished; not

[1] *Gleanings of Past Years*, Vol. I., p. 194.

to the most distinguished; not to the best read; but to the most sagacious, to the man of a sound judgment. It is so with the wider decisions of politics. What in regard to them is needed is not, primarily, theorising faculty (though none but a fool would despise it), and not mere political information (though the more of this the better), but practical good sense.

"Well," we can hear the cynic say, "it is none too common." Suppose it be granted. Good sense is none too common, let us admit, in any class or station. But we are bound to add, neither is it any class's monopoly. It may be possible to sift out from the community a learned class, a rich class, a fashionable class, an idle class, a criminal class; it will tax the wit of man to sift out a sagacious class. Not that sagacity does not exist, but that it overleaps classes.

For it is not by the things that splinter us into classes, castes, coteries, that men of sense are made. They are made by that management of his own life which every man must face; by that participation in the work and organisation of societies (trade combinations not forgotten), which already is a hopeful feature of our time; by that interest in urgent public questions which men in all classes feel; by that sound education, fast coming, nay, already come, within reach of the humblest. These are not perhaps agencies enough to banish doubts. They are too new, too plainly still upon their trial. But they are enough to justify, to all but pessimists, the strong hope that in the near future, if not at this moment, we may find, sufficiently diffused throughout all ranks and classes, that modicum of sound sense which will prove equal to the well sifted and greatly simplified issues on which alone the Electorate is called upon to judge.

(3) All this, however, will not avail if, besides, we cannot count, as a third main requisite, upon Public Spirit.

By Public Spirit is not to be understood a readiness for heroic sacrifice (though it exists). In this connexion, nothing more is needful than, in union with the appreciation of the large ends of national life, an absence of the narrow, selfish interests which so hopelessly distort the

political judgment. Can we then count on the absence of these? Perhaps we may best take our answer from the words of a notable statesman: "A long experience impresses me with the belief that this evil temper (*i.e.*, selfish interest) does not grow in intensity as we move downwards in society from class to class. I rather believe that, if a distinction is to be drawn in this respect, it must be drawn in favour of, and not against, the classes (if such they should be called) which are lower, larger, less opulent, and, after allowing fully for Trades' Unions, less organised."[1]

If there are those who will not concede the truth of this, it is not necessary to ask them to concede nearly so much. No man is bound, and perhaps no man is able, to prove that one 'class' is more disinterested than another. The comparison is invidious. Enough if we can agree that the larger 'classes' are as disinterested. For, in that case, under this head at least, there can be no ground for distrusting popular any more than aristocratic power.

And yet, though this appears a modest aspiration enough, it is needful to remember that no man is entitled to entertain it, till he has frankly faced a double danger. One is the danger—deadly if it triumphs—that, in a land where property is most unequally diffused, the issue that swamps all else should become the struggle for the greater equalisation of wealth by force of law. It would be a harder task to be sure of the disinterestedness of the majority then.

And yet it may be doubted if this (alarmists notwithstanding) is the greater danger. For we have amongst us a sense of justice, and a love of personal liberty; there is already a large class who possess property, though it be not much; and there are other agencies making for diffusion of wealth besides the legal confiscation of the extremer Democratic State Socialism. It is not rash to think that these are strong enough to stem the tendency to contract politics, with all its diversified and glorious ends, into a concentrated, materialistic struggle for property.

[1] Gladstone, *Gleanings of Past Years*, Vol. I., p. 140.

But there is another danger, all the more menacing because it springs up under the very shadow of Liberty. Liberty, we are told, is but subdivided power—power broken up into minute fragments, and portioned out among the multitudes of a democratic electorate.[1] No believer in Democracy will regret it. Power subdivided is, in his arithmetic, power multiplied. But there is a price to pay. Unhappily, subdivided power is likewise subdivided responsibility; and, with this, too surely comes that blight of indifference that so swiftly falls upon the elector, as often as he begins to think how paltry, how unavailing seems his fraction of power. "What matter how I vote; what matter if I vote at all"—this is the fatal paralysing thought. And it is the reality of this danger, that the units who make up the majority will not stand forward and do their duty, which prompts a last remark.

It may seem to some but a faint-hearted plea to have claimed for the majority no more than a presumption in its favour. But the truth is that he would be the worst foe of the majority who took it upon him to claim more. In order that the majority should go right, nothing is more needful than that every member of it should lay it well to heart that the majority may go wildly wrong; and that he should accept, in all its gravity, the individual responsibility which a conviction of that fallibility ought to bring.

Mr. Bryce has told us in his *American Commonwealth* that, where the rule of the majority is long established there is apt to grow up in individual citizens a tendency at once to acquiesce.[2] Partly it is the conviction that there is no use in resisting; but, partly, the conviction that the majority must be right. If this spirit triumphs, the case for the majority is lost. Who would hold a brief for a majority whose every member, paralysed by this slavish spirit of blind acquiescence, was ready to shuffle off his individual responsibility, and fasten it on neighbours as servile as himself? It would be a majority

[1] Cf. Maine, *Popular Government*, p. 29.

[2] *The American Commonwealth*, Part IV., ch. lxxxiv., "The Fatalism of the Multitude."

discredited by every one of its members. As well build a dock wall out of shifting sand, as a great Democracy out of such as these.

If, therefore, it is something to be able to believe—when the tramp of Democracy is in every street—that the voice of the majority is the voice not only of power, but of justice and good sense; it is even more important to remember that it is more likely to be Vox Diaboli than Vox Dei (which in some sense one trusts it is), if it be not, at bottom, the voice of individual judgment and personal conviction.[1] Reasonable trust in the majority there can never be where there is not a readiness, if need be, to withstand the majority to the face; for it is only out of men prepared so to do that a reasonable majority can be made.

It is, at any rate, on some such grounds that—pending the event of the vast political experiment we have in the England of our own day initiated—a believer in Representative Democracy may venture to think that we are not on that path, which one great writer tells us leads "towards Democracy, as towards Death";[2] not already clutched by the rapids which, another assures us, are hurrying us on to "shoot Niagara."

[1] "I never said that the vox populi was of course the vox Dei. It may be; but it may be, and with equal probability a priori, vox Diaboli. That the voice of ten millions of men, calling for the same ... is a spirit, I believe; but whether that be a spirit of Heaven or Hell I can only know by trying the thing called for by the prescript of reason and God's will."—Coleridge, *Table Talk*, p. 173, 3rd edition.

[2] Maine, *Popular Government*, p. 170.

V

THE RULE OF THE MAJORITY IN POLITICS
(*Continued*)

II. "THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY"[1]

"*Tyranny of the Majority*" *must be distinguished* (1) *from mere mistaken decision by the majority, and* (2) *from illegal abuse of power by the majority. Its danger lies in the very fact that it is a* legal *abuse of power, and that this abuse of power may be conscientious. A minority has no grievance simply because it is outvoted, or because discussion is cut short. It has a grievance when the majority, from motives good or bad, neglects available means of justifying its action in the eyes of its opponents. The abuse of power which creates tyranny springs from impatient appeal to the weight of numbers and wilful disregard of the need for arguments.*

When a citizen suffers under a tyrannical majority, there are circumstances under which resistance, active or passive, may be the justifiable course. But there are reasons why a good citizen will, except in exceptional cases, endure tyranny rather than defy the law.

"TYRANNY of the Majority" is a phrase to which minorities so readily have recourse, that it has become of some practical moment to ask what it means. And it is especially important, at the outset, to be clear that this tyranny is something different from mere mistaken decision

[1] For discussion of the wider aspects of this question, cf. De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Part I., chs. xiv. and xv. Mill, *Representative Government*, chs. vi. and vii. Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, Part IV., ch. lxxxv. Burke, *Works*, Vol. II. 167, "Speech at Bristol," 1780; III. 76, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs."

by the majority on the one hand, and from illegal abuse of power by the majority on the other. It is neither so innocent as the first of these, nor so flagitious as the second.

Decision by majority may at times be difficult to accept. Few situations are more exasperating than that of the citizen whose law-abiding instincts and habits are enlisted in acceptance of an enactment which he patriotically may abhor. But if the measure has been passed after full and fair discussion, by constitutional means, the situation must be accepted. Such decision is the inevitable result of democratic rule. Consolation must be sought in the knowledge that, after all, the right or wrong of a question is not settled by count of heads; and in the hope that, though the majority has blundered, blundering is not of its essence. But in any case there can be here no question of "tyranny"; for there is no "tyranny" in the fact that men from whom we differ get their way in despite of all we can do. Otherwise there is no Committee, Board, Council, Association, or Assembly, which could without "tyranny" transact its business for a day.

On the other hand, to fix the charge of tyranny we need not bring home the imputation of illegality. In a free country, tyranny, if it comes at all, comes, insidiously and respectably, in the use of means that are entirely legal. There is abuse of power, otherwise there would not be tyranny; but it is abuse of power by legal means.

The problem that emerges is clear: it is to define this legal abuse of power. And it may be well to remark at once that it does not appear to lie in the quality of the intentions of those who perpetrate it. There is, of course, a brutal and repulsive tyranny which is found when a majority, with shameless disregard of the Public Good, pursues a policy of deliberate, or even cynical, party selfishness. But we need not dwell upon this. For a majority to tyrannise, it is not necessary that it should be unpatriotic. On the contrary there is no tyranny worse, because there is none more conscientious, than that of men firmly persuaded that they are the saviours of the State, and that their opponents are little better than public malefactors. For the abuse of power that constitutes tyranny, one must, therefore, seek, not in the intentions

of those who impose restraints, but rather in the nature of the restraints which are imposed.

Now, doubtless there is much restraint which (unless to the fanatics of anarchy) is no grievance. We have no grievance when, being in a minority, we find ourselves made liable to pay a tax, of which we have been and are the vehement opponents. The plain truth is that we have fought our battle and lost it. And if we remain still unconvinced, our opponents are not therefore to blame. In a world where there are many persons beyond convincing, it would be absurd to insist that any majority should hold its hand till it had convinced the other side. Politicians may be bound to furnish arguments, they are certainly under no obligation to create convictions.

No more is it, necessarily, a grievance that discussion should be "closured" or otherwise cut short. There are good reasons why discussion should be free, but none why it should be unlimited. Mankind has never yet established the right even to any specific quantum of discussion. It is a "right" that cannot be established. So long as the deliberations of politicians are different from the disputations of a debating club, so long, in the name of justice and of reason, must the limits of discussion expand or contract according to the urgency of the issues discussed. A well-advised majority will doubtless listen, even at some cost of patience, to what its opponents have to say. It may even, for the sake of courtesy or expediency, bear with them when, having nothing to say, they spend time in saying it. But the most long-suffering of majorities cannot undertake to measure the length of discussion by the possible duration of hostile arguments. Why should it? Discussion is not an end in itself. It is an instrument, priceless enough, but still a mere instrument for the transaction of business; and as such, it must in reason bear some relation to the urgency of the business to be transacted. Not being an end, it ought somewhere to have an end.

We see this clearly when urgency is undeniable. When the Public Safety is really endangered, and an Executive asks for exceptional powers which will be useless if not promptly granted, every lover of freedom, even though he

would fain discuss the proposal for weeks, must see that there is no tyranny though the vote be taken and the die cast in a night. The decision may bring the gravest consequences; it may be the precursor of meetings proclaimed, manifestoes seized, newspapers suppressed, men imprisoned. These consequences are all things in the last degree deplorable; shocking to free political instincts; and hateful to all who suffer and to some who inflict. But in none of them can we justly say that there is tyranny, if it be true, as on the supposition it is, that the Public Safety is in danger.

What thus happens in an extreme case, happens in a less degree in every case. Men do not decide on the practical problems of life after that prolonged suspense of judgment which is so admirable in Science. In life there is urgency always. It may range through all degrees, from the mild pressure that permits almost unlimited debate, to the dire necessity that passes a drastic measure in a sitting. But it is always there, and by every one who would define the reasonable limits of discussion, it must be reckoned with. Of all lovers of freedom he is the least discriminating who would measure it by mere prolongation of debate. For he mistakes the issue. He thinks it is a question between much speech and little. It is really a question between speech and action. And so it happens that in his burning zeal for freedom to discuss, he is fatally impairing that freedom to act, which is after all the higher test of all liberty that is not to be barren of deeds. "I must first beg leave," said Burke to his constituents at Bristol, "just to hint to you that we may suffer very great detriment by being open to every talker. It is not to be imagined how much of service is lost from spirits full of activity, and full of energy, who are pressing, who are rushing forward to great and capital issues, when you oblige them to be continually looking back. Whilst they are defending one service, they defraud you of a hundred. Applaud us when we run; console us when we fall; cheer us when we recover; but let us pass on—for God's sake, let us pass on."[1]

[1] *Works*, Vol. II., p. 129, "Speech at Bristol," 1780.

If then majorities may thus, for the sake of freedom itself, impose many an unwelcome restraint, it still remains to enquire when they cross the line where just restraint ends and tyranny begins. It is a line not easy to perceive; but at least we can say that a majority comes near it when it *neglects available means of justifying its action in the eyes of its opponents.* For it is not in the absence of restraints, nor even in the absence of restraints of which he may disapprove, that the free citizen differs from the slave. In the freest of countries there are few indeed who have not sooner or later to acquiesce in much. But the sting of tyranny comes when a man feels that he has not been consulted. He does not ask to be convinced. He does not always ask even to be heard. But he does, and must insist that, as a reasonable being, he be not ignored. His grievance, and there is none bitterer, begins from the moment when, as a free citizen, he looks for reasons, even if they be no more than reasons why further reasons are not forthcoming, and finds nothing but the irrational dead-weight of votes, nothing but the *Sic volo, sic jubeo*, of a hostile multitude. Men may submit to much; to defeat, to neglect of their counsels, to "closuring" of discussions, to the mistakes and the folly of opponents. But the one thing they may not endure is that their consent should be not so much as asked. And it is then that they do well to cry out against 'tyranny,' perhaps even to threaten resistance.

This danger is only too near to all great democracies, especially to those which have few or weak constitutional checks against the power of the majority. For, as one of the keenest of critics has said, it is the very snare of a large and victorious majority, that it mistakes the volume of its own agreement for a public verdict in its favour;[1] so that, wise in its own conceit, it heedlessly ignores the honest criticism and outspoken opposition which, then most of all, it ought to call into its counsels. Just when it ought to listen, it shuts its ears; just when it should welcome discussion, it mistakes impatience for urgency, assumes its own infallibility, and sets its opponents at

[1] Cf. Burke, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 365, "Reflections on the Revolution."

nought. For it is not through the coarse intimidation of riots, nor through overwhelming displays of physical force, that tyranny, in the future, is most likely to enter. It may come through that confidence in votes, and that disregard of arguments, which degrades a political issue into a sum in arithmetic.

A practical question remains. If this tyranny should come, and bring in its train some hateful tax or some detested authority, how does it befit the citizen to act? Should he resist, actively or passively, or should he choose the perhaps more difficult alternative of submission?

This is a question of political casuistry, and as such its actual decision must be left to the practical judgment of the responsible citizen, or leader of citizens, who "knows the men and knows the things." And yet the problem is not without its general principles.

One of these is that even passive resistance is so extreme a resource that no responsible citizen can adopt it, as long as there is a prospect of getting rid of his grievance by constitutional action. Not only in this case, but in all cases like it, men do well to remember that there is a fallacy in arguing from the casuistry of private life to the casuistry of politics. In private life, on nine occasions out of ten, the act is secret. Under the stress of emergency, the lie may be told, the truth concealed, the promise broken, the moral precept set aside; yet the whole transaction rests between the man and his own conscience. Let no one, hesitating on the brink of resistance to Law, imagine it will be so with him. *His* action will not be hid. And, however he may plead that it is thrust upon him by dire necessity, and may justify it as "the extreme medicine of the State," he must reckon with the certain prospect that others, perhaps less law-abiding than himself, will use him as their precedent, and "make the extreme medicine of the Constitution its daily bread."[1]

Even when constitutional action is hopeless, it does not follow that there is nothing left but to resist. Conceivably

[1] Burke, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 335, "Reflections on the Revolution." "I confess to you, sir, I never liked this continual talk of resistance," etc.

it might be so. A measure 'tyrannically' passed might so disastrously imperil security of person or contract, or, in one way or another, go so deep, that those who suffer might find the resulting situation intolerable. But there is tyranny and tyranny. We must distinguish enactments that bid fair to be exceptional, from enactments which seem to presage a persistent coming slavery.

In the former case, a man may well decide to submit and to suffer. Better, he may think, endure a tyrannical law than set the match to civil strife. In such submission, at any rate, there is no cowardice, if the fear that is uppermost be a dread of what his country may suffer. It has been nobly said that timidity with regard to the well-being of one's country is heroic virtue.

When the tyrannical law seems likely to be but one of a series, it is different. In such a case, a minority may not have coolness to argue the matter out. Its "inferences will lie in its passions." But the citizen who serves his country with his conscience will not thus shut his eyes. He will distrust the sense of grievance, however burning, if it does not come in strong alliance with a positive devotion to the Public Good. He will satisfy himself that if a contemplated resistance to authority should prove effectual, there will remain security that society may escape the dangers of disorder which all resistance needs must bring. Not least, he is bound to discount the contingency of failure. There have been times, no doubt, in the history of nations when heroic unavailing resistance has seemed the only means left to keep alive the spirit of freedom. But they do not often occur, and when they do, it is only under a despotism that is peculiarly grinding. And in other cases, it is a counsel not of cowardice but of prudence, that resistance without a reasonable prospect of success, though it may bespeak much personal heroism, is a political mistake and a public calamity.

Nor is it rash to indulge the hope that the tyranny of the majority, should it come, will not come in that shape that drives the citizen to defiance of the law. The very massiveness that renders the majority so headstrong and self-opinionated, helps to lift it above the panic that is supposed to drive the suspicious despot and the nervous

oligarchy to their worst excesses. The absence of compact class interests eliminates some of the strongest temptations to tyrannise; and even that socialistic tyranny which some dread as "the coming slavery," is robbed of many of its terrors, when we reflect upon the difficulties of uniting a free people in so vast a project of social and political reconstruction. That very inability to persist in a settled policy, with which its critics taunt Democracy, furnishes some presumption against its pursuit of a course of consistent oppression. And though democratic majorities may not improbably pervert new-won power to acts of tyranny, the hope remains that, learning partly by their own mistakes, they will at least withhold their hands from the injustice that drives the citizen to the dire arbitrament and doubtful remedy of civil war.

VI

PARTY AND POLITICAL CONSISTENCY

Loyalty to party seems a practical necessity, and goes far towards securing a substantial consistency. But strong parties may make limited men, and a true consistency may necessitate a breach with party. For though party seems a necessary instrument for enacting our convictions, it is but one of many agencies by which convictions are formed and fed. Hence an honest and open-minded politician's convictions may come to diverge so widely from those of his party that they can no longer find their best practical expression through it. There is a deeper consistency than loyalty to party.

THOUGH politicians are not slow to tax one another with inconsistency, it may be doubted if, in this country, their real danger lies in this direction. Between us and it, there interposes a form of consistency so respectable, so practical, so inveterate, so despotic, and to many minds so entirely satisfactory, that the risk is not that men will fall into inconsistency, but that they may rest too easily content with the consistent contractedness that is summed up in unqualified loyalty to Party.

There is much to be said for this kind of consistency.[1]

(1) It has the merit of ensuring practicality. It is a truism to say that, whether it be for the raising and the administering of funds, or for the pushing of a propaganda, or for purposes of organisation and public demonstration, to act with effect, a man must act in association. Most of all is this true when the group to which he belongs is, like a political party, by the very reason of its existence,

[1] Cf. Burke's classical plea for party in "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents," *Works*, Vol. I., pp. 373-381.

an instrument of action. The man who quits his party, however conscientiously, must face the risk of political impotence. The man who lives and dies in his party, "a penitent Christian, but an impenitent Radical," may rest at any rate in the consciousness of work done. And what is the value of political consistency if it be not practical?

(2) Loyalty to party likewise goes far to guarantee adaptability to circumstances. It is just here that adherence to party is so markedly superior to adherence to formula. A party is alive. However obstinately conservative, it moves with the times, and even its most retrograde adherents are constrained imperceptibly to move with it. Why should they hesitate to follow when it is so easy, and indeed so laudable, thus to devolve on the collective wisdom, and collective responsibility, that task, so difficult to every man, and so impossible to the man of formulas—the task of adjusting the political programme to the inevitable changes of political situation?

(3) Even more important is the advantage, that a party offers so large an object for allegiance. A great party is not a curiosity shop, in which customers can each simply find his own particular fancy in measures. It unites men on grounds of principle and of general policy—principle and policy that admit of many a varied application. If it makes demands upon its members, and exacts from them much self-suppression, it offers none the less a comprehensive creed, in which some of the most vigorous minds have for a life-time found room enough and to spare. And who can deny that the public life of many a citizen, otherwise narrow, desultory, and incoherent in its aims and interests, has gained in breadth and in consistency, because it has been caught up into the larger life of party, which is, after all, much wider and fuller than even the aspirations of the vast majority of its members?

(4) It is an even greater gain that adherence to a party is so admirably fitted to secure a consistency, a continuity in thought and in action, of which individuals are often quite incapable. Even the strongest of men have learnt the lesson that, if they try to stand alone,

their convictions wax and wane. They are at the mercy of doubts, despondencies, apathies. What they need is some support, impersonal enough to remain untouched by the accidents and impulses of the veering individual life. And they find this in a party, especially if it is a party with old traditions and far-reaching hopes. Once adopted by a party, a principle or a policy gains a weight and a stability which it cannot have when held, however strongly, by individual minds alone. Not easily, even in subordinate measures, can a well-organised party make those sudden new departures which are always possible to the private citizen. For the party it is wholesomely necessary to pause till it can carry the mass of its members with it; for the member of the party, it is as wholesomely repulsive to sever himself, even upon grave grounds of difference, from men with whom he has long acted in close alliance. A party is no compact made for temporary issues. It rests on more than a mere agreement of opinion and interest upon even a permanent policy. It is also an association of men, disciplined and welded together by what Burke called "hard essays of practised friendship and experimented fidelity." This may have its drawbacks. But the gain is, that it is just in this instinct and habit of loyalty, that there lies a safeguard against the precipitancy, the crudity, the instability, the misgivings, which are so apt to waylay even the most self-confident of men, when in their decisions they have no one to think of but themselves.

Nor is it cause for wonder that, in the present day especially, the average citizen should feel it a welcome relief to find many an issue decided for him. His problems are so hard and so complex—so much more complex than those of earlier generations. And yet they are so urgent. Hardly one of them but seems at times to demand a life-time's study; while yet the hundredth part of a life-time's study is often more than they can get. Forced on by democratic pressure or party rivalry, thrust to the front by groups of irreconcilables, they clamour for solution. And yet, who is the man with recklessness enough to solve them by a leap in the dark?

In such a time many a private man, conscious of his

political ignorance, conscious of his barrenness of suggestion, may well be pardoned if, loving his country too well to vote at random, he turns thankfully, for light and leading, to the party organ, the party manifesto, the party leader. *They* are beset by no misgivings. *They* are afflicted by no consciousness of ignorance. For *them* there is no problem too difficult. What then easier, and what more tempting, than to betake ourselves to them, and, in a new revival of old authority, to get rid of all our embarrassments by believing all they say, and by doing all they bid us? If, in the perplexities of our private lives, we call into counsel our trusted friends, we cannot blame the citizen, when, in justifiable self-distrust, he takes his decision from the spokesman, and the oracles, of the party in which he has long reposed an almost religious faith.

It is for these reasons that in this country we do well "in the way they call party to worship the constitution of our fathers,"[1] and even to visit with a just suspicion the man who sits loose to party allegiance. For there are men incapable of party—fanatical men, feeble men, unprincipled men, egotistical men, impulsive men, unsocial men. Some sacrifice what they call consistency to what they call practicality, and some practicality to a pedantic consistency. But the lesson all of them might learn is, that in the very loyalty to party which they despise, they might find a consistency more truly practical, and a practicality more truly consistent, than they are ever likely to realise in the fancied independence, and real ineffectiveness, of their own small, isolated lives.

And yet if there be men who are thus below party consistency, there are just as certainly others who are above it. We must not brand with inconsistency every politician who quits his old associates, not even though he may turn and rend them. For he may do all these things just because he is consistent. We have a notable instance. Burke was the greatest advocate of Party whom this country, or any country, has ever seen. His plea for Party is classical. He was also the architect of a party,

[1] Burke, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 37, "Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol."

"the Wesley of eighteenth century politics," who brought a new and saving life to the Whigs of the 18th century. And, in this task, he gave the twenty-five best years of his life to what he called "the forlorn hope of constant minorities." If he had a fault, it was, so we are told, that

> "he narrowed his mind,
> And to Party gave up what was meant for mankind."

And yet, by the irony of fate, it was reserved for Burke, when the French Revolution came, to do more than any other man to bring to disintegration and impotence the very party to which he had given the labour of his prime. There is an anecdote that reveals the full extent of the breach. His old associates taunted him with apostasy, and Burke retorted on them in the words Diogenes used, when he was told that his fellow-citizens of Sinope had condemned him to banishment; "And I condemn them to live in Sinope."[1]

Now, of course, the action of Burke, like that of Peel after him, has been branded as inconsistency. But one may venture to think that this is an inversion of the true order of things. Men, then and since, judged Burke by Party, when they ought to have judged Party by Burke. They stigmatised him as inconsistent, when they ought to have inferred that adherence to Party is a too narrow test of political consistency. The ugly fact is that strong parties make narrow men. They create a partisan orthodoxy which can see no good outside of itself, and a partisan intolerance, hardly surpassed in the annals of religious persecution.

One can see this in the judgments passed on Burke. Burke went into political life with a comprehensive ideal of political well-being. There was room in it for King and for People, for Aristocracy and Church; and he had his own ideas of the due place and powers of each in the complex organism of a nation's life. He may have been right in his views, he may have been wrong; but he held these ideas strongly, for they were not the product of a day. And when the practical problem came to him, how

[1] *Works*, Vol. III., p. 2, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs."

best to give effect to them, he solved it by throwing in his lot with the Whigs, and by resisting with them what he believed to be the menacing and unconstitutional encroachments of the Crown. But the Revolution came, and with it the day when he could no longer think that the danger came from the Crown. In the light of that great democratic revelation, he thought that now it came from the People; and so he withstood the People, with even more than the determination and the passion with which he had fought the battle of freedom against George the Third and Lord North. And when all was done, when his old party was destroyed, there was nothing upon which he so prided himself as upon his consistency. He well might. To read his writings is to see that the ideals of the Revolutionists struck as fatal a blow at his conception of the Public Good, as did the dogged unscrupulous struggles of the King to govern (or misgovern) as well as to reign. He had not parted with that ideal when he joined the Whigs, as all his writings testify. And when he went one way, and Fox and his friends another, it was simply because there lay implicit in his creed convictions they did not share, and on which there was previously no reason on his part to insist. As John Morley puts it, "He changed his front, but he never changed his ground."[1] Perhaps he was mistaken; he certainly was consistent. Fox and the "New Whigs" had not given him his convictions. Why then should they bound them, or seek to dictate their practical application? Even with his limitations, Burke was larger than the men who could not see round him.

What thus happened in the case of Burke may befall many a humbler politician. Like Burke, he may "worship the constitution of his fathers," by throwing in his lot with a party. Like Burke, he may live for his party. Like Burke, he may not die in it. Like Burke, he may denounce it. And his reason may be Burke's reason, that implicit in his mind from the first, there may have lain convictions which, in the face of new issues, compel him to break with even tried associates.

[1] Burke, in *English Men of Letters*, p. 169. Cf. *Burke, A Historical Study*, p. 53.

Not only does history tell us that this is so: in the very nature of Party it must be so. A party is entitled to exact much of its members, much in speech and much in silence, much in action and much in forbearance to act. Such things are the conditions of all effective association, and it would be childish to expect to gain the advantages of collective action, without substantial sacrifice of individual initiative. A strong party must influence both the speech and conduct of its members; else forthwith it sacrifices its efficiency—its efficiency *as an instrument of action.* But it must not therefore expect to control, or to limit, their convictions. For though convictions may be fed from within a party (and we can hardly blame a partisan if he gives to the party organ, or the party manifesto, something more than its due), yet, in the case of every open mind, they must also draw their nutriment from far beyond the party seedplot of truth. The rabid partisan, indeed, may disregard; and few things are, in politics especially, more remarkable than the power of disregarding. But even the political sectary can hardly wholly shut his eyes. New light may come in many ways. It may be some work or pamphlet above the limitations of party. It may be the spoken or the written word of the other side. It may be simply an independent interpretation of the signs of the times. It is with these that the open-minded citizen has to reckon. *He* at any rate cannot disregard them. And even though they may not shake his *practical* allegiance, they will, even in that failure, accentuate the vital truth that, in the very moment when we accept our party as the necessary instrument for *enacting* our convictions, we may see, with the clearest eyes, that it is at best but one of many agencies by which convictions are formed and fed. Our party may justly ask us to do much. It may ask us to act as it acts, to speak as it speaks, and all this even when we are unable to see with it eye to eye. But it cannot ask us to believe as it believes. Political belief, like all belief, "owns no lord." In free men, it bows to no authority. It depends simply and solely on the data that are before it; and of these data, a party, just because it is a party, can furnish no more than a part.

It is for this reason that a true consistency may compel many a man to quit his party. Party is but an instrument for enacting convictions; and a politician's convictions may, like those of Burke, be from the first, or by experience may come to be, far wider than what his chosen party enacts. It does not follow that he need therefore cease to act with it. Of the instruments at his disposal it may remain the best. But a time may come, as it came to Burke, when the divergence between conviction and instrument may become so wide, that the chosen party can be chosen no longer. A change may pass over the individual's beliefs; they may broaden, or they may undergo an alteration of relative emphasis. Or something may happen in the world of politics, an abuse of power, an industrial crisis, a threatening of turbulence, a war, even perhaps (as in the supreme instance of 1789) a revolution in another country; and, in the light of the new event, political ends may, in their order of urgency, be thrown into a fresh perspective. Or the party itself may change; new counsels may prevail within it, and questions, hitherto slumbering in the background, may be pushed to the front. Happen how it may, the result is the same. The instrument of action, once chosen and cherished, is a fit instrument no longer; even in the teeth of sentiment and of habit, the inevitable hour of rupture comes; and the soldier of party resigns his commission, if indeed he be not forced to take service in the ranks of those he once counted as his life-long foes.

This has happened again and again. It will continue to happen in political life. It happened, as we have seen, in the case of Burke. It happened to Peel, when, on a memorable occasion, he told the House of Commons that he had been converted to Free Trade by "the unadorned eloquence of Richard Cobden."[1] And, as we read the facts, it has happened in our own day, when a supreme issue has, in one great party in the State, revealed antagonisms of national ideal, which formerly lay latent within it, and has divided old associates into hostile camps. "Which are consistent?" men ask. To this may we not venture to reply by another question? Is it not possible

[1] *Life of Richard Cobden*, Vol. I., p. 388.

that both are inconsistent with Party, because both are consistent with conviction? It is natural to cling passionately to one and the same cherished instrument of action, but this is, after all, a lesser thing than the resolute courage which turns to new instruments because it dare not do violence to rational convictions.

VII

ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL CONSISTENCY

The best security for consistency is a sound practical judgment; and a sound judgment is enlightened, deliberate, and disinterested. (1) Enlightenment *involves* (a) *an ideal of what we wish our country to be: this gives coherency to our aims and deliberations, and promptitude to our decisions;* (b) *some knowledge of precedents: the use and abuse of precedents.* (2) Deliberation, *linking means to permanent ends, prevents the inconsistencies that usually mark the men who decide on instinct.* (3) Disinterestedness *is the needful security against the sinister interests and the false emphasis to which political, as contrasted with scientific, judgments are peculiarly prone. It has its root in love of our country.*

THERE is nothing more indispensable to a real political consistency than a swift and sound practical judgment. Without this men may be consistent visionaries, but they will never be men of affairs. Without it they may be consistent theorists, even to the drawing of chains of inference in which logic itself can find no flaw; but they will never solve a single practical problem. The reason is obvious. The consistency we call political is not won in the region of dreams, however prophetic, or of reasonings, however logical. It is won, and only won, in "the world of all of us," that scene of concrete, changing, incalculable, baffling, urgent fact; and won by dint of that masculine faculty of judgment which, from Aristotle to Burke, has been singled out as the practical man's pre-eminent virtue. Do we not know the type; the politician not much addicted to theories, not much in love with ideals, not much wedded to programmes, of whom we can yet say, with a strange strength of conviction,

that, happen what will, he can never deviate far from the straight line of honourable consistency?

The same holds good of bodies of men. There are Governments we trust. It is not because they are made up of "all the talents," not because the Treasury Bench is sprinkled with geniuses, emphatically not because they can make a brave show of theorists, or deluge their adversaries with torrents of ratiocination. We trust them because we believe that they possess a collective sagacity, a practical wisdom, such as will not fail even in face of the most difficult and urgent issue by which a politician's mettle can be tried. This is no great stretch of confidence. Few among us but can call to mind occasions, great or small, recorded or unrecorded, when the emergency that seemed insoluble did but give to the man of judgment the opportunity to stand out from amongst his fellows. Nor need we wonder that the two great thinkers whose names will be for ever associated with what the one called "practical wisdom" (φρόνησις), and the other "prudence," alike believed that if a man had but this, all other practical qualities would follow in its train.[1] To both, the very root of practical consistency lay in that soundness of judgment which can alone deliver us from fragmentariness of life.

And yet we must not pledge our fealty even to Aristotle and Burke, till we have put a question. Sound judgment may be much, but what is it that makes judgment sound? The very definition of practical consistency lies in the answer.

The answer involves three fundamental conditions. If the judgment is to be sound, it must be enlightened, deliberate, and disinterested.

(1) And, first, it must be enlightened, and this in two conspicuous ways.

(*a*) The main requisite of enlightenment is an ideal of

[1] Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. VI., xiii. 6. "The presence of the single virtue of practical wisdom (φρόνησις) implies the presence of all the moral virtues."

Cf. Burke, *Works*, Vol. III., page 16, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." "Prudence is not only the first in rank of the virtues political and moral, but she is the director, the regulator, the standard of them all."

our country's Future, or, in simpler phrase, a conception, or picture, of what in our most reflective moments we wish our country to be. The picture will not in all cases be the same. From nation to nation, from party to party, from man to man, it will vary, even in the broad features of its landscape; and still more in the place assigned in its perspective to this feature or to that. Clearly the ideal which might please the Quaker philanthropist would ill satisfy the citizen soldier; and the "Calico Millennium" of Cobden as little content a believer in "blood and iron." And as he looks from this picture to that, a man must expect to find many a cherished end dwindled, even to insignificance, in the ideal of his neighbour. But some picture there must be; and without a picture, drawn in bold and strong outline, there can be no true coherency in our decisions from day to day or from year to year. No substitute will suffice. One man may steady himself by his party and his party's programme; another may pin his faith to precedents or analogies; a third may be swallowed by his formula. And they will all, after their kind, be types of consistency. But in the changing and complex scene of politics, the time comes when formula does not fit fact, when precedents do not apply, when parties break up. The citizen without ideal will then be the citizen without resource. Whither can he turn? Is he to decline upon the short-sighted shiftiness of hand-to-mouth politics? Is he to stand aloof in the impotence of abstention? Or, if he still would march in the ranks of party, by what criterion will he judge which of his old associates deserve his devotion, and which his denunciation? The necessity of an ideal is, indeed, hardly a matter for controversy. In private life, to have made up our minds upon the ends that are worth striving for, is the elementary condition of all consistency of judgment, and the humblest cottager can tell us that his decisions become easy according as his aims are fixed and clear. It is not otherwise in politics, where even the shrewdest wits, however alert and confident, will wander and stumble, if their possessor do not know, at least in regulative outline, what he would have his country be.

But an ideal can do more for us than this. It can likewise stimulate the judgment to grapple with problems, and nerve it for prompt decision. Two vices, begotten sometimes by the natural reaction from precipitation, lie in wait to paralyse the practical judgment: the colourless neutrality of mind that approaches all questions with that equal interest which is really equal neglect; and the prolonged suspense of judgment which, however admirable in science, is of all foes the most fatal to a real practicality. An ideal firmly grasped and passionately desired dispels both these vices. Let but a man once care that his country should be educated, or industrially great, or powerful abroad; from that moment the measures that bear on any one of these great ends will be safe alike from the half-hearted attention, and the procrastinating doubts, which cut the very nerve of all manly decision. There was a time when the American colonists were hesitating on the brink of rupture with the mother country. Then, if ever, might indecision have been excused. But one man at least saw that indecision must end. "Wherefore," wrote Paine, in the pamphlet *Common Sense*, "since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting of throats, under the violated, unmeaning names of parent and child."[1] We may not cite this for imitation. It has too much of the narrow headlong consistency of the revolutionist by profession. But at least it is a memorable instance of how a fixed ideal can give sinews to the judgment.

(*b*) And yet an ideal, however passionately it may be desired, cannot alone suffice. It may hold a man to the conviction that Defence is an essential end of a nation's life; but it will not much help him to make up his mind upon the wisdom of Army or Navy estimates. It may make him a life-long friend of Extension of the Franchise, but it will not tell him how best the Franchise is to be extended. For a practical enlightenment we need a more definite guidance;[2] and for this, in face of the concrete issues of actual politics, we must seek the further aid of

[1] *Common Sense*, p. 25, Sherwin, 1817.
[2] Cf. Aristotle's *Ethics*, VI. vii. 7.

precedents. If precedents, however valuable in law, have sometimes, and especially in the camps of Radicalism, fallen out of fashion in politics, it is from a misconception of their proper use, added to a just contempt for the pedantry whose one sufficient reason for doing anything is the knowledge that other men in other days have done a similar thing. Do we not smile at those French Revolutionists who, in their misplaced classical enthusiasm, fancied that they could reproduce in modern France the example of the Roman 'republicans';[1] or at the humbler reformers of our own country, who in 1793 must needs summon their 'Convention' at Edinburgh and pose in one another's eyes as 'citizens'?[2] This was not consistency but pedantry. The very authors of the precedents so slavishly copied, might well, could they have come upon the scene, have disclaimed this worthless tribute of servile imitation. When circumstances are different, the precedent copied is not the precedent applied. "Exact imitation," as Mackintosh has it, "is not necessary to reverence."[3] Precedents have a higher use. For though they must not, and except in feeble or fanatical minds, cannot *supplant* the judgment, they can none the less *discipline* it. For they can tell us how the masters of practicality, in other days or in other places, have faced and solved their own peculiar difficulties; and thus in the altered circumstances of our own times, we may learn not to imitate their acts, but to emulate their sagacity.[4]

(2) Enlightenment, however, must, as we have said, be reinforced by Deliberation. The promptness and rapidity of judgment often seen in public men misleads us into thinking that their decisions are instinctive. We are apt even to suppose that it is the practical man's special

[1] Taine, *The Revolution*, Bk. IV., ch. iv., section 2.

[2] October 29, 1793; cf. Howell, *State Trials*, Vol. XXIII.

[3] *A Defence of the French Revolution*, Section V., "The only manly and liberal imitation is to speak as a great man would have spoken, had he lived in our times, and been placed in our circumstances."

[4] Cf. Burke, *Works*, Vol. III., p. 456, "Remarks on the Policy of the Allies." "From this source much political wisdom may be learned; that is, may be learned as habit, not as precept; and as an exercise to strengthen the mind, as furnishing materials to enlarge and enrich it, not as a repertory of cases and precedents for a lawyer."

privilege to be, somehow, relieved from all deliberative worry and delay. Our mistake is due in part to ignorance of the secret history of his mind. The politician who values the confidence of men will not, if he be wise, lay bare his mind to them, and let them see him in the times of his uncertainties and hesitations, which they will too surely construe as the hours of his weakness. What they look for, and what they need, is confident decision, backed by cogent reasons. For the rest let him

> "roll
> Oblivion o'er the work, and hide from man
> What night had ushered morn."

And then, as Hobbes puts it, "Thought is quick"; and fast-crowding alternative possibilities of action flash through a mind versed in affairs, with a swiftness which beguiles the onlooker into the belief that what is really the last result of intense and, it may be, wearing deliberation, is nothing higher than a display of that common sense which cuts all knots with the clumsy hatchet of instinct. In reality, the two things are diverse. It is instinctive judgment that is the very parent of inconsistency. It may be swift and confident; but, especially if it be wedded to strong passions, it will end, as in the case of Cobbett, that archetype of English common sense, in making its possessor a puzzle to his contemporaries and a problem to his biographers.

> "From right to left eternal swerving,
> He zig-zags on."

It is otherwise when decisions, seemingly intuitive, are really deliberative. For it is deliberation alone which, in the face of competing alternatives, can securely link the right means to the chosen end, and thereby rivet the isolated decision of the hour on the strong chain of settled policy. Nay, it is to it we must look even for that larger consistency, which, with a wise distrust, refuses to embark upon a new plan or policy till it can find a place for it in the context of a coherent career. We must demand nothing less than this, if a man's life is to escape being

broken up into a medley of ill-assorted and incompatible enterprises.[1]

(3) To deliberate well is, however, more than an intellectual excellence. When we pass in review alternative possibilities, when we reject one and retain another, till at last deliberation terminates in decision, we have not performed a process identical with a train of reasoning in Science. On the contrary, at every step we have had not simply to weigh the alternatives that offer, but to weigh them in scales other than those of the scientific intellect. This will become evident if we pass to our third security for soundness—the essential condition that judgment be disinterested. In other words, it must be free from those selfish and sinister interests, which appear to have such malign power to warp the minds, even of men of undoubted public spirit, when they come to deal with the actual concrete measures by which the greater ends of politics can alone be realised.

It is easy to construct a case which may help to make this clear—the case, let us suppose, of a genuine and zealous, but yet not quite disinterested reformer. He is consistent enough, we will assume, till at last the course of reform—Land Law Reform, perhaps, or Church Disestablishment, or Employers' Liability,—comes to touch him keenly in his personal interests. He proves, let us suppose, unequal to the ordeal. He is a reformer no longer, and men call him inconsistent, perhaps worse.

And upon our supposition he is inconsistent. But of his inconsistency there are two possible explanations. One is simply that he acts against his conscience and his truer judgment; that he sees the better and chooses the worse; that in his inmost soul he is as consistent a reformer as ever, though in his actions he has proved untrue to himself. But this is an explanation far too easy, and, we may add, far too uncharitable, to cover all actual cases. For when we say of men, as we often do, that they see the better and choose the worse, we sometimes greatly flatter them. They "choose the worse," undoubtedly, but so far from their "seeing the better," it is pre-

[1] On Deliberation, cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. VI., ch. ix., and Bk. III., ch. iii.

cisely one of the most fatal, because one of the most hopeless, features in their backsliding that they cannot see the better. For it is not in politics as it is in science. In politics, selfishness and self-seeking not only prompt wrong actions, their evil influences sink deeper, till (as they cannot do in science) they blind the eyes and distort the judgment even to the altering of the very meaning of propositions.[1]

We can see this if we return to our case. Why does our reformer turn renegade? We need not suppose it is because he fails to see the issues involved in the reform at which he shies. Given intelligence, and free discussion, and familiarity with affairs, and acquittal is not possible on the score of blindness. His malady is more subtle. For it lies in the fact that he sees, and, under the insidious influence of sinister interest, cannot help seeing, these issues in a deluding light. He goes wrong *in his emphasis.* Some loss of money, some diminution of influence, some sacrifice of ease, comes up before his mental vision; and, forthwith, the fair, just, and trifling weight which ought to have been laid on such considerations, is exchanged for the false and exaggerated, but entirely genuine, emphasis of terrified selfishness. And so, though he may have been a consistent reformer all through his life, he is a reformer no longer. And the reason is *not* that he sins against his better judgment, but that (though he does not know it) his judgment is no longer 'sound.'

It is for these reasons, we may add, that there is so poor a guarantee for a genuine political consistency in mere cleverness, even when it takes the form of the clever politician's faculty of finding means to ends.[2] Your clever politician is of course a shrewd person. When an issue arises he is quick to comprehend the situation. He is very circumspect—even to contempt of duller (and

[1] Cf. Aristotle, *Ethics*, Bk. VI., v. 6: "For it is not *any* kind of judgment that is destroyed or perverted by the presentation of pleasant or painful objects (not such a judgment, for instance, as that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles), but only judgments about matters of practice"; cf. also VI. xii. 10.

[2] Cf. Aristotle, *Ethics*, VI. xii. 9.

better) men. The irony of the situation is that, even at the height of his self-conceit, some very ordinary onlooker could tell him, if he would but listen, that all his circumspection and all his cleverness will not avail. How can they? If the illusive bias of selfish interest be in him, the intellect of a Machiavelli would not suffice to disclose the facts in their true and just proportions. And should it happen that there ever comes to him a sudden flow of generous patriotic feeling, such as to sweep him away in the tide of one of those great movements which now and again lift even selfishness out of itself, he may be himself the first to wonder, and to blush, at the monstrous exaggeration given, in the days before this "conversion," to the paltry concerns of personal interest. And this is but a glaring instance of what happens in many a subtler form. The disturbing bias may come even in the semblance of a virtue. It may be the intense, long-cherished hope of victory, which blinds the eyes to the fact that a party gain may be a national loss; or the genial toleration of some abuse that is far from wholly evil; or simply the pardonable human tendency to press unduly the claims of a profession or a neighbourhood. But the result is the same. The perfect sanity of judgment is gone; and the life inevitably swerves from the straight path of consistency.

There is no direct remedy. For it is not by wishes or resolves, not by warnings or exhortations, that men are ever likely to be kept consistent. They must learn to go more thoroughly to work. They must first do their part to secure the conditions of the thing they covet. To Knowledge they must add Deliberation, and to Deliberation, Disinterestedness, in well-grounded confidence that, though these great elements of character can only blend into effective union through time and actual contact with affairs, the man who has them has at least the stuff out of which consistency is made. Most of all must they learn from earliest years to love their country with that deep and settled affection, which above all other influences can redeem men's public lives from the most fatal forms of inconsistency. If one were asked what was the secret of the consistency of Mazzini, it would not be enough to

answer that he had an ideal. It would be needful to add that it was an ideal on which he had set not only mind but heart, and to point out that, through all defeats, disillusionments, and disgusts, his affections never swerved from that vision that upheld him of an Italy free, united, and republican. What is true of the revolutionary leader is true of the common citizen. It is not enough that we should think about our country's future, even though the thought of it be habitually with us. If we are to have the settledness of purpose that has discounted failure, the pertinacity "that is but a step below heroism," the elasticity that revives even in the hour of disaster, we must also desire this imagined future with the fixity of a passion that has dedicated itself to a permanent and satisfying object.

VIII

DEMOCRACY AND CHARACTER

The tendencies of democratic society make for uniformity. This is the inevitable result (a) *of the energy and centralisation of legislation, and* (b) *of the despotism of public opinion: popularisation and plebification. These tendencies are, however, counteracted* (a) *by the toleration which characterises later as contrasted with earlier Democracy;* (b) *by the law of social differentiation which is endlessly fruitful of industrial and other variety. Hence the substantial result that in a democratic society men are more than ever free to choose and to change their lot in life. This increases the efficiency of the individual and fosters the virtues of self-reliance and self-help; though the gain is purchased at some sacrifice of depth of interests and of tenacity of ties. On the whole, however, the danger is not so much democratic restlessness and licence as "virtuous materialism." But this danger may be escaped if Democracy comes to recognise more adequately that worth of the individual man, in which it finds its ultimate justification. There is reason to think that, in spite of many obstacles, the conviction of the worth of men is becoming more and more, in practice and in theory, an article of the democratic creed. This is especially the case where the democratic spirit finds support in the fact, which is part of the message of Christianity, that the individual soul, even when conscious of its own insignificance, is strengthened and dignified by an uplifting dependence on the Divine and Eternal.*

THAT the true development of Democracy is towards variety is the hope of Mill, as in the ancient world it was the fear of Plato. Let but Society be freed from the old bondage of custom and despotism, and safeguarded against the new multiplied tyranny of the majority, and the vitality of the human spirit will enrich the world by many a varied type. Hence we find in the great essay *On Liberty* a sympathy quite unqualified for those

"experiments of living," upon which respectability, not without reason, looks with such suspicious eyes.[1] Hence comes, too, Mill's ready welcome even for eccentricity, not as the tribute that folly pays to freedom, but as a reassuring sign of the "genius, mental vigour, and moral courage" which a society contains.[2]

Yet even this optimist has his misgivings. For though he thinks that, of all his writings, his plea for "individual vigour and manifold diversity" is the most likely to survive, this is because he anticipates, in days to come, not converts but rather men who need converting.[3] There are facts to justify his fears. In his *American Commonwealth*, Mr. Bryce tells us that what he saw in that "land of happy monotony" was not variety. "Travel where you will, you feel that what you have found in one place that you will find in another. The thing that hath been will be: you can no more escape from it than you can quit the land to live in the sea."[4] We do not need to cross the ocean to gain a similar experience. It is not to a democratic country like our own that the traveller turns his steps, if he is in love with the old customs, traditions, dialects, costumes, which make up the socially picturesque; he seeks rather some corner of one of the less advanced states of Europe, which has not yet received the impress of Democracy. And if he be an Englishman, it is part of the charm of his wanderings that, in what he sees abroad, there lies so strong a contrast to what he finds on his return at home. For at home the spirit of uniformity has been at work. Levelling agencies have been busy. From end to end of a country meshed in a network of rails, men are discussing the same topics of the day; buying the same products of trade; sending children to schools that acknowledge the same Education Code; reading the same books; even, with a surprising promptitude, following the same fashions in dress, in social

[1] *On Liberty*, ch. iii., p. 33, People's edition.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 39, "That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time."
[3] *Autobiography*, pp. 253-4.
[4] *The American Commonwealth*, Part VI., ch. cxii., "The Uniformity of American Life," 2nd edition.

intercourse, in amusements. The inevitable result ensues. Local peculiarities are going. Local customs, traditions, dress, manners, dialects, even languages, are giving ground; or, if they survive, it is because they draw a fragile, lingering life from the sentimental, or antiquarian, interest that springs from the very fact that they are perishing. Nay, who does not know that, much as the rarer flora vanish before the botanist, so does the ancient ballad or legend, the time-honoured custom or costume, disappear before the advent of the connoisseur in old world things, who, however fondly conservative, does but deal the finishing stroke to the old world by making it self-conscious?

The result need surprise no one who observes the tendencies of democratic society. For this march of uniformity is impelled by two tendencies, so vast, so persistent, and already over wide areas so victorious, that it may well seem as if neither the pleas of Pestalozzi and the Pestalozzians for individuality in Education, nor the philosophical protests of Humboldt, Mill, and Spencer, on behalf of "liberty" in society and politics, were likely to make a stand against them.

(1) The first of these is the energy of legislatures, which, in one of his large generalisations, Sir Henry Maine notes as the great solvent of custom and local usage. To this, "the capital fact in the mechanism of modern States," we do but need to add two possibilities, the one that legislation may become not only energetic but centralised; the second that, almost by consequence, it may stretch out its iron hands over wide areas. Who can fail to discern the consequences? "Seen in this light," says Maine, citing the greatest of all instances, "the Roman Empire is accurately described in the prophecy of Daniel. It devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet."[1]

The phenomenon repeats itself. There is a ruthlessness about energetic legislatures, especially when they are

[1] Maine, *Early History of Institutions*, Lecture XIII., p. 391. "This completer trituration in modern societies of the groups which once lived with an independent life has proceeded concurrently with much greater activity in legislation."—p. 387.

democratic. Let them but once be centralised, let them but once confront the task of dealing with the vast masses of a great country, and results ensue which nothing can avert. Forced on by a utilitarian electorate which may have but little sympathy, and less patience, with local customs and institutions such as in an old country have grown, and perhaps half-decayed, on the soil of bygone days, Legislation respects neither persons nor things. Its Commissions let in the light upon the secret places of old foundations; its Education Code is felt in the remotest islands; its authority issues Factory Acts, and in vital matters regulates the relations of employer and employed; its Courts sometimes adjust the relation of landlord and tenant; and its inspectors, owning no local allegiance, appear upon scenes where, in times past, diverse local authorities were left to manage, or to mismanage, their own affairs after their own fashion. There are some who fear this, as there are others who welcome it; because both see in it the coming of a day when Democratic Socialism will legislate with even more of energy and more of centralisation. But if these fears and hopes are to be realised, the consequences are certain. This new "Beast" of Democracy, "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly," will in its devastating path "devour, break in pieces, and stamp the residue with its feet."

There is a significant episode in the life of Scott. It came in the train of a project to remove the Scottish Courts to London. "Were I as I have been," said Sir Walter, with a startling vehemence, "I would fight knee-deep in blood ere it came to that."[1] The inspiration of these words was not the mere conservative instinct that resists innovation; nor the blind national prejudice with which the world is too ready to tax the Scotsman. For Scott felt, even if he did not clearly see, that the reform he resisted so passionately might prove but the first step to a general subversion of the peculiar time-honoured institutions of his country, round which, "with tendrils strong as flesh and blood," his affections had grown; and to which so much was due of the strongly marked dis-

[1] Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, Vol. VI. 319. Cf. Vol. II. 110.

tinctive characteristics of the Scottish people. This particular fear was not realised. Scotland has retained its institutions, and of these its people have retained the stamp; and, doubtless, the spirit of local patriotism, there as elsewhere, resists centralisation. But Scott's instinct was true. Legislation from a distance, applied to masses of men, does not know how to tolerate variety.

(2) These tendencies are further strengthened by the added volume which, under Democracy, is given to the popular will. The acceptance of the Greatest Happiness of the majority, as the end to work for, is not peculiar to politicians; nor are politicians alone in coveting the suffrages and support of the multitude. Side by side with the movement that has, in politics, given to the average man the power to enforce his will by his vote, there have been other innovations which give him a like influence as a buyer, and as a patron, and, through the popular spokesman and the popular press, even as an arbiter of morals and of manners. The manufacturer finds his interest in producing for "the public," while the trader appeals to them through ubiquitous advertisement, and the shopkeeper crowds his windows with popular luxuries. That mighty democratic monster that Plato figured in vision has stirred into life, and has found a thousand pliant servants to feed, to stimulate, and to pander to its wants. And, in obedience to the irresistible unwritten degrees of fluctuating taste and capricious fashion, whole industries rise and fall at the whim of the multitude. Nor is this true of material production alone. When Dr. Johnson wrote the Letter to Chesterfield, which gave a finishing stroke to the regime of "twice cursed" patronage, he could not foresee the coming of a new subjection to the public, which, if it be not morally so humiliating, is perhaps intellectually more enslaving than subservience to a patron. No one can deny that, over wide regions of spiritual as well as material production, this has actually happened. The worst fears of Plato have been realised. Democracy has not been content to turn the statesman into the servant of the People; it has yoked to its car many another captive in industry and trade, in fashion, in art, in literature, thereby enforcing on them, on penalty

of neglect, "the fatal necessity of producing what it praises."[1]

Nay, there are ways in which the very blessings of Democracy may draw down a blight. It is part of a real citizenship that the best things must be made common. And so the tide sets in, with resistless current, towards popularisation—popularisation in literature and science and art, in moral ideals, in religious truth. Few can seriously wish it otherwise. Great influences made common are like the common sunshine and shower which make all things grow after their kind. Rightly used, they quicken the secret seeds of individual vitality. Else were the popularisation of the very Gospel itself a barren sowing of the sand. But there is a risk which has to be faced. The best and greatest things on earth, in being popularised, may be plebified.[2] The golden coin may become the brass counter, the watchword the catchword, the precept the platitude, the creed the cant. In political programme, in popular lecture, in ethical or religious address, the message received is not the message sent. Popular information is mistaken for education, and acquaintance with the current commonplaces of literary or scientific hearsay, for a knowledge of science and literature. Never before has there been an age when the reputations of literature, or the formulas of science, were upon so many lips; and never was there richer illustration of the truth that "there are more echoes in the world than voices." It was a despotism of "collective mediocrity" that Mill most of all dreaded for the days to come.[3] Can we say he had not reason, in the face of this mighty tide that, with the ocean of Democracy behind it, sets towards the mud-flat shores of Uniformity?

Happily, however, all this, if it be the truth, is not the whole truth. If the energy of democratic legislation, and the forces of popular taste and patronage, thus tend to

[1] *Republic*, Bk. VI., p. 493.

[2] Cf. Coleridge, *Church and State*, ch. vii., p. 71: "You begin, therefore, with the attempt to popularise science: but you will only effect its plebification."

[3] *On Liberty*, ch. iii., p. 38.

crush out variety, they will at any rate not gain the day till they have mastered tendencies which may well seem as resistless as themselves.

(1) We can discern one of these in the fact that the spirit of Democracy has become, and persistently tends to become, more tolerant.

It may have happened to the traveller to visit some ruined castle or cathedral, and to find it in the custody of a local cicerone, in whom a 'bottomless' radicalism was united with a jealous care for the crumbling shell and fragmentary legends of bygone life. This is a parable of much besides. Democracy at first is intolerant and ruthless. It makes havoc. It "cares for nothing, all shall go": institutions, customs, traditions, relics. It is so in Paine, to whom the whole great drama of History is but a spectacle of "ruffian torturing ruffian."[1] It is so in Bentham, who is never happier than when in his *Book of Fallacies*, he is pouring exuberant ironical derision upon the "Wisdom of our ancestors, or Chinese argument." "Antiquity is not a reason," so runs his well-known text;[2] and if we are startled elsewhere to read that, after all, mankind may learn from their ancestors, all doubts as to his consistency vanish when we discover that it is from their folly.

Yet this intolerance is happily not of the essence of Democracy. Born of "raw haste, half sister to delay," it has already yielded to facts. Democracy, since Bentham's day, has gone to school. It has given ear to the tales of the travellers, and to the researches of the ethnologist, who have made even the popular mind familiar with customs, morals, laws, which are not its own. It has listened to the student of other countries and other civilisations, to which perhaps Democracy has never come. The historian has told his story of men greater even than modern reformers, and of events more momentous even than reform bills. The magic of historical romance has shown how lives, heroic, gentle, saintly, could be lived under old Feudalism as well as under new Radicalism. And the political philosopher,

[1] *Rights of Man*, Part II., ch. ii.
[2] *Theory of Legislation*, ch. xiii., p. 67.

even the political reformer, has ceased to wish to fashion men and things anew.[1] For he has come to see that, not only for the sake of the hoarded wisdom of past experience, but in obedience to Evolution and the very laws of life, the Radical who would look forward to posterity must, also, in a deeper sense than Burke imagined when he used the words, look backwards to his ancestors.

All this tends in one direction. It begets the spirit that tolerates and even loves variety. It abates the passion for moulding life after the democratic pattern alone. It suggests that even anomalies and defects may be the price we are paying for that adaptation of usage or institutions to a people's character and wants, which only comes as the result of time and growth. It carries the reminder that "men are not made for plans, but plans for men." Nay, it even begins to look upon old-fashioned things and people with a new interest as 'survivals,' and to welcome with a smile the variety wherewith they diversify and decorate the intercourse of life.

Most of all must this be so in an old country like ours, where even our revolutions, as has well been said, are not so much revolutions made as revolutions prevented; and where in our political constitution, our social system, our morality, and our manners, the new has never swept away the old. Even the troubles of our times suggest the same reflection. If the country squire does not know how the dock labourer lives, nor the wage-earner of the city understand the legitimate ambitions of the owner of hereditary acres or inherited capital, we may take to ourselves the consolation that in these things, however they may increase the frictions of life, lies a proof that our country is rich in varied types of men.

(2) And yet, of course, Toleration creates nothing. It may conserve. It may furnish the friendly soil for new development. But it will not by itself call into existence a single new type, or enrich human nature by one new quality. For this we must look elsewhere, and we need not look in vain.

[1] Cf. p. 39.

In a democratic society there may necessarily be less of the picturesque variety that takes the eye. Progress works through death.

> "The knight's bones are dust,
> And his good sword rust."

From castle to cottage, "a thousand types are gone." But by that very law of social differentiation, through obedience to which the work of the world can alone be done, new types are for ever starting into life, to fill their allotted place in the vast organism of divided and sub-divided labour. This holds throughout. Specialisation runs its course, till the fear of uniformity may well be lost in the fact that, through sheer diversity of occupation, men's lives are a riddle to their neighbours. Nor can all the weary monotony that weights with lead the life of the individual citizen, alter the fact that, under the "smoke counterpane" of a great modern city, there lies a variety of work, experience, knowledge, of struggle and aspiration, of trial and failure, beyond the wildest dreams of past generations. It is not likely to diminish. Limits to the tasks that lie before a great society there are practically none; and so long as individual human strength and faculty do not, and cannot, increase in proportion to the work that must be undertaken, ever more will type separate itself from type, along the diverging lines of the material and spiritual division of Labour.

This, however, is but partially reassuring. Division of Labour begets variety. But much specialisation, such as diversifies the pages of a city directory, may but too readily co-exist with individual contractedness and poverty of soul. Social variety need by no means bring individual versatility. It may do so in the pages of Plato, when he pours congenial satire upon the democratic citizen, who is supposed to reproduce, in the shallow desultory many-sidedness of his own life, the motley pattern of the democratic State.[1] But this result does not happen in fact. Nay, one could at times wish that the fear was more likely to be justified. Is it in apprehension of individual many-sidedness that we rise from

[1] *Republic*, Bk. VIII., p. 561.

the writings of the economists, from Adam Smith onwards, who, by reiteration, have made it a commonplace one is ashamed to repeat, that Division of Labour, in making the producer, "mutilates" the man?[1] And is it not precisely one of the bitter drops in the cup of the working part of the modern world, that, just when, through knowledge and sympathy, even the average man may take so many interests into his life, all this expansion of horizon does but mock the specialised insignificance of the daily tasks upon which his best hours must needs be spent? Division of Labour is an admirable text from which to preach upon the need of ideal interests, but it is so only because the foundation of the argument is laid in the otherwise poverty-stricken one-sidedness of the men who labour.

And yet there is compensation. If the citizen of an industrial democracy, however 'emancipated,' cannot emancipate himself from this great Law of Work, at least the yoke may be lightened. *He can choose, and he can change his lot.* For the democratic principle of Free Choice has been at work. This principle has not been, and never can be, the monopoly of politicians. It has wrought itself into the very texture of social and economic relationships. And its fruits have followed it. Already, over wide tracts of life, "Status" has given place to Choice.[2] It is no longer "the situation of a man that is the preceptor of his duties."[3] That was the old dispensation. It is now the choice of a man that is the preceptor of his situation. Relation of ruler and subject, of master and servant, of employer and handworker, of landlord and tenant, of priest and people, even of parent and child—who will contend that the reciprocal duties which these relationships imply, can any longer command the unsuspecting confidence of the bygone days, when Custom lay heavy on the lives of men, "who ne'er had

[1] Cf. *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. v., ch. i., Article 2, p. 365, Rogers' Edition.

[2] Maine, *Ancient Law*, p. 170, 8th edition. "The movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from *Status to Contract.*" Cf. Mill, *Subjection of Women*, p. 31, 4th edition.

[3] Burke, *Works*, Vol. II., p. 197, "Speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill."

changed, nor wished to change, their place"? Everywhere the father begins to ask, "What shall I make of my son?"; and the youth quits farmstead or village for the city, so that families scatter to the quarters of the globe. Capital threatens to 'move' at the first hint of insecurity. And the modern workman—does he not pass freely, from place to place, and from employer to employer, till the economist tells us he is "encamped, not established, on the soil he treads upon,"[1] and the satirist, in revolt from "nomadic contract," sighs for the vanished days of permanence and "brass collars"?[2]

Qualifications, of course, remain. "The mobility of Labour," of which the text-books speak, does not prevent the discharged workman from eating in bitterness the bread of compulsory idleness; and "the mobility of Capital" sounds mockingly enough in the ears of the manufacturer, whose dwindling resources are locked up in unsaleable machinery. It is so throughout. There is no free and open path either to livelihood or to life. In the freest and openest, barriers remain; and even the men whom nothing can resist must, in Trade or in Society, in Church, or State, or Profession, encounter many a buffet and many a disgust, to remind them that the "free career," which is the boast of Democracy, is not free even to them.

There are limits more inexorable still. "I may assume," writes Burke, in the greatest of all his protests against that apostasy from ties which he dreaded from the advent of revolutionary "liberty," "that the Awful Author of our being, is the Author of our place in the order of existence; and that having disposed and marshalled us by a divine tactic, not according to our will, but according to His, He has in and by that disposition, virtually subjected us to act the part which belongs to the place assigned us."[3] These words are true for all time. The freest of citizens in the freest of States will never see the day when life will bring no obligations except

[1] Cf. Walker, *The Wages Question*, p. 180, note.
[2] Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Bk. IV., ch. v., "Permanence."
[3] *Works*, Vol. III., p. 79, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs."

such as are of his own making. The son cannot change his duties to parents, or his obligations to kith and kin. The man cannot undo the mistake that sent him to a distasteful calling, or that led him to choose an uncongenial partner in life. Nor can the citizen, without just execration, shake himself loose from the claims upon him of his fatherland, in its hour of need. These are not cases in which we can say that men are free to change; and, if we still insist that they are free to choose, it will only be in that sense in which we can be said to choose the station and the duties which are also chosen for us, perhaps from our very birth. Nor can Democracy escape the inevitable lesson, that but one part of the citizen's freedom is won by making his own career, because the other is won by the patient understanding of his irremovable limits.

And yet, when all is said, a substantial result remains. The words of Burke do not carry the same message in these days which they were meant to bear a hundred years ago. How can they? When one by one the ties of old Use and Wont and unquestioning obedience have been cut by the relentless steel of the new dispension of Free Choice, it must needs be that men will choose and change their modes of association, their friends and acquaintance, their political parties, their Churches, their manners; and by ability, by wealth, by character, by alliance, rise in the world with a freedom and a facility beyond the horizon of their fathers.

The gains to character follow. In this less obstructed, competitive arena, there is a rapid and irreversible advance in individual efficiency. Tools fall into the hands that can use them; and out of the hands that cannot. Ambition and enterprise awaken. The factory worker may have his dream of the Cabinet, and see it fulfilled; and the country lad his prophetic vision of the Bar or the Bench. And to many a man, conscious that it is given to him, as never before to his fathers, to make or to mar his own fortunes, there comes an alertness, a resourcefulness, and a self-reliance, hitherto at best the possession of the few. Nay, the whole perspective of character changes. The qualities that stood out, in the days of

Use and Wont, recede, and those that come with independence emerge. There is less deference to authority, less prompt obedience, less trustful loyalty to persons or to causes, less plodding patience; but there is more of courageous self-assertion, and more of that personal sagacity of judgment, through which alone men can hope to deal with the changeful conditions of a life that no longer runs in grooves. We cannot lament the change. It brings great gains, and among them that type of man which it is the peculiar glory of modern commercial and industrial democracy to produce, the type that unites enterprise, nerve, sagacity, integrity, independence, generosity, munificence; "masters in industry," as one remarks who knows them well, "because in industry they are masterly."[1]

The drawback is that, in this self-helpful and honourable struggle, human nature is so apt to lose something of the depth of its interests, and of the tenacity of its ties. There is in De Tocqueville a graphic sketch of the American citizen, as his free career has made him. "In the United States a man builds a house to spend his latter years in it, and he sells it before the roof is on: he plants a garden and lets it just as the trees are coming into bearing: he brings a field into tillage, and leaves other men to gather the crops: he embraces a profession and gives it up: he settles in a place which he soon afterwards leaves, to carry his changeable longings elsewhere. If his private affairs leave him any leisure, he instantly plunges into the vortex of politics; and if at the end of a year of unremitting labour he finds he has a few days' vacation, his eager curiosity whirls him over the vast extent of the United States, and he will travel fifteen hundred miles in a few days, to shake off his happiness. Death at length overtakes him, but it is before he is weary of his bootless chase of that complete felicity which is ever on the wing."[2]

[1] Walker, *The Wages Question*, pp. 251-2. For influence of Commerce and Industry on character, cf. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, Vol. I., p. 140, 4th edition; also cf. Ruskin, *Unto this Last*, p. 128.

[2] *Democracy in America*, Part II., Bk. II., ch. xiii. "Causes of the restless spirit of the Americans in the midst of their prosperity."

We must read this picture of "the strange unrest of happy men" as satire, if we apply it to the Old World: and it would be a bitter mockery to associate it with those vast multitudes whose lives pass joylessly away between the monotony of a factory and a rare visit to a popular watering-place. But at least we know something like it, among the ranks of those of us who

> "see all sights from pole to pole,
> And glance, and nod, and bustle by;
> And never once possess our soul
> Before we die."[1]

And, in any case, it is not easy to see how any part of a democratic society can evade that loosening of ties which must bring with it a similar restless superficiality. There is an intensity of local affections that is only known, and only can be known, to those who have spent a lifetime in the well-beloved monotony of familiar surroundings. There is a depth and a tenacity of attachment that is bred only of prolonged habitual intercourse with tried associates. Such things do not come in a day. Time, habit, a common past, a well-tried mutual confidence, permanence of relationship—they are all needful for the ties that grow with the growth, and strengthen with the strength of character. Yet it is just these things that the 'free career' of democratic society, with its restless ambitions and its nomadic changes, is so ill-fitted to furnish. There are moralists who dread a worse result. They see how, under the conditions of democratic society, ambition may beget the commercial, or the social, or the political adventurer; how enterprise may pass into speculation, nerve into unscrupulousness, independence into inconsiderateness of men, and generosity into ostentation. And with these facts before them, they are ready to join in the oft-re-echoed cry that liberty, with its 'free career,' is passing straight to license.

And yet it is hard to believe, even when the worst is said, that the danger of Democracy, as we actually know it, is license. It is not license we find in the trim uniformity of American streets; nor is it license that menaces

[1] Arnold, *Poems*, "A Southern Night."

the lives and homes of the merchants and tradesmen, the artisans and the peasantry, of Great Britain. There is a sufficient security. Between license and the overwhelming majority of a great industrial and commercial people, there interposes that 'virtuous materialism,' of which De Tocqueville, generalising from American society, tells us that it does not lead men away in the pursuit of forbidden enjoyments, because it absorbs them in the quest of those that are allowed.[1] Let us not grudge to it its virtues. They are solid. They are respectable. Its bitterest Bohemian or academic satirist will not deny that it is industrious, punctual, law-abiding, honest, kindly, domestic, hospitable, wholesomely impervious to sentimentality. And yet if our moralists, preachers, and censors, speak truth of this virtuous materialism, it is in its very virtues that its weakness lies. Just because it is entrenched in these virtues; just because it can enjoy the comforts that these virtues imply, it is fatally prone to turn a deaf ear to all who would stir the human spirit to the greater interests of life—to religion and practical benevolence, to the things of the mind, nay, even to the larger and more distant ends of politics. And when one considers how justly, in our own country, it has provoked, and how effectually it has resisted, the penetrating unworldliness of Frederick Robertson, the polished sarcasms of Arnold, the savage humour of Carlyle, the edged invectives of Ruskin, it cannot seem wonderful that some keen observers forecast a future in which the enhanced comfort of beaverish lives will but poorly compensate for moral decadence. For the evil they dread is not the coming of a time when turbulent passions and lawless ambitions will plunge society into excess. They fear rather the slow sap of the influences that follow in the train of a tame and ignoble contentment. "Our morality," writes the author of *National Life and Character*, "will then be the emasculate tenderness of those who shrink from violence, not because it is a transgression of order,

[1] *Democracy in America*, Part II., Bk. II., ch. xi., "By these means, a kind of virtuous materialism may ultimately be established in the world, which would not corrupt, but enervate the soul, and noiselessly unbend its springs of action."

but because it is noisy and coarse; and having out-lived strong passions, and the energy by which will translates itself into act, we shall plume ourselves on having abolished vice. Our intellectual discipline will be derived from the year-book and the review, and our intellectual pleasure from the French novel. Yet there seems no reason why men of this kind should not perpetuate the race, increasing and multiplying, till every rood of earth maintains its man, and the savour of vacant lives will go up to God from every home."[1]

This is a dark outlook, though perhaps not too dark, if indeed, as the author of the passage forecasts, the generations after us are to fall on days when the family has declined, and religion waned, and character decayed, and literature well-nigh died "for lack of argument." And it is based too impressively on wide experience and searching analysis to be met by any dogmatic optimism. Certainly it is not our purpose here to open up that vast question, whether the human spirit must thus be declared incapable of turning its material resources to higher ends. Yet there are general grounds for hope, sufficiently strong perhaps to justify their statement.

These lie in no assumptions as to changed conditions, or novel influences; they are to be found in the simple expectation that, as Democracy goes on, it may become more fully conscious of that worth of men in which so much that is truly democratic finds its ultimate justification.[2]

It is not dogmatic to affirm that no society in which there exists a common conviction that men have worth, can ever decline upon the levels of even a virtuous materialism. For this belief in men does not terminate in itself. It is, on the contrary, one of those profoundly practical convictions, whose very glory consists in bringing so much with it in its train. Does it not bring the Respect for one's neighbour that is the very ground of Justice;[3] and that moral Sympathy that is the ultimate basis of a true Fraternity;[4] and that Courtesy of spirit which recognises claims of man upon man, such as go far beyond what law, or usage, or utility can ever enjoin?[5]

[1] *National Life and Character*, p. 338.
[2] Cf. pp. 4-6.
[3] Cf. pp. 6-8.
[4] Cf. p. 25.
[5] Cf. p. 6.

And the hope is that to these great central realities of life Democracy must come, in proportion as it learns to understand its own significance.

We may see this if we look no farther than the enjoyment of Civil Rights. Thus, the citizen who, in a foreign land, has realised that he is safe from outrage, or sure of redress, beneath the flag of his own nation, has gained more than a material advantage. In his own eyes, in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen, he enjoys a heightened sense of his own value. Why else is it that, in all our recent history, there has been no more memorable parliamentary triumph, than when a great statesman struck the note "Civis Romanus sum"?[1] The same applies to the more familiar rights of daily life. Persistently and equitably upheld by an even-handed Justice, they bring far more than simple security; because they carry a message, such as can be known and read of all men, that the poorest man, the most helpless woman, the neglected waif, the hapless wreck in whom reason has been darkened, are alike the objects of a jealous and impartial care.

The enjoyment of Political Rights yields the same lesson. Not all at once perhaps; and it would indeed be idle to ignore the too obvious fact that new-won political power, like new-won wealth or reputation, is apt to have its enemies. Men exist who have passed half a life-time of indifference to humbler neighbours—neighbours upon whom the gift of the vote has for the first time drawn down their suspicion and hostility. But, even then, it is something that there is an end of indifference; and however far the end of indifference may be from the beginning of respect and esteem, it is nearer it by many a stage than the state of mind, and of fact, that made indifference possible. It is nearer still when the enfranchised voter becomes the active citizen. We have seen how a real citizenship enriches a man's life.[2] But it does far more.

[1] Palmerston, in "Don Pacifico" Debate, June, 1850. "As the Roman in days of old held himself free from indignity when he could say 'Civis Romanus sum,' so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong."

[2] Cf. pp. 9, 10, 45-58.

However sharp and bitter the strifes by which it may be agitated, it steadily tends to win respect for all who honestly exercise it; for the simple reason that, in material surroundings, in family life, in the seriousness and magnitude of the interests which come through the two great avenues of Politics and Religion, it makes men's lives more worthy of being respected. This is a hope from which no believer in Democracy can afford to part. Not easily can respect for men be taught in words or in books; else had the world been long ago converted. To the great mass of mankind respect for men will not come home as conviction till they see worth looking at them out of the eyes of their fellow-men.

It is not Utopian to look for more. Even as the tender and sacred union of family life has its beginnings on the day when youth and maiden lightly join hands for that "better or worse," whose full significance they realise only after many years, so with many a wider form of association. Their origin does not explain their end, and their initial motive but poorly suggests their final value. And so it comes to pass, by the cunning bounty of Nature, who gives us more than we ask, that though their roots may go deep into the earth of selfishness and utility, their fruit is in the upper air of a conscious Fraternity.[1] The same law acts even in forms of association, which might not seem to need its application. There has come in with Democracy so much deliberate effort to free the slave, to reform the vicious and the criminal, to protect the helpless man or beast, that it might seem enough to cite the facts and leave them. In themselves they are signal proofs of the determination of the human spirit to discern some poor vestige of worth even in its most terribly and hideously obstructed forms. But they have more significance than this. For, here as elsewhere, the outward effort reacts upon the inward spirit. Even in the very surrender of sacrifice the giver gets more than he gives, because, as the years go on, he comes to know that the instinct of pity and beneficence has taken upon itself a conscious courage and an added vitality, by revealing itself in deeds of mercy. And it is for this reason

[1] Cf. pp. 23, 24.

that, among believers in the worth of men, few are so steadfast as those who have spent their lives in the service of the worthless.

And yet it would be rash indeed to think that Democracy could safely be left to learn from this gradual gospel of its own deeds. When the democratic spirit sees itself in the imperfect mirror of actual democratic life, it finds much to which it would willingly shut its eyes. It is but too manifestly possible for Democracy to run its course in politics, with little real respect for men. A keen interest in voters is entirely compatible with much scepticism as to human beings. And were democratic sympathies to be gauged by the presence of an eye for worth, there is many a radical reformer who might well be put to the blush by some of the bitterest foes of popular government; for example, by Scott, who anathematised the Rights of Man, but wrote *The Heart of Midlothian*. So in the disputes of industry, the rivalries of commerce, the dissensions of sects and parties; the combatants may recognise each other's strength, but give little heed to each other's worth. The master does not think of the merits of the workman whom he discharges into indigence, nor the workman of the personal virtues of the master, against whom he wages industrial war. Nay, there are features in Democracy, due to its very success, which at times seem to make this belief in the worth of the individual man a well-nigh impossible thing. Is not Democracy, alike in Industry and Politics, familiar with the wholesale handling of men in masses? Is it not callously intent upon the mere organisation of voting or producing power? Is it not habituated to the teeming indistinguishable life of great cities? And where these things are, it is not wonderful if all sense of the value of the unit is lost in presence of the mass of the multitude.

> "The Eternal Sákí from that bowl has pour'd
> Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour,"[1]

—this is a thought by which even the stoutest and the most human of hearts has at times been crushed. It is the very thought which Mazzini puts into the lips of

[1] *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, xlvi.

the individual man, before whom there rises in vision the vastness of society on the one hand, and on the other all the profound pathos of individual insignificance. It is not the individualist's self-confident, "Every man for himself": not the equalitarian's, "I am as good as you," but the prayer with which the fisherman of Brittany puts out to sea, "Help me, my God, my boat is so small, and thy ocean is so vast."[1]

And yet there is resource. For, in its extremity, Democracy, in conscious need, and with true instinct, turns for assurance of its faith in men to Religion. For the democratic spirit is not a spirit of negation; far rather is it a spirit of belief. If it 'emancipates,' it is in a higher service; nor does its strength lie in insurrection, but in appeal, "appeal from Earth's Courts to Heaven's Chancery." It has been so, at any rate, with the men in time past who have most conspicuously stood for freedom. Like the religious Reformers, the Puritan patriots, the Covenanting martyrs, they have never so clearly realised the worth and the claims of the individual soul, as in the moments when they were convinced of a strengthening and uplifting dependence upon the Unseen. If the citizen of Democracy is to be denied a like resource, it will not be because he needs it less.[2] He needs it to quicken flagging responsibility, to prop menaced independence, to make distant ends real. And he needs it also in presence of this crushing sense of his own insignificance. As Wordsworth has it,

> "This I speak
> In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
> For His own service; knoweth, loveth us,
> When we are unregarded by the world."[3]

For indeed it is a false and suicidal conviction to hold that, as democratic freedom runs its course, the freedom to think, to discuss and to doubt, must needs end in the necessity to deny. It may be true that many of the greatest writers of Democracy have justified the supposition. Secular to the core in tone as well as in thought, they have had much to say about Rights, much

[1] "The Duties of Man," ch. v., in *Life and Writings*, Vol. IV.
[2] Cf. pp. 54, 55. [3] *The Prelude*, Bk. XIII., p. 348, Moxon, 1870.

about Greatest Happiness, much about individual well-being, much about industrial and commercial prosperity, and latterly something about evolution; not much about Religion. And it is the very paradox of the younger Mill's philosophy, that a fervour which sets an almost sacred value upon individuality as one of the elements of well-being, goes with a sensationalistic metaphysic which makes the worth of the individual life, in theory at any rate, an unintelligible thing.

But there is another, and as some suppose, a more excellent way. For it is precisely the distinctive characteristic of modern Idealism that, from Descartes onwards, it has proclaimed to the world that freedom to think, even when it takes the form of freedom to doubt to the uttermost, is but the beginning, the sequel of which is necessity to believe. It has not been blind to difficulties. As in the reasoned "Acosmism" of Spinoza, or in the fragmentary philosophical prophecy of Carlyle, it has profoundly realised the illusiveness of all ordinary life, and the mutability, at times the nothingness, of things. But, even then, it has done this in the conviction that the falsely satisfying world of appearances does but half-reveal and half-conceal that spiritual Reality, in which, if we think at all, we must unfalteringly believe.

This may seem to some a matter that little concerns the future of Democracy. Nor need we hesitate to concede that Democracy is not likely to be saved from materialism and negation and blindness to human worth by the popularisation of Idealism, or of any other philosophy. In the exacting rigour of its analysis, in the strict logic of its construction, philosophy is beyond popularising. For the great mass of men, preoccupied with the endless struggle for livelihood, the absorbing excitement of politics, the welcome claims of private life, time is too short and life too urgent for philosophy. And yet there is not a peasant or a dock labourer to whom philosophy has not its message. Through those who have, by word or pen, to speak to him of spiritual things in a language he can understand, it brings the assurance that when the spirit of Freedom finds footing in the Unseen, it is setting its trust on demonstrable fact. "I am inclined to think," writes De

Tocqueville, "that if faith be wanting in man he must serve; and if he be free, he must believe."[1] May we not accept the words with a still deeper conviction, if, in all sobriety of hope, we can add, that faith need never be wanting in man, because the "masters of those that know" have found, in their own experience, that perfect freedom to think is the sure path to reasoned belief.

Nor after all is it needful that, for confirmation in its great central conviction of the worth and the claims of man, Democracy should go so far afield. There is a simpler way. The religion which has had its message for all phases of the political life of Christendom has still, possibly in enhanced degree, its old yet ever-new message to Democracy. It is not simply because the type can find entrance at doors, at which precept, definition, analysis, argument, might knock long and in vain; nor that the life of the carpenter's Son, whose earliest disciples were fishermen, has, through all the ages, had a strange power to make the humble great, and the great humble. It is because also, through this type, there is revealed to the human heart and conscience a nobler idea of the possibilities, and of the worth, of man. "It is recorded of one of the world's gifted painters," says Frederick Robertson, "that he stood before the masterpiece of the great genius of his age—one which he could never hope to equal, or even to rival—and yet the infinite superiority, so far from crushing him, only elevated his feelings; for he saw realised those conceptions which had floated before him, dim and unsubstantial; in every line and touch he felt a spirit immeasurably superior, yet kindred, and is reported to have exclaimed, with dignified humility, 'And I, too, am a painter!'"[2]

It is not otherwise with the central Life of Christendom, or, indeed, with greatness and nobility in any life. In the aspirations with which the spectacle of such lives has so often filled men, there is more than

> "The desire of the moth for the star,
> Of the night for the morrow."

[1] *Democracy in America*, Art. II., Bk. I., ch. V.
[2] Robertson, *Sermons*, Vol. III., Sermon vii.

There is that which brings a reverent confidence that, even in obscure and common men, there are possibilities which await the strong summons of the slowly coming day of a better, because a more spiritual, Democracy.

> "Wherefore did I contrive for thee that ear
> Hungry for music, and direct thine eye
> To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,
> Unless I meant thee to beseech me play?"

IX

SOME ECONOMIC AND MORAL ASPECTS OF LUXURY

Consumption of wealth is nothing more than change of form; and this change of form may be from a more beneficial to a less beneficial form, or contrariwise. (1) *Is, then, the change of form implied in the production and consumption of luxuries industrially and commercially profitable? The economists tell us that work which produces nothing, or work which produces mere instruments of pleasure, is* commercially and industrially *waste of wealth. Thus truth is concealed by popular fallacies in regard to work. If the production of luxuries is to be encouraged, it must be on other than economic grounds.* (2) *But the ascetic moralist is even more unsparing in his condemnation of luxuries than the economist, on the ground that they obstruct the moral life. The truth that underlies asceticism. But, as against these conclusions, it may be argued* (1) *that the desire for luxuries is so closely bound up with commercial and industrial motive that there would be economic difficulties in suppressing luxuries, even if this were possible.* (2) *Still more is the ascetic doctrine open to attack. Luxuries, well chosen and rightly used, are instruments of moral development. The real moral problem is* how to select. *Amongst many possible principles of selection* (1) *one is Durability: superiority of durable to perishable luxuries.* (2) *A second is Unselfishness. But this principle is to be carried out, not narrowly by limiting luxuries to the things in which everyone can share in equal measure, which seems impracticable; but by preferring the luxuries which clearly make us better men and more efficient citizens.*

THOUGH all wealth is ordinarily said to be "consumed," being, indeed, produced with that very object, the strict truth is that no wealth is consumed. A great fire devours goods, and licks up furniture and fabrics, and rolls them in smoke and sparks to the skies; yet, even then, not one atom of them is in the literal sense consumed. Science

tells us—and it is a truism to the scientific man—that in the charred ashes, and in the smoke particles that are lost to sight in the blue, and in the heat diffused by the flames, and in one result or another, the "consumed" warehouse is still all there, and, had we but eyes a million times keener, perceptibly all there, in exact and ponderable equivalent. There is the vastest change of form, from valued products that have cost profitable labour, to worthless products that necessitate profitless labour, but there is no consumption of matter. From the matter of the world not all the modes of consumption, or of destruction, devised by man and nature have ever taken away one feather-weight. We may venture to go a step further. If we think, when we have, as we say, "consumed" anything (food, dress, or books), that such things are over and done with, and that we have seen the last of them, we are seriously mistaken. It would sometimes be better for us if it were so. The feast of a night, or the fragile costly fabric, have they not a history long after they have perished—a history written, if we could but read it, in influence upon the character and disposition of those who have enjoyed them? And the lax or vicious book, who can measure the poison that goes on circulating in the imagination of its readers, possibly of their children, long after its contaminating pages have been thumbed to pieces, or, let us hope, flung into the fire?

This law holds throughout. "Consumption" does not arrest influence. For good or for evil, influence often most powerfully begins when what we call consumption ends. Whether it be with nations or with men, the wealth that disappears inevitably reappears, in due moral or political equivalent. A passer-by once stopped to visit the workshop of an old joiner. There, in a corner, lay piled together a heap of small flat oblong bits of wood. He asked the old man what they were. The answer was that they were old planes, worn thin and useless by the friction of a life-time's industry. That was consumption of wealth. But, then, the results were not gone; they were still there in the acquired skill, in the honourable independence and reputation, of the consumer of them. It is this that can give at times an almost relic-like value

to so many old things that have had their day—the neglected ploughshare that has worn thin against the stiff clay of the furrows; the battered ship whose keel has slipped through the waters of many a sea. They are worth nothing—nothing in the market. But we may be pardoned if, at times, we look on them with something of the relic-worshipper's eye, as instruments which have helped men to do their duty, and nations to make themselves great.

And now, in the light of these general considerations, we may look at Luxury. Luxury is the word, the vague word, by which we denote certain modes of consuming wealth. "Consumption," when pressed for a meaning, denotes nothing more than change of form. Change of form may be in two directions. It may be change from the more beneficial to the less, as when a ship is wrecked, or a book left to moulder on the shelf. It may be from the less beneficial to the more, as when pig-iron is hammered into a plough, or the book worn out by the loving perusal of successive generations.

It follows that, when we see before us the sort of consumption which we call Luxury, we may ask two main questions about it. The one will be, Is this change of form industrially and commercially profitable? The other, Is it good, is it the best, for our character as individuals or as a nation? The first is the question of Luxury as it meets the economist; the second, as it meets the moral and political philosopher.

And this may suggest what is perhaps the most striking fact altogether in regard to Luxury, the fact that it has been so vehemently assailed from such opposite quarters. Assailed it certainly has been by those who have been regarded as the most materialistic of mankind, and as the least materialistic; by the men who magnify wealth, and by the men who minimise it; by the political economists, and by the ascetic moralists.

First, let us turn to the economists. It is the deliverance of the whole school of economists—so distinct a deliverance that even Mr. Ruskin compliments them upon it—[1] that from the economic aspect, expenditure on luxuries is waste-

[1] *Political Economy of Art*, p. 65, Edition 1868.

ful perversion of wealth. The proof is not hard to follow. Suppose we enter one of the great ship-building yards, and see there on the stocks an Atlantic liner. It is an object that implies cost. Hundreds of workmen come and work and go, day by day, consuming food and clothing and tools all the while, and spending their force on various products, which in their turn have only come into the yard at heavy cost of labour and material. By all this consumption, the nation is so much poorer. It has expended much. But then, there is a *quid pro quo*, a magnificent instrument of commerce, by means of which a country may be, in comparatively brief space, not only recouped for all this outlay, but placed in a better position than ever for adding to its wealth. On the whole transaction there is gain. As a nation we are wealthier.

And now, suppose we take a few steps further down the yard, and find there, fast approaching completion, the hull of a pleasure yacht. At first sight there might seem small difference between the cases. Men come and go, and earn their living here, just as in the other case; and, just as in the other case, there is the using up of raw materials of diverse kinds. So far, it might seem of small account whether we filled our yards with Atlantic liners or with pleasure yachts. But of course there is a difference—the widest. In this case we have not an instrument of commerce; we have, instead, an instrument of pleasure and delight, destined to carry some happy company across summer seas, such as banish from the mind the very thought of commerce and all its accompaniments.

Let us carry our supposition a step further still, and, invited by the fortunate owner of this bark of pleasure, let us drop anchor in some mountain-girdled loch, where lives a friend to whom the kind fates have given a deer forest. We find our friend there living like a potentate among gamekeepers and ghillies. Money is circulating, of course. He is fulfilling nobly the function of spending. And there is work being done, strenuous enough; for we may be sure this following is not fed and housed for doing nothing. But when all is over, and the season is ended, what is there to show? No instrument of

commerce or of industry, not even an instrument of pleasure like the yacht, but only some score or two of stags and a few hundred brace of grouse, all of which have long ago disappeared before the appetites of these men of the chase and their friends.

Now we are not condemning either of these two last-named modes of expenditure. The luxuries of yacht and deer forest are not finally to be judged merely on commercial grounds. But who will deny that, from the commercial point of view, it would have been tenfold better had those shipwrights, who spent their strength and expended material on the yacht, been employed in putting into the hands of their fellow-countrymen an instrument, a steamer or a ship, the possession of which would enable them to increase the national wealth by bringing useful articles into the hands fittest to use them to industrial advantage? And again, from the same point of view, it would have been more than tenfold better, had all the effort, expended through the long autumn days by ghillies in that deer forest, been given to work that left something behind it—something more applicable to commerce and industry, than stories, however charming, about bagging grouse or stalking deer.

Three things, therefore, are to be clearly distinguished:

(1) Work done in producing some instrument of commerce or industry;

(2) Work done in producing some object not available as such an instrument;

(3) Work terminating in itself, *i.e.*, services which leave no product of any economic significance at all.

In all three cases there is work done by which men earn a livelihood. And some are so impressed by this aspect of the matter, that they seemingly care to go no further. "Why," says the yachtsman, "does not my yacht employ carpenters?" "And does not my forest employ ghillies?" adds the sportsman. "Is not our money doing the country good?" say both. Now, their money may, or may not, be "doing the country good." This depends on the whole case that can be made out for yachts and deer forests. But, as to the commercial and industrial aspect of the matter, their money is not doing

the country good. As if the wealth of nations were to be secured simply by setting men to work! Never can it be too clearly understood that the *amount* of work or effort in a country is no measure of its industrial or commercial prosperity. Prosperity depends on *reward* of work or effort. It is a good thing in its way, of course, that men, be they ghillies or shipwrights, should, by doing work, be fed and clothed. But the question whether that work and food and clothing be a good investment or a bad—this depends not on the work, but on what we get for it; not on what disappears, but on what re-appears. And the incalculable superiority, industrially and commercially, of the first mode of employing men over the two last is that, as result of all that is consumed, there remains that splendid product, a great ship, which is one more weapon in the unceasing struggle to increase the material resources of mankind against the unresting forces of consumption and decay.[1]

This fact is obvious enough. But, however elementary, it furnishes the ground on which the economist judges Luxury. For his condemnation of Luxury simply rests on this; the greater the growth of Luxury, the greater the amount of human effort diverted to the second and the third kind of work—work that produces mere instruments of pleasure, or work that produces nothing at all; and this, whatever it be otherwise, cannot be, commercially or industrially, other than waste of wealth. It is demonstrably a bad bargain. As Adam Smith puts it in his well-known antithesis, "A man grows rich by employing a multitude of manufacturers (*i.e.*, hand-workers): he grows poor, by maintaining a multitude of menial servants."[2] What is true of the man is true of the nation. Let every shipyard in the kingdom resound to the clang of hammers on a fleet of yachts, and let every man with £500 a year hire a body servant; there is no industrial or commercial

[1] Cf. Cairnes, *Some Leading Principles of Political Economy*, p. 50, "Of all ideas within the range of economic speculation, the two most profoundly opposed to each other are cost and the reward of cost,—the sacrifice incurred by man in productive industry, and the return made by nature to man upon that sacrifice." Cf. pp. 60, 310.

[2] *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. II., ch. iii., p. 332, Rogers' edition.

prosperity in that. Unless counteracted by other kinds of commerce and other kinds of industry, such expenditure would lead direct to ruin.

And here a word seems needful upon the fallacy which stands in the way of a perception of this obvious truth. It is the fallacy of supposing that there is so little to do in the world that, unless we employ men in such work as building yachts, or carrying game bags, they will go idle and starve. If we take a quite narrow and quite local view, this may be true. When our deer-stalker says, "These fellows would starve if it were not for what they get from me," he says what is true, supposing that they cannot go elsewhere and find work and wages. Or, when our yachtsman says that, but for him, there would be no vessel on the stocks where we have placed his yacht, and shipwrights would be going idle, this may be true in a particular locality, till the shipwrights find other work.

Nor need we hesitate to make the admission that in many places, and at many times, it seems difficult for a certain number of men to find work at all. Under these circumstances, it is the recognised opinion, in this country at least, that we are bound to dispense allowances to keep such persons alive. This result is, however, by no means a pleasant one to face. It would be better to set men to work, if we could, even though it be at building yachts and following sportsmen. And if any one will be content with a defence of Luxury on this ground, as a mode of distributing wealth preferable to doles, we need not quarrel with him. Earnings are better than alms.

It is quite another thing, however, to hold that, not thus temporarily or sporadically, but as a matter of general commercial and industrial policy, it is either desirable or necessary to encourage the production of luxuries. The fact is quite otherwise. Even if we could reduce man to the position of a mere commercial and industrial animal, we should still leave him wants so many, and such powers of supplying these wants, that no fear could be more illusory than the fear of work failing. Simply to fit man for a maximum production of material wealth, simply to feed him, and clothe him, and house him, and educate him, and doctor him, and govern him, so as to make the

most of him as a wealth-producer, even this implies an amount of production so infinitely beyond anything we know at present, that we may dismiss as a groundless alarm, the fear that mankind will fall idle for lack of work. The work to be done simply and solely under the first of the three heads mentioned, the production of instruments of further production, is, as matters stand at present with this ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, ill-organised, ill-governed world, so practically unlimited, that it is a contradiction of elementary economic analysis to justify work done for the sake of Luxury, on the sorry plea that otherwise mankind would be reduced to enforced idleness.[1] As the economist thinks, such work is work wasted,—wasted in the sense that it implies the deliberate misdirection of wealth into channels which tend to impoverish every nation that resorts to them. From all which this practical conclusion follows. If men must have Luxury, especially if it be costly and elaborate, let them be quite honest about the matter. Let them say frankly they must have it because they like it, or because they think it does mankind good for other than commercial reasons. Let them not say they must have it because its result will be to encourage the trade and commerce of the country; for, apart altogether from the probability that their luxury rests on no such elevated motive, we may feel assured, by the consensus of economists, that it will have no such result.

This brings us to a practical alternative. If we give heed to the foregoing facts, we must either, in deference to Political Economy, abjure luxuries, or, if we retain and even prize them, we must be careful, seeing they are commercially so bad a bargain, to find other arguments in their favour.

But it is just here that luxury passes from one court to another, there to receive from the ascetic moralist an even rougher handling than it has undergone at the hands of the economist. A moralist is ascetic, when he holds that the way to the truest life lies in the minimising of our wants. His method is just the reverse of the way of the world. The way of the world is to multiply wants, and their satisfaction. Honour, love, obedience, troops of

[1] Cf. Cairnes, *Leading Principles of Political Economy*, pp. 304-7.

friends, fame, power, position, wealth, luxury in all modes —this is the way of the world. It is precisely what the ascetic abjures. To minimise wants, to reduce material resources, to simplify life all round, of luxuries to make a clean sweep—this is the way of the ascetic.

Now, Asceticism may not be the last word on morality. But no one can do justice to its spirit, and fail to see that it rests on some of the deepest experiences in life. One is that any life much given up to luxury is almost of necessity precarious, and at the mercy of fortune. Take, as a type, some man of quick, keen interests, many-sided, susceptible to pleasures, who, by peculiar favour of fortune, has secured almost everything he has cared to have; who knows no hour without its pastime, no day without its comforts, no season without its sports or its amusements. How are we to view all his pleasant luxuries? Are they helps to life, or are they "hostages to fortune"? May not this question receive its answer, when suddenly some disaster comes—as disasters in the commercial world needs must come—and he is utterly and irretrievably nonplussed? In setting his trust in his resources, he has lost the faculty of trusting in himself.

There is but one complete security. Care for none of these things. Covet none of them; lean on them not at all; give never a hostage to fortune; abjure luxuries; count them as less than nothing; if possible, hate them. For after all, why should we care so much for luxuries? Why actually stake our lives upon them? They are not our life. They are clogs and obstacles. The truest life is the life led without them. "A man's a man for a' that"; not dependent on the gifts, the embellishments, the comforts of life, but, like the pine "moored in rifted rock," capable of drawing the very sap of a noble character from few, simple, ordinary, accessible things. This is the lesson that some of the greatest have lived to teach. Cynics, Stoics, anchorites, monks, mendicant friars, the example of Socrates, the frugality of Spinoza, the social ideal of Rousseau, the "plain living and high thinking" of Wordsworth, the unadorned spirituality of Carlyle and Emerson; they have all taught one doctrine, the old

doctrine of the Greek ascetics, that "men are rich and poor, not in their establishments, but in their souls."

That is the spirit of Asceticism. It warns us not to squander our souls on the trivial and the perishable, and bids us cut up luxury by the very roots. It is, at any rate, a heroic protest. Whether it be the highest morality or not, it remains for ever true, as the testimony of some of the world's greatest spirits against that profligate pursuit of inordinate Luxury which saps the life of great and prosperous nations. Criticism cannot prevent it from standing secure on the eternal fact, that some of the best things which life has to offer men are also the simplest; the unobtrusive beauty of hill, and sea, and sky; the homely delights of friendly intercourse; the joy of elevated thoughts; the communion with the noblest of the earth through books, or art, or music. "In ancient medical phraseology," says one well qualified to speak on the subject, "herbs possessed of healing natures were called simples; in God's laboratory, all things that heal are simple—all natural enjoyments—all the deepest—are simple too. At night, man fills his banquet hall with the glare of splendour which fevers as well as fires the heart; and at the very same hour, as if by intended contrast, the quiet stars of God steal forth, shedding, together with the deepest feeling, the profoundest sense of calm. One from whose knowledge of the sources of natural feeling there lies almost no appeal, has said that to him,

> 'The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.'"[1]

Thus are we bidden, it would seem, to abjure Luxury, at once by the world and the spirit, at once by the economist and the ascetic. Are we to agree with them, and hold that Luxury stands condemned?

If our answer be, No, we must be clear as to our reasons. In the first place, then, we may doubt if these ascetic counsels are practicable, even from the strictly economic aspect. Political Economy, it is true, condemns Luxury. It tells us, as we have seen, that it is a bad

[1] Robertson, *Sermons*, Vol. III. ix., "Sensual and Spiritual Excitement."

bargain. And yet, were luxuries to vanish before an ascetic revolution, even the most resolute of economists could not face the result with unqualified satisfaction. For he is bound to think of more than the value of industrial products. He must face the question of industrial and commercial motive; and no one knows better than he how powerfully this motive is stimulated, and sustained, by the desire for luxuries. The working part of the world, and especially that section of it whose vocation lies in the management of business, does not exert itself merely for livelihood, or for security against the future, or for the amassing of a fortune. In great measure, it works for comfortable homes, and pleasant surroundings, and foreign travel, and works of art, and many another of the thousand objects of expenditure that lie within the reach of wealth. There are striking exceptions, no doubt, and to the honour of human nature there will remain exceptions, so long as there are men who spend their hard-won wealth as if they held it in trust for the public. But in the case of the average man, it is obvious that the sinews of enterprise and activity draw much of their strength from the more ordinary ambitions. This being so, we may well pause to consider what would happen, were a crusade of extermination against Luxury successful. Would enterprise remain as keen, and industry as unslackening; and would men work as hard as they do now, even in the production of the wealth without which the world cannot be fed, or clothed, or governed, or educated? This is not a question that strikes a very lofty note; but at least it suggests the reflection that Political Economy itself cannot, without qualification, bring its indictment against Luxury.

But this is only a small part of the case. Suppression of Luxury, were it possible, would be disastrous, because men are, not only economically but morally, ill-fitted to bear this suppression. This has been proved repeatedly in the course of history. Ascetics have again and again preached a god-like simplicity of life, and have again and again ended by creating a brutish poverty of soul. Deplenish life of its luxuries, swamp in one common condemnation the luxuries of art and music, and the luxuries

of gluttony and revelry; and a chosen spirit here and there will perhaps go upward by the steep road of bare renunciation; but for ordinary men, there comes the danger that, when stripped of those natural and not inordinate enjoyments which give zest and interest to life, they may gravitate downwards towards the brute. The result has often happened. Cynic, Stoic, anchorite, monk, recluse have striven to possess their souls in a noble, simple independence of all the luxuries of life; too often to find that a life-long suicide had not left them souls worth the possessing.

There is a better and more hopeful way. There is a deeper, and really a more spiritual morality, which sees in luxuries, if only they be well chosen and rightly used, the instruments of moral and intellectual development. It is a bad and beggarly economy of life's resources, worthy only of Goths and Vandals, which would ruthlessly rifle human life of its natural satisfactions, its reasonable comforts, its needful recreations, its purifying tastes. These things are not obstacles, distractions, temptations. They are not concessions to human weakness. They are not "hostages to fortune." They are helps to living. They are the allies of morality, not its enemies. They are the very means, put by civilisation into the hands of men, for making something of themselves. Any one can put this to a test. Let him run over in his mind a dozen of the best men or women he knows. Does he find that they are indifferent to luxuries? Do they prize a good book, a good concert, a good play, or a cheerful party where friend meets friend, less or more than their neighbours? Can it be that, in these things, they are tasting forbidden joys, and rewarding themselves for the self-denial of one half of their lives by a little deliberate dissipation in the other? Let us not think so; else must we believe some of the best of men to be likewise the most hardened sinners. The more natural interpretation is that men take these things with a clear conscience. They are not called on, like pedants, to justify theatre or concert on the pretext that, if they did not patronise them, the orchestra or the actors would starve. Enough, should it happen to them to be put on their defence, candidly to

say that they believe that they are happier and better men because of these recreations. It argues but a poor estimate of the human spirit when any one, be he economist, or be he ascetic, pronounces it to be morally so frail, and intellectually so resourceless, that it cannot be trusted to turn to spiritual uses even the most artistic luxury that man's invention can devise. For it is but half of the world's offence that it so greedily pursues the luxuries that are frivolous or vicious; the other half is that it fails to pursue, because it has yet to learn to value, those that are honest, true, lovely, and of good report.

To all this, however, there must be one proviso. We have stated our plea for the luxuries of life. We have refused to part with them, either at the bidding of the economist, who tells us that they are a bad and wasteful investment; or at the bidding of the ascetic, who adds that they ruin the lives of men. Just on this account, however, is it of vital importance that there should be selection of them—that wise selection, apart from which a plea for luxuries may be read, and welcomed, by the first voluptuary, as a defence of sensuality and extravagance.

In this momentous task of selection, then, what are to be our canons of choice?

Nothing could be easier than to multiply canons. Men are so various as to justify a large variety of rules. "Many persons like a song who do not like a sermon," and contrariwise. If we consult one large section of Englishmen, they will assure us that the luxuries most needful are those which furnish the best antidote to habitual pursuits,—the wilderness for the man of towns, or foreign travel for the victim of the contractedness begotten by the division of labour. If we consult a second section, they will assure us (so differently strung are men, one seeking incentive where the other looks only for anodyne) that no luxuries are better than those that relate to our habitual pursuits, as when our engineer betakes himself straight to the machinery department of an exhibition, or our travelling lawyer to the law courts of some foreign capital. A third section will readily enough be found to urge a plea for the luxuries that wear

best, on the principle that "the test of a pleasure is the memory of it." A fourth stands up for the luxuries that bring us among the best people—a great matter, if men could only agree as to who the best people are; or, possibly, for the luxuries that bring us into the best and most ennobling scenes, which is one weighty consideration in all estimates of our national luxury of sport. And so we might run on; and though precepts can, neither here nor elsewhere, supersede individual judgment, there are few subjects on which a body of rules could be more profitably drawn up than on this subject of luxuries.

At present, however, two of such rules must suffice, partly because they seem in themselves the most important, partly because the one is fitted to disarm that economic, and the other that ethical criticism, to which, as has been seen, all luxury lies open.

(1) The first, the rule appealing specially, though by no means solely, to the economist, is to prefer the luxuries that are durable to those that are perishable. The rule is not absolute, but it has much in its favour.

(*a*) In the preference of durable luxuries lies the possibility of accumulation.[1] One man gives large dinners and keeps a pack of hounds. A few years go past, and all his lavish outlay is as if it had never been. Another spends as much, but with him expenditure takes the form of furniture, old china, books, pictures; and, a hundred years after he is dead, his house is one of the sights of the country-side, if only his heirs will allow the country-side to see it. It is here we strike upon one of the things that Art can do for luxury. It draws our interests to the more durable objects, and by so doing, as Ruskin has taught us, checks the reckless profusion in perishable luxuries—checks it in one way, just as the reproof of the preacher, or the lash of the satirist, checks it in another.

(*b*) In durability there also lies the possibility of the conversion of luxuries into utilities. The yacht of past seasons may end her days as a trading sloop or fishing boat; or the deserted houses or cast-off furniture of luxury come at last to shelter, or serve, industrious poverty. There may be matter for moralising here. But to the

[1] Cf. *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. II., ch. iii., p. 350, Rogers' edition.

economist, there can be but a prosaic satisfaction that honest work has carried its utility throughout various ranks and conditions of men.[1]

(*c*) Durability, again, plays powerfully into the hands of retrenchment and frugality.[2] When any one who has been living extravagantly, determines to retrench, he must be prepared to face impediments. If he has been keeping a little army of servants, and giving dinner-parties and balls, he draws upon himself the comments and the conjectures of his neighbours. Whereas, if extravagance has the redeeming feature of bestowing itself on the more durable commodities, on unostentatious comforts or objects of art, our domestic economist may retrench even by half his income, and no one, not even the gossip who lies in ambush for other people's disasters, is one whit the wiser.

(*d*) Weightiest of all is the fact, that the preference for durability economises the labour of the country by lightening the toil of perpetually producing perishable things. That labour must produce perishable things is of course inevitable. This, however, is but a reason why we should the more be upon our guard, and do what rests with us to secure that this perishability be minimised.

There are many persons who seem to think otherwise. Their notion seems to be that if, by some divine fiat, the decree of perishability were revoked, the result would be a public calamity. "What," they ask, "would become of our trades-people and artisans? What would our tailors and milliners do if our clothes never wore out; or our upholsterers, if our cabinets and our wardrobes never lost their handles or their hinges?" Let us reassure them at once. The decree of perishability never can be revoked. It is written on the face of the world. This assurance given, it may, however, be added that, if only the decree could be revoked, greater blessing could hardly befall the race of man. In two cases alone is it possible to contemplate perishability with satisfaction. The one is when —to borrow an epigram from Professor Walker—destruction implies the removal of obstruction;[3] when some

[1] Cf. *Wealth of Nations*, Bk. II., ch. iii., p. 351.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 352.
[3] *Political Economy*, p. 328, Macmillan, 1883.

antiquated factory goes up in a blaze, or some rotten "sea coffin" sinks, and each makes room for something better. The other is when an object, fashioned faithfully and well, has had its day, and fulfilled its uses, and ceased to be, because it has yielded up to man the maximum of serviceability. This is the perishability of the sword that has been notched and broken against the hostile steel, as compared with the durability of the sword that has rusted ingloriously on the wall; or the perishability of the book that has been thumbed to tatters by hard and loving study, as compared with the durability of the book that enjoys the safe uselessness of unvisited shelves. These kinds of perishability let us welcome. Out of such destruction comes man's life.

But, in other cases, swift perishability, if it be sign of anything, is sign of the primal curse, which condemns man to the task of toiling for ever against the forces of decay. Could it come to pass that nothing lasted for a week, there would be work enough, ceaseless and prodigious. The leisure men need and prize would vanish in a grinding struggle against the encroachments of abject want. Not even the fool would see in this a sign of prosperity. The sign of commercial and industrial prosperity is not the sweat of the brow and the aching arm. It is large recompense with least possible effort, large permanent gain for work done; and this is just what we get when we discover that philosopher's stone of all industry, the true craftsman's secret how to make goods that are *not* perishable. We see this in works of art. No one, not even a starving artist, wishes that they should be perishable. For in them we see, with convincing clearness, what the end of all true work is; to meet, and minister to, human wants. Their lesson for us is the fundamental truth that a lasting product is a lasting strength to life, and that, the more lasting the product, the better for mankind, in that unresting and often cruel struggle with want. Ruskin tells us how one of the Medici set Michael Angelo to model a statue of snow.[1] We need not pause to ask whether it was cruel caprice, or a pardonable practical joke. In any case the episode serves the

[1] *The Political Economy of Art*, p. 47, 1868.

purpose. It discloses the folly, and worse, of setting tasks which spend the strength and the skill of labour in producing trifles that can but satisfy the whim of a moment, or the vanity of an evening. Few men can emulate Pietro de Medici. But every man who, by his habit of life, indulges in perishable luxuries, does what in him lies to produce a quite similar result. Up to his abilities, he sets labour to the task of for ever returning to the production of worthless, frivolous, and perishable luxuries.

But if, despite all this, there are those who still think that men can be benefited by producing things, of which the main characteristic is that the greedy powers of decay and corruption snatch them away, almost as soon as they leave the workshop, then such persons ought to have the courage of their convictions, and pray for hurricanes to wreck their houses and sink their ships, and for fire and flood to take the rest, and choose for their saint the Florentine ruler who set genius to mould the statue of snow.[1]

Thus far the rule that we ought to prefer the durable to the perishable. We have said that it is not absolute, and one special exception to it is seen when the spirit of affection and sacrifice, finding no outlet in ordinary words or deeds, mutely strives to symbolise itself in some act of pious profusion and waste. And one of these acts will never be far from the memory of Christian people. We must find a place for them, and if only we are sure that our motives are as pure, we may well cling to this hyperbole of extravagance, for it will be part of our religion. Such things as these are not to be weighed in ordinary scales. But it is not with such cases that we have to deal. It is with the ordinary lives of English citizens; and for such, there are few juster or safer rules than that which gives unhesitating preference to the durable over the perishable.

(2) A second canon of choice is that we ought to prefer unselfish to selfish luxury. These, of course, are vague and trite terms, but it may help to define the meaning here put upon them if we take an example. A man leaves his comfortable house with its well-made and

[1] Cf. Cairnes, *Leading Principles*, p. 300.

artistic furniture, its books, its pictures, and goes along the street. Before he has walked a hundred yards he has met many who do not enjoy even a tithe of his own moderate luxuries. He reflects, "Can it be right for me and mine to enjoy these things, and to know the cheerful exchange of hospitalities, and to have, as matter of course, the autumn holiday on the moors or by the seaside, while thousands seem barely to have decent clothes to cover their backs, or decent roofs to shelter them?" It is a common reflection, made a hundred times a day in great cities. What fruit ought it to bear? Ought our reflective citizen to resolve at once to forswear his luxuries, to buy no more etchings, to minimise his expenditure on books, to content himself with the plainest furniture, to give up all hospitalities, to spend no more than he can help on anything which cannot be shown to make life directly more comfortable or more attractive to the mass of the community? It is a course of action which has sometimes been passionately enjoined. "No nation," says Ruskin, "has a right to indulge in luxuries until all its poor are comfortably housed and fed."[1] It is likewise a conclusion from which it is difficult to dissent. There is so much flagitious abuse of luxury, that such a gospel seems needful, and, we might add, salutary, were we certain it would be taken to heart most by those children of luxury who need it most, and least by those children of light who need it not at all. Nevertheless, dissent from it we must.

Inevitably there are conditions, inseparable from the enjoyment of luxuries, which give it a look of selfishness. By the very laws of our life, emphasising as these do the claims of domestic and private relationships, there are many luxuries which, if they be enjoyed at all, must be, in a sense, the monopoly of ourselves and of our chosen circles. Our comfortable homes, for example, how can these be shared with our fellow-citizens at large? We cannot turn our collections of books into lending libraries;

[1] *Political Economy of Art*, p. 220; cf. p. 71; cf. also, *Unto this last*, p. 173, "Luxury at present can only be enjoyed by the ignorant; the cruelest man living could not sit at his feast, unless he sat blindfold."

or our drawing-rooms into concert-rooms open for all comers. And when we take our holiday, is it not its very charm that we retreat from the world, and enjoy, in quiet places, the precious hours of domestic and friendly intercourse? In this sense our luxuries must begin at home. Undoubtedly such enjoyments place us and ours in a position of advantage, as compared with many thousands of our fellow-citizens no less deserving than ourselves. But they are not therefore selfish. By abuse they may become so. They may not only begin at home, but end there. Yet this is exactly what need not happen. In many cases it does not happen now. The selfishness of a luxury is not settled by our enjoying it, but by the question whether we do, or do not, turn our enjoyment of it to good account. Honest and well-chosen luxury makes us stronger men. It makes us better in ourselves, and for that very reason, better for others; better educators of our families, better comrades for our friends, better servants of society. If a man loves in solitary hours to read Plato, or Shakspeare, or Scott, or Thackeray, is he less or more fit thereby to be a champion of free public libraries? If he delights in drawing-room music, is he less fit or more fit to be an organiser of people's concerts? If he spends long days of wandering on hill or shore, is he less fit or more fit to become an advocate of public parks and open spaces in great dismal cities? These are not exceptional cases. They are instances of the general law that the way to public helpfulness is found, not by starving, but by feeding the soul. It is good for us to honour those who think otherwise. Few will withhold the tribute even of reverence from the man who starves his mind and mortifies his tastes, in the conviction that we must abjure in order that we may help, that we must level down the resources of our individual lives that we may level up the general mass. Nor need we much fear the warning, though there is a truth in it, that those who are cruel to themselves become cruel to others also. But the fact remains that such persons, in defiance of their own goodness, distrust human nature too much, both in themselves and others. In the sacrificing effort to be helpful they

may be rendering themselves less capable of being so. Nor must all the gross, and all the frivolous abuse of life's resources be suffered to shake the conviction that the reasonable, as well as the practical, doctrine for the England of to-day is, not the suppression of luxuries, but the duty of so selecting and diffusing them that they may make of Englishmen better men and better citizens. Hardly can the tenderest of consciences over-estimate the claims of the community upon us, and especially the claims of that part of it which lives in chronic misery and joylessness, or that part of it which alternates hard work with coarse pleasures, or that part of it which diversifies vacant lives with costly excitements. But the hope is, that these claims will come home to no one more than to the man in whom feelings have been quickened, and powers developed, by the luxuries that are pure, simple, accessible, unselfish, and enduring.

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