

**DICKINSON
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LOWES**

A MODERN SYMPOSIUM

Goldsworthy Dickinson
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G. Lowes Dickinson

A Modern Symposium

A MODERN SYMPOSIUM

SOME of my readers may have heard of a club known as the Seekers. It is now extinct; but in its day it was famous, and included a number of men prominent in politics or in the professions. We used to meet once a fortnight on the Saturday night, in London during the winter, but in the summer usually at the country house of one or other of the members, where we would spend the week-end together. The member in whose house the meeting was held was chairman for the evening; and after the paper had been read it was his duty to call upon the members to speak in what order he thought best. On the occasion of the discussion which I am to record, the meeting was held in my own house, where I now write, on the North Downs. The company was an interesting one. There was Remenham, then Prime Minister, and his great antagonist Mendoza, both of whom were members of our society. For we aimed at combining the most opposite elements, and were usually able, by a happy tradition inherited from our founder, to hold them suspended in a temporary harmony. Then there was Cantilupe, who had recently retired from public life, and whose name, perhaps, is already beginning to be forgotten. Of younger men we had Allison, who, though still engaged in business, was already active in his socialist propaganda. Angus MacCarthy, too, was there, a man whose tragic end at Saint Petersburg is still fresh in our minds. And there were others of less note; Wilson, the biologist, Professor Martin, Coryat, the poet, and one or two more who will be mentioned in their place.

After dinner, the time of year being June, and the weather unusually warm, we adjourned to the terrace for our coffee and cigars. The air was so pleasant and the prospect so beautiful, the whole weald of Sussex lying before us in the evening light, that it was suggested we should hold our meeting there rather than indoors. This was agreed. But it then transpired that Cantilupe, who was to have read the paper, had brought nothing to read. He had forgotten, or he had been too busy. At this discovery there was a general cry of protest. Cantilupe's proposition that we should forgo our discussion was indignantly scouted; and he was pressed to improvise something on the lines of what he had intended to write. This, however, he steadily declined to attempt; and it seemed as though the debate would fall through, until it occurred to me to intervene in my capacity as chairman.

"Cantilupe," I said, "certainly ought to be somehow penalized. And since he declines to improvise a paper, I propose that he improvise a speech. He is accustomed to doing that; and since he has now retired from public life, this may be his last opportunity. Let him employ it, then, in doing penance. And the penance I impose is, that he should make a personal confession. That he should tell us why he has been a politician, why he has been, and is, a Tory, and why he is now retiring in the prime of life. I propose, in a word, that he should give us his point of view. That will certainly provoke Remenham, on whom I shall call next. He will provoke someone else. And so we shall all find ourselves giving our points of view, and we ought to have a very interesting evening." This suggestion was greeted, if not with enthusiasm, at least with acquiescence. Cantilupe at first objected strongly, but yielded to pressure, and on my calling formally upon him rose reluctantly from his seat. For a minute or two he stood silent, humping his shoulders and smiling through his thick beard. Then, in his slow, deliberate way, he began as follows:

"Why I went into politics? Why did I? I'm sure I don't know. Certainly I wasn't intended for it. I was intended for a country gentleman, and I hope for the rest of my life to be one; which, perhaps, if I were candid, is the real reason of my retirement. But I was pushed into politics when I was young, as a kind of family duty; and once in it's very hard to get out again. I'm coming out now because, among other things, there's no longer any place for me. Toryism is dead. And I, as you justly describe

me, am a Tory. But you want to know why? Well, I don't know that I can tell you. Perhaps I ought to be able to. Remenham, I know, can and will give you the clearest possible account of why he is a Liberal. But then Remenham has principles; and I have only prejudices. I am a Tory because I was born one, just as another man is a Radical because he was born one. But Remenham, I really believe, is a Liberal, because he has convinced himself that he ought to be one. I admire him for it, but I am quite unable to understand him. And, for my own part, if I am to defend, or rather to explain myself, I can only do so by explaining my prejudices. And really I am glad to have the opportunity of doing so, if only because it is a satisfaction occasionally to say what one thinks; a thing which has become impossible in public life.

"The first of my prejudices is that I believe in inequality. I'm not at all sure that that is a prejudice confined to myself – most people seem to act upon it in practice, even in America. But I not only recognize the fact, I approve the ideal of inequality. I don't want, myself, to be the equal of Darwin or of the German Emperor; and I don't see why anybody should want to be my equal. I like a society properly ordered in ranks and classes. I like my butcher or my gardener to take off his hat to me, and I like, myself, to stand bareheaded in the presence of the Queen. I don't know that I'm better or worse than the village carpenter; but I'm different; and I like him to recognize that fact, and to recognize it myself. In America, I am told, everyone is always informing you, in everything they do and say, directly or indirectly, that they are as good as you are. That isn't true, and if it were, it isn't good manners to keep saying it. I prefer a society where people have places and know them. They always do have places in any possible society; only, in a democratic society, they refuse to recognize them; and, consequently, social relations are much ruder, more unpleasant and less humane than they are, or used to be, in England. That is my first prejudice; and it follows, of course, that I hate the whole democratic movement. I see no sense in pretending to make people equal politically when they're unequal in every other respect. Do what you may, it will always be a few people that will govern. And the only real result of the extension of the franchise has been to transfer political power from the landlords to the trading classes and the wire-pullers. Well, I don't think the change is a good one. And that brings me to my second prejudice, a prejudice against trade. I don't mean, of course, that we can do without it. A country must have wealth, though I think we were a much better country when we had less than we have now. Nor do I dispute that there are to be found excellent, honourable, and capable men of business. But I believe that the pursuit of wealth tends to unfit men for the service of the state. And I sympathize with the somewhat extreme view of the ancient world that those who are engaged in trade ought to be excluded from public functions. I believe in government by gentlemen; and the word gentleman I understand in the proper, old-fashioned English sense, as a man of independent means, brought up from his boyhood in the atmosphere of public life, and destined either for the army, the navy, the Church, or Parliament. It was that kind of man that made Rome great, and that made England great in the past; and I don't believe that a country will ever be great which is governed by merchants and shopkeepers and artisans. Not because they are not, or may not be, estimable people; but because their occupations and manner of life unfit them for public service.

"Well, that is the kind of feeling – I won't call it a principle – which determined my conduct in public life. And you will remember that it seemed to be far more possible to give expression to it when first I entered politics than it is now. Even after the first Reform Act – which, in my opinion was conceived upon the wrong lines – the landed gentry still governed England; and if I could have had my way they would have continued to do so. It wasn't really parliamentary reform that was wanted; it was better and more intelligent government. And such government the then ruling class was capable of supplying, as is shown by the series of measures passed in the thirties and forties, the new Poor Law and the Public Health Acts and the rest. Even the repeal of the Corn Laws shows at least how capable they were of sacrificing their own interests to the nation; though otherwise I consider that measure the greatest of their blunders. I don't profess to be a political economist, and I am ready to take it from those whose business it is to know that our wealth has been increased by Free Trade. But no one has

ever convinced me, though many people have tried, that the increase of wealth ought to be the sole object of a nation's policy. And it is surely as clear as day that the policy of Free Trade has dislocated the whole structure of our society. It has substituted a miserable city-proletariat for healthy labourers on the soil; it has transferred the great bulk of wealth from the country-gentleman to the traders; and in so doing it has more and more transferred power from those who had the tradition of using it to those who have no tradition at all except that of accumulation. The very thing which I should have thought must be the main business of a statesman – the determination of the proper relations of classes to one another – we have handed over to the chances of competition. We have abandoned the problem in despair, instead of attempting to solve it; with the result, that our population – so it seems to me – is daily degenerating before our eyes, in physique, in morals, in taste, in everything that matters; while we console ourselves with the increasing aggregate of our wealth. Free Trade, in my opinion, was the first great betrayal by the governing class of the country and themselves, and the second was the extension of the franchise. I do not say that I would not have made any change at all in the parliamentary system that had been handed down to us. But I would never have admitted, even implicitly, that every man has a right to vote, still less that all have an equal right. For society, say what we may, is not composed of individuals but of classes; and by classes it ought to be represented. I would have enfranchised peasants, artisans, merchants, manufacturers, as such, taking as my unit the interest, not the individual, and assigning to each so much weight as would enable its influence to be felt, while preserving to the landed gentry their preponderance. That would have been difficult, no doubt, but it would have been worth doing; whereas it was, to my mind, as foolish as it was easy simply to add new batches of electors, till we shall arrive, I do not doubt, at what, in effect, is universal suffrage, without having ever admitted to ourselves that we wanted to have it.

"But what has been done is final and irremediable. Henceforth, numbers, or rather those who control numbers, will dominate England; and they will not be the men under whom hitherto she has grown great. For people like myself there is no longer a place in politics. And really, so far as I am personally concerned, I am rather glad to know it. Those who have got us into the mess must get us out of it. Probably they will do so, in their own way; but they will make, in the process, a very different England from the one I have known and understood and loved. We shall have a population of city people, better fed and housed, I hope, than they are now, clever and quick and smart, living entirely by their heads, ready to turn out in a moment for use everything they know, but knowing really very little, and not knowing it very well. There will be fewer of the kind of people in whom I take pleasure, whom I like to regard as peculiarly English, and who are the products of the countryside; fellows who grow like vegetables, and, without knowing how, put on sense as they put on flesh by an unconscious process of assimilation; who will stand for an hour at a time watching a horse or a pig, with stolid moon-faces as motionless as a pond; the sort of men that visitors from town imagine to be stupid because they take five minutes to answer a question, and then probably answer by asking another; but who have stored up in them a wealth of experience far too extensive and complicated for them ever to have taken account of it. They live by their instincts not their brains; but their instincts are the slow deposit of long years of practical dealings with nature. That is the kind of man I like. And I like to live among them in the way I do – in a traditional relation which it never occurs to them to resent, any more than it does to me to abuse it. That sort of relation you can't create; it has to grow, and to be handed down from father to son. The new men who come on to the land never manage to establish it. They bring with them the isolation which is the product of cities. They have no idea of any tie except that of wages; the notion of neighbourliness they do not understand. And that reminds me of a curious thing. People go to town for society; but I have always found that there is no real society except in the country. We may be stupid there, but we belong to a scheme of things which embodies the wisdom of generations. We meet not in drawing-rooms, but in the hunting-field, on the county-bench, at dinners of tenants or farmers' associations. Our private business is intermixed with our public. Our occupation does not involve competition; and the daily performance of its duties we

feel to be itself a kind of national service. That is an order of things which I understand and admire, as my fathers understood and admired it before me. And that is why I am a Tory; not because of any opinions I hold, but because that is my character. I stood for Toryism while it meant something; and now that it means nothing, though I stand for it no longer, still I can't help being it. The England that is will last my time; the England that is to be does not interest me; and it is as well that I should have nothing to do with directing it.

"I don't know whether that is a sufficient account of the question I was told to answer; but it's the best I can make, and I think it ought to be sufficient. I always imagine myself saying to God, if He asks me to give an account of myself: 'Here I am, as you made me. You can take me or leave me. If I had to live again I would live just so. And if you want me to live differently, you must make me different.' I have championed a losing cause, and I am sorry it has lost. But I do not break my heart about it. I can still live for the rest of my days the life I respect and enjoy. And I am content to leave the nation in the hands of Remenham, who, as I see, is all impatience to reply to my heresies."

REMENHAM in fact was fidgeting in his chair as though he found it hard to keep his seat; and I should have felt bound in pity to call upon him next, even if I had not already determined to do so. He rose with alacrity; and it was impossible not to be struck by the contrast he presented to Cantilupe. His elastic upright figure, his firm chin, the exuberance of his gestures, the clear ring of his voice, expressed admirably the intellectual and nervous force which he possessed in a higher degree than any man I have ever come across. He began without hesitation, and spoke throughout with the trained and facile eloquence of which he was master. "I shall, I am sure, be believed," he said, "when I emphatically assert that nothing could be more distressing to me than the notion – if I should be driven to accept it – that the liberal measures on which, in my opinion, the prosperity and the true welfare of the country depends should have, as one of their incidental concomitants, the withdrawal from public life of such men as our friend who has just sat down. We need all the intellectual and moral resources of the country; and among them I count as not the least valuable and fruitful the stock of our ancient country gentlemen. I regretted the retirement of Lord Cantilupe on public as well as on personal grounds; and my regret is only tempered, not altogether removed, when I see how well, how honourably and how happily he is employing his well-deserved leisure. But I am glad to know that we have still, and to believe that we shall continue to have, in the great Council of the nation, men of his distinguished type and tradition to form one, and that not the least important, of the balances and counter-checks in the great and complicated engine of state.

"When, however, he claims – or perhaps I should rather say desires – for the distinguished order of which he is a member, an actual and permanent preponderance in the state, there, I confess, I must part company with him. Nay, I cannot even accept the theory, to which he gave expression, of a fixed and stable representation of interests. It is indeed true that society, by the mysterious dispensation of the Divine Being, is wonderfully compounded of the most diverse elements and classes, corresponding to the various needs and requirements of human life. And it is an ancient theory, supported by the authority of great names, by Plato, my revered master, the poet-philosopher, by Aristotle, the founder of political science, that the problem of a statesman is so to adjust these otherwise discordant elements as to form once for all in the body-politic a perfect, a final and immutable harmony. There is, according to this view, one simple chord and one only, which the great organ of society is adapted to play; and the business of the legislator is merely to tune the instrument so that it shall play it correctly. Thus, if Plato could have had his way, his great common chord, his harmony of producers, soldiers and philosophers, would still have been droning monotonously down the ages, wherever men were assembled to dwell together. Doubtless the concord he conceived was beautiful. But the dissonances he would have silenced, but which, with ever-augmenting force, peal and crash, from his day to ours, through the echoing vault of time, embody, as I am apt to think, a harmony more august than any which even he was able to imagine, and in their intricate succession weave the plan of a world-symphony too high to be apprehended save in part by our grosser sense, but perceived

with delight by the pure intelligence of immortal spirits. It is indeed the fundamental defect of all imaginary polities – and how much more of such as fossilize, without even idealizing, the actual! – that even though they be perfect, their perfection is relative only to a single set of conditions; and that could they perpetuate themselves they would also perpetuate these, which should have been but brief and transitory phases in the history of the race. Had it been possible for Plato to establish over the habitable globe his golden chain of philosophic cities, he would have riveted upon the world for ever the institutions of slavery and caste, would have sealed at the source the springs of science and invention, and imprisoned in perennial impotence that mighty genius of empire which alone has been able to co-ordinate to a common and beneficent end the stubborn and rebellious members of this growing creature Man. And if the imagination of a Plato, permitted to work its will, would thus have sterilized the germs of progress, what shall we say of such men as ourselves imposing on the fecundity of nature the limits and rules of our imperfect mensuration! Rather should we, in humility, submit ourselves to her guidance, and so adapt our institutions that they shall hamper as little as may be the movements and forces operating within them. For it is by conflict, as we have now learnt, that the higher emerges from the lower, and nature herself, it would almost seem, does not direct but looks on, as her world emerges in painful toil from chaos. We do not find her with precipitate zeal intervening to arrest at a given point the ferment of creation; stretching her hand when she sees the gleam of the halcyon or the rose to bid the process cease that would destroy them; and sacrificing to the completeness of those lower forms the nobler imperfection of man and of what may lie beyond him. She looks always to the end; and so in our statesmanship should we, striving to express, not to limit, by our institutions the forces with which we have to deal. Our polity should grow, like a skin, upon the living tissue of society. For who are we that we should say to this man or that, go plough, keep shop, or govern the state? That we should say to the merchant, 'thus much power shall be yours,' and to the farmer, 'thus much yours?' No! rather let us say to each and to all, Take the place you can, enjoy the authority you can win! Let our constitution express the balance of forces in our society, and as they change let the disposition of power change with them! That is the creed of liberalism, supported by nature herself, and sanctioned, I would add with reverence, by the Almighty Power, in the disposition and order of His stupendous creation.

"But it is not a creed that levels, nor one that destroys. None can have more regard than I – not Cantilupe himself – for our ancient crown, our hereditary aristocracy. These, while they deserve it – and long may they do so! – will retain their honoured place in the hearts and affections of the people. Only, alongside of them, I would make room for all elements and interests that may come into being in the natural course of the play of social forces. But these will be far too numerous, far too inextricably interwoven, too rapidly changing in relative weight and importance, for the intelligence of man to attempt, by any artificial scheme, to balance and adjust their conflicting claims. Open to all men equally, within the limits of prudence, the avenue to political influence, and let them use, as they can and will, in combined or isolated action, the opportunities thus liberally bestowed. That is the key-note of the policy which I have consistently adopted from my entrance into public life, and which I am prepared to prosecute to the end, though that end should be the universal suffrage so dreaded by the last speaker. He tells me it is a policy of reckless abandonment. But abandonment to what? Abandonment to the people! And the question is, Do we trust the people? I do; he does not! There, I venture to think, is the real difference between us.

"Yes, I am not ashamed to say it, I trust the People! What should I trust, if I could not trust them? What else is a nation but an assemblage of the talents, the capacities, the virtues of the citizens of whom it is composed? To utilize those talents, to evoke those capacities, to offer scope and opportunity to those virtues, must be the end and purpose of every great and generous policy; and to that end, up to the measure of my powers, I have striven to minister, not rashly, I hope, nor with impatience, but in the spirit of a sober and assured faith.

"Such is my conception of liberalism. But if liberalism has its mission at home, not less important are its principles in the region of international relations. I will not now embark on the troubled sea of foreign policy. But on one point I will touch, since it was raised by the last speaker, and that is the question of our foreign trade. In no department of human activity, I will venture to say, are the intentions of the Almighty more plainly indicated, than in this of the interchange of the products of labour. To each part of the habitable globe have been assigned its special gifts for the use and delectation of Man; to every nation its peculiar skill, its appropriate opportunities. As the world was created for labour, so it was created for exchange. Across the ocean, bridged at last by the indomitable pertinacity of art, the granaries of the new world call, in their inexhaustible fecundity for the iron and steel, the implements and engines of the old. The shepherd-kings of the limitless plains of Australia, the Indian ryot, the now happily emancipated negro of Georgia and Carolina, feed and are fed by the factories and looms of Manchester and Bradford. Pall Mall is made glad with the produce of the vineyards of France and Spain; and the Italian peasant goes clad in the labours of the Leicester artisan. The golden chain revolves, the silver buckets rise and fall; and one to the other passes on, as it fills and overflows, the stream that pours from Nature's cornucopia! Such is the law ordained by the Power that presides over the destinies of the world; and not all the interferences of man with His beneficent purposes can avail altogether to check and frustrate their happy operation. Yet have the blind cupidity, the ignorant apprehensions of national zeal dislocated, so far as was possible, the wheels and cogs of the great machine, hampered its working and limited its uses. And if there be anything of which this great nation may justly boast, it is that she has been the first to tear down the barriers and dams of a perverted ingenuity, and to admit in unrestricted plenitude to every channel of her verdant meadows the limpid and fertilizing stream of trade.

"Verily she has had her reward! Search the records of history, and you will seek in vain for a prosperity so immense, so continuous, so progressive, as that which has blessed this country in the last half-century of her annals. This access of wealth was admitted indeed by the speaker who preceded me. But he complained that we had taken no account of the changes which the new system was introducing into the character and occupations of the people. It is true; and he would be a rash man who should venture to forecast and to determine the remoter results of such a policy; or should shrink from the consequences of liberty on the ground that he cannot anticipate their character. Which of us would have the courage, even if he had the power, to impose upon a nation for all time the form of its economic life, the type of its character, the direction of its enterprise? The possibilities that lie in the womb of Nature are greater than we can gauge; we can but facilitate their birth, we may not prescribe their anatomy. The evils of the day call for the remedies of the day; but none can anticipate with advantage the necessities of the future. And meantime what cause is there for misgiving? I confess that I see none. The policy of freedom has been justified, I contend, by its results. And so confident am I of this, that the time, I believe, is not far distant, when other countries will awake at last to their own true interests and emulate, not more to their advantage than to ours, our fiscal legislation. I see the time approaching when the nations of the world, laying aside their political animosities, will be knitted together in the peaceful rivalry of trade; when those barriers of nationality which belong to the infancy of the race will melt and dissolve in the sunshine of science and art; when the roar of the cannon will yield to the softer murmur of the loom, and the apron of the artisan, the blouse of the peasant be more honourable than the scarlet of the soldier; when the cosmopolitan armies of trade will replace the militia of death; when that which God has joined together will no longer be sundered by the ignorance, the folly, the wickedness of man; when the labour and the invention of one will become the heritage of all; and the peoples of the earth meet no longer on the field of battle, but by their chosen delegates, as in the vision of our greatest poet, in the 'Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World.'"

WITH this peroration Remenham resumed his seat. He had spoken, as indeed was his habit, rather as if he were addressing a public meeting than a company of friends. But at least he had set

the ball rolling. To many of those present, as I well knew, his speech and his manner must have been eminently provocative; and naturally to none more than to Mendoza. I had, therefore, no hesitation in signalling out the Conservative chief to give us the opposite point of view. He responded with deliberation, lifting from his chest his sinister Jewish face, and slowly unfolding his long body, while a malicious smile played about his mouth.

"One," he began, "who has not the privilege of immediate access to the counsels of the Divine Being cannot but feel himself at a disadvantage in following a man so favoured as my distinguished friend. The disadvantage, however, is one to which I have had, perforce, to grow accustomed during long years of parliamentary strife, I have resigned myself to creeping where he soars, to guessing where he prophesies. But there is compensation everywhere. And, perhaps, there are certain points which may be revealed to babes and sucklings, while they are concealed from beings more august. The worm, I suppose, must be aware of excrescences and roughnesses of the soil which escape the more comprehensive vision of the eagle; and to the worm, at least, these are of more importance than mountain ranges and oceans which he will never reach. It is from that humble point of view that I shall offer a few remarks supplementary to, perhaps even critical of, the eloquent apostrophe we have been permitted to enjoy.

"The key-note of my friend's address was liberty. There is no British heart which does not beat higher at the sound of that word. But while I listened to his impassioned plea, I could not help wondering why he did not propose to dispense to us in even larger and more liberal measure the supreme and precious gift of freedom. True, he has done much to remove the barriers that separated nation from nation, and man from man. But how much remains to be accomplished before we can be truly said to have brought ourselves into line with Nature! Consider, for example, the policeman! Has my friend ever reflected on all that is implied in that solemn figure; on all that it symbolizes of interference with the purposes of a beneficent Creator? The policeman is a permanent public defiance of Nature. Through him the weak rule the strong, the few the many, the intelligent the fools. Through him survive those whom the struggle for existence should have eliminated. He substitutes the unfit for the fit. He dislocates the economy of the universe. Under his shelter take root and thrive all monstrous and parasitic growths. Marriage clings to his skirts, property nestles in his bosom. And while these flourish, where is liberty? The law of Nature we all know:

The good old rule, the ancient plan
That he should take who has the power,
And he should keep who can!

"But this, by the witchcraft of property, we have set aside. Our walls of brick and stone we have manned with invisible guards. We have thronged with fiery faces and arms the fences of our gardens and parks. The plate-glass of our windows we have made more impenetrable than adamant. To our very infants we have given the strength of giants. Babies surfeit, while strong men starve; and the foetus in the womb stretches out unformed hands to annex a principality. Is this liberty? Is this Nature? No! It is a Merlin's prison! Yet, monstrous, it subsists! Has our friend, then, no power to dissolve the charm? Or, can it be that he has not the will?

"Again, can we be said to be free, can we be said to be in harmony with Nature, while we endure the bonds of matrimony? While we fetter the happy promiscuity of instinct, and subject our roving fancy to the dominion of 'one unchanging wife?' Here, indeed, I frankly admit, Nature has her revenges; and an actual polygamy flourishes even under the aegis of our law. But the law exists; it is the warp on which, by the woof of property, we fashion that Nessus-shirt, the Family, in which, we have swathed the giant energies of mankind. But while that shirt clings close to every limb, what avails it, in the name of liberty, to snap, here and there, a button or a lace? A more heroic work is required of the great protagonist, if, indeed, he will follow his mistress to the end. He shakes his

head. What! Is his service, then, but half-hearted after all? Or, can it be, that behind the mask of the goddess he begins to divine the teeth and claws of the brute? But if nature be no goddess, how can we accept her as sponsor for liberty? And if liberty be taken on its own merits, how is it to be distinguished from anarchy? How, but by the due admixture of coercion? And, that admitted, must we not descend from the mountain-top of prophecy to the dreary plains of political compromise?"

Up to this point Mendoza had preserved that tone of elaborate irony which, it will be remembered, was so disconcerting to English audiences, and stood so much in the way of his popularity. But now his manner changed. Becoming more serious, and I fear I must add, more dull than I had ever heard him before, he gave us what I suppose to be the most intimate exposition he had ever permitted himself to offer of the Conservative point of view as he understood it.

"These," he resumed, "are questions which I must leave my friend to answer for himself. The ground is too high for me. I have no skill in the flights of speculation. I take no pleasure in the enunciation of principles. To my restricted vision, placed as I am upon the earth, isolated facts obtrude themselves with a capricious particularity which defies my powers of generalization. And that, perhaps, is the reason why I attached myself to the party to which I have the honour to belong. For it is, I think, the party which sees things as they are; as they are, that is, to mere human vision. Remenham, in his haste, has called us the party of reaction. I would rather say, we are the party of realism. We have in view, not Man, but Englishmen; not ideal polities, but the British Constitution; not Political Economy, but the actual course of our trade. Through this great forest of fact, this tangle of old and new, these secular oaks, sturdy shrubs, beautiful parasitic creepers, we move with a prudent diffidence, following the old tracks, endeavouring to keep them open, but hesitating to cut new routes till we are clear as to the goal for which we are asked to sacrifice our finest timber. Fundamental changes we regard as exceptional and pathological. Yet, being bound by no theories, when we are convinced of their necessity, we inaugurate them boldly and carry them through to the end. And thus it is that having decided that the time had come to call the people to the councils of the nation, we struck boldly and once for all by a measure which I will never admit – and here I regret that Cantilupe is not with me – which I will never admit to be at variance with the best, and soundest traditions of conservatism.

"But such measures are exceptional, and we hope they will be final. We take no delight in tinkering the constitution. The mechanism of government we recognize to be only a means; the test of the statesman is his power to govern. And remaining, as we do, inaccessible to that gospel of liberty of which our opponents have had a special revelation, we find in the existing state of England much that appears to us to need control. We are unable to share the optimism which animates Remenham and his friends as to the direction and effects of the new forces of industry. Above the whirr of the spindle and the shaft we hear the cry of the poor. Behind our flourishing warehouses and shops we see the hovels of the artisan. We watch along our highroads the long procession of labourers deserting their ancestral villages for the cities; we trace them to the slum and the sweater's den; we follow them to the poorhouse and the prison; we see them disappear engulfed in the abyss, while others press at their heels to take their place and share their destiny. And in face of all this we do not think it to be our duty to fold our arms and invoke the principle of liberty. We feel that we owe it to the nation to preserve intact its human heritage, the only source of its greatness and its wealth; and we are prepared, with such wisdom as we have, to legislate to that end, undeterred by the fear of incurring the charge of socialism.

"But while we thus concern ourselves with the condition of these islands, we have not forgotten that we have relations to the world outside. If, indeed, we could share the views to which Remenham has given such eloquent expression, this is a matter which would give us little anxiety. He beholds, as in a vision, the era of peace and good-will ushered in by the genius of commerce. By a mysterious dispensation of Providence he sees cupidity and competition furthering the ends of charity and peace. But here once more I am unable to follow his audacious flight. Confined to the sphere of observation,

I cannot but note that in the long and sanguinary course of history there has been no cause so fruitful of war as the rivalries of trade. Our own annals at every point are eloquent of this truth; nor do I see anything in the conditions of the modern world that should limit its application. We have been told that all nations will adopt our fiscal policy. Why should they, unless it is to their interest? We adopted it because we thought it was to ours; and we shall abandon it if we ever change our opinion. And when I say 'interest' I would not be understood to mean economic interest in the narrower sense. A nation, like an individual, I conceive, has a personality to maintain. It must be its object not to accumulate wealth at all costs, but to develop and maintain capacity, to be powerful, energetic, many-sided, and above all independent. Whether the policy we have adopted will continue to guarantee this result, I am not prophet enough to venture to affirm. But if it does not, I cannot doubt that we shall be driven to revise it. Nor can I believe that other nations, not even our own colonies, will follow us in our present policy, if to do so would be to jeopardy their rising industries and unduly to narrow the scope of their economic energies. I do not, then, I confess, look forward with enthusiasm or with hope to the Crystal Palace millennium that inspired the eloquence of Remenham. I see the future pregnant with wars and rumours of wars. And in particular I see this nation, by virtue of its wealth, its power, its unparalleled success, the target for the envy, the hatred, the cupidity of all the peoples of Europe. I see them looking abroad for outlets for their expanding population, only to find every corner of the habitable globe preoccupied by the English race and overshadowed by the English flag. But from this, which is our main danger, I conjure my main hope for the future. England is more than England. She has grown in her sleep. She has stretched over every continent huge embryo limbs which wait only for the beat of her heart, the motion of her spirit, to assume their form and function as members of one great body of empire. The spirit, I think, begins to stir, the blood to circulate. Our colonies, I believe, are not destined to drop from us like ripe fruit; our dependencies will not fall to other masters. The nation sooner or later will wake to its imperial mission. The hearts of Englishmen beyond the seas will beat in unison with ours. And the federation I foresee is not the federation of Mankind, but that of the British race throughout the world."

He paused, and in the stillness that followed we became aware of the gathering dusk. The first stars were appearing, and the young moon was low in the west. From the shadow below we heard the murmur of a fountain, and the call of a nightingale sounded in the wood. Something in the time and the place must have worked on Mendoza's mood; for when he resumed it was in a different key.

"Such," he began, "is my vision, if I permit myself to dream. But who shall say whether it is more than a dream? There is something in the air to-night which compels candour. And if I am to tell my inmost thought, I must confess on what a flood of nescience we, who seem to direct the affairs of nations, are borne along together with those whom we appear to control. We are permitted, like children, to lay our hands upon the reins; but it is a dark and unknown genius who drives. We are his creatures; and it is his ends, not ours, that are furthered by our contests, our efforts, our ideals. In the arena Remenham and I must play our part, combat bravely, and be ready to die when the crowd turn down their thumbs. But here in a moment of withdrawal, I at least cannot fail to recognize behind the issues that divide us the tie of a common destiny. We shall pass and a new generation will succeed us; a generation to whom our ideals will be irrelevant, our catch-words empty, our controversies unintelligible.

*Hi motus animorum atque haec certamina tanta
Pulveris exigui jactu compressa quiescunt.*

"The dust of oblivion will bury our debates. Something we shall have achieved, but not what we intended. My dream may, perhaps, be furthered by Remenham, and his by me, or, it may be, neither his nor mine by either. The Providence whose purposes he so readily divines is dark to me. And perhaps, for that reason, I am able to regard him with more charity than he has always been willing,

I suspect, to extend to me. This, at any rate, is the moment of truce. The great arena is empty, the silent benches vanish into the night. Under the glimmer of the moon figures more than mortal haunt the scene of our ephemeral contests. It is they which stand behind us and deal the blows which seem to be ours. When we are laid in the dust they will animate other combatants; when our names are forgotten they will blazon others in perishable gold. Why, then, should we strive and cry, even now in the twilight hour? The same sky encompasses us, the same stars are above us. What are my opinions, what are Remenham's? Froth on the surface! The current bears all alike along to the destined end. For a moment let us meet and feel its silent, irresistible force; and in this moment reach across the table the hand of peace."

With that he stretched his hand to Remenham, with a kind of pathos of appeal that the other, though I think he did not altogether like it, could hardly refuse to entertain. It was theatrical, it was un-English, but somehow, it was successful. And the whole episode, the closing words and the incomparable gesture, left me with a sense as though a curtain had been drawn upon a phase of our history. Mendoza, somehow, had shut out Remenham, even more than himself, from the field on which the issues of the future were to be fought. And it was this feeling that led me, really a little against my inclination, to select as the next speaker the man who of all who, made up our company, in opinions was the most opposed to Remenham, and in temperament to Mendoza. My choice was Allison, more famous now than he was then, but known even at that time as an unsparing critic of both parties. He responded readily enough; and as he began a spell seemed to snap. The night and the hour were forgotten, and we were back on the dusty field of controversy.

THIS is all very touching," he began, "but Mendoza is shaking hands with the wrong person. He's much nearer to me than he is to Remenham, and I don't at all despair of converting him. For he does at least understand that the character of every society depends upon its law of property; and he even seems to have a suspicion that the law, as we have it, is not what you would call absolute perfection. It's true that he shows no particular inclination to alter it. But that may come; and I'm not without hope of seeing, before I die, a Tory-Socialist party. Remenham's is a different case, and I fear there's nothing to be made of him. He does, I believe, really think that in some extraordinary way the law of property, like the Anglican Church, is one of the dispensations of Providence; and that if he removes all other restrictions, leaving that, he will have what he calls a natural society. But Nature, as Mendoza has pointed out, is anarchy. Civilization means restriction; and so does socialism. So far from being anarchy, it is the very antithesis of it. Anarchy is the goal of liberalism, if liberalism could ever be persuaded to be logical. So the scarecrow of anarchy, at least, need not frighten away any would-be convert to socialism. There remains, it is true, the other scarecrow, revolution; and that, I admit, has more life in it. Socialism is revolutionary; but so is liberalism, or was, while it was anything. Revolution does not imply violence. On the contrary, violence is the abortion of revolution. Do I, for instance, look like a Marat or a Danton? I ask you, candidly!"

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