GILBERT CLINTON WALLACE

BEHIND THE MIRRORS: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DISINTEGRATION AT WASHINGTON

Clinton Gilbert

Behind the Mirrors: The Psychology of Disintegration at Washington

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Содержание

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Le métier superieur de la critique, ce
n'est pas même, comme le proclamait
Pierre Bayle, de semer des doubtes;
il faut aller plus loin, il faut détruire.

De Gourmont

FOREWORD

"A book like the *Mirrors of Downing Street* is well enough. It is the fashion to be interested in English notables. But that sort of thing won't do here. The American public gets in the newspapers all it wants about our national politicians. That isn't book material."

An editor said that just a year ago when we told him of the plan for the *Mirrors of Washington*. And, frankly, it seemed doubtful whether readers generally cared enough about our national political personalities to buy a book exclusively concerned with them.

But they did. The *Mirrors of Washington* became an instantaneous success. It commanded almost unprecedented attention. It was heartily damned and vociferously welcomed. By the averagely curious citizen, eager for insight behind the gilded curtains of press-agentry and partisanship, it was hailed as a shaft of common-sense sunlight thrown into a clay-footed wilderness of political pap. And close to one hundred thousand copies were absorbed by a public evidently genuinely interested in an uncensored analysis of the people who are running us, or ruining us, as individual viewpoint may determine.

The *Mirrors of Washington* was by way of being a pioneer, at least for America. Overseas, it is habitual enough to exhibit beneath the literary microscope the politically great and near-great, and even to dissect them – often enough without anæsthesia. To our mind, such critical examination is healthily desirable. Here in America, we are case-hardened to the newspapers, whose appraisal of political personages is, after all, pretty well confined to the periods of pre-election campaigning. And we are precious little influenced by this sort of thing; the pro papers are so pro, and the anti papers so anti, that few try to determine how much to believe and how much to dismiss as routine partisan prevarication.

But a book! Political criticism, and personality analyses, frozen into the so-permanently-appearing dignity of a printed volume – that is something else again! Even a politician who dismisses with a smile or a shrug recurrent discompliments in the news columns or the anonymous editorial pages of the press, is tempted to burst into angry protest when far less bitter, far more balanced criticism of himself is voiced in a book. A phenomenon, that, doubtless revisable as time goes on and the reflections of more book-bound Mirrors brighten the eyes of those who read and jangle the nerves of those who run – for office.

Behind the Mirrors is another such book. It delves into the fundamentals at Washington. It is concerned with political tendencies as well as political personalities. It presents what impresses us as a genuinely useful and brilliant picture of present-day governmental psychology and functioning. It is a cross section of things as they are.

The picture behind the mirrors is not as pretty as it might be. Probably the way to make it prettier is to let ample light in upon it so that the blemishes, discerned, may be rectified; and to impress those responsible for its rehabilitation with the necessity of taking advantage of the opportunities that are theirs.

When President Eliot of Harvard presented to a certain Senator an honorary degree, he described with inimitable charm and considerable detail that Senator's literary achievements; and then he mentioned his political activities, ending with substantially these words: "A man with great opportunities for public service still inviting him."

The invitation yet holds good. Acceptances are still in order.

G. P. P.

New York,
June, 1922.

CHAPTER I
PRESIDENT HARDING AND THE CLOCK. GOD'S TIME AS IT WAS IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

President Harding had recently to decide the momentous question whether we should have daylight saving in Washington. He decided it in a perfectly characteristic way, perfectly characteristic of himself and of our present political division and unsureness. He ruled that the city should go to work and quit work an hour earlier, but that it should not turn back the hands of the clock, should not lay an impious finger upon God's Time.

That this straddle is typical of our President needs no argument – he "has to be so careful," as he once pathetically said – but that it is symptomatic of the present American political consciousness perhaps needs elucidation.

The clock is one of the problems left to us by the Great War, one of the innumerable problems thus left to us; it involves our whole attitude toward men and things.

It represents, rather literally, Mechanism. In the war we adopted perforce the creed that man was sufficiently master of his own destiny to adapt Mechanism to his own ends; he could lay a presumptuous hand upon God's Time. But in peace shall he go on thus boldly? Or shall he revert to the good old days, the days of McKinley, when the clock was sacred? Think of all the happiness, all the prosperity, that was ours, all the duty done and all the destiny abundantly realized, before man thought to lay a hand upon the clock!

The question what the limits to human government are is involved. What may man attempt for himself and what should he leave to the great Mechanism which has, upon the whole, run the world so well, to the Sun in its courses, to progress, to inevitability? After all the clock was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be – unless we meddle with it – and before its cheerful face America was built from a wilderness into a vast nation, creating wealth, so as to be the third historic wonder of the ages – the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome, the dollars that are America.

And not only are we divided as to the limits of government, but where shall Mr. Harding look for authority to guide him with respect to clocks? To his party? This is a party government, you remember. But his party speaks with no clear voice about clocks or about anything else. To business? Business has only one rule – more clocks in government and less government in clocks. But business bows to the public. To public opinion then? The public is divided about clocks; we tend to grow class conscious about clocks. And clamorously amid all these authorities is heard the voice of the Farm Bloc exclaiming: "Don't touch God's Time."

So it is decided that Washington may save daylight and save the clock too, a double saving, a most happy compromise. If all questions touching Mechanism could only be solved in the direction of such splendid economies!

I listened a year ago to a most unusual Fourth of July oration. The speaker, like most of us in this period of breakup following the Great War, was rather bewildered. He had, moreover, his private reasons for feeling that life was not easily construed. An illness, perhaps mortal, afflicted him. Existence had been unclouded until this last cloud came; why was it to end suddenly and without reason? He had gone through the Great War a follower of Mr. Wilson's, to see the world scoffing at the passionate faith it had professed a few months before and sneering at the leaders it had then exalted. He had echoing in his mind the fine war phrases, "Brotherhood of Man," "War to End War," "We must be just even to those to whom we do not wish to be just." Then some monstrous hand had turned the page and there was Harding, just as in his own life all success at the bar and in politics,

and the joy of being lord of a vast country estate that had been patented in his family since colonial times, had suddenly come to an end; the page had turned.

So this is what he said, in a voice that rose not much above a whisper, "I have told them where to dig a hole and put me, out here on my pleasant place. I don't know what it means. I don't believe it has any meaning. The only thing to do is to laugh. You have trouble laughing? Look about you and you will find plenty to laugh at. Look at your President and laugh. Look at your Supreme Court and laugh. Not one of them knows whether he is coming or going. Everything for the moment has lost its meaning for everyone. If you can't laugh at anything else, just think how many angels there are who are blank blanks and how many blank blanks there are who are angels … and laugh."

The Comic Spirit looking down from some cool distance sees something like what this lawyer saw. It sees President Harding and the Ku Klux Klan. The connection between President Harding and the Ku Klux Klan? The Comic Spirit, perceiving everything, perceives that too. For it Mr. Harding is but the pious manifestation of a sentiment of which the Ku Klux Klan is the unconscious and serviceable parody, that instinctive rush of a people with the world breaking up about it, to seek safety in the past. Men always shrink thus backward when facing an uncertain future, just as in moments of great peril they become children again, call "Mother!" and revert to early practices at her knee. It is one of the most intelligent things the human race ever does. It is looking before you leap: the race has no choice but to leap; it draws back to solid ground in the past for a better take-off into the future. Mr. Harding represents solid ground, McKinley and the blessed nineties, the days before men raised a presumptuous hand against the clock.

If utterly in earnest and determined to revive that happy period, you clothe yourself in that garment which evokes the assured past, the blessed nineties, the long white night shirt; the long white night shirt supplemented by the black mask and the tar brush shall surely save you.

The Comic Spirit looking about largely, like our Fourth of July orator, sees in Mr. Harding a wise shrinking into the safety of the past and in Mr. William H. Taft, our new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, at once a regard for the past and an eye for the future. Can anyone tell whether Mr. Justice Taft is coming or going, as this Fourth of July speaker asked? He comes and he goes, and like the wind man knows not whence he cometh or whither he goeth. He is forward looking – when he is not backward looking. Like Zekle,

> "He stands a while on one foot fust,
> Then stands a while on t'other;
> And on which one he feels the wust,
> He can not tell you nuther."

Glance at his public career. He stood upon his future foot with Roosevelt, the chosen executor of "My Policies." A little later he stands upon his past foot, alongside of Aldrich and Cannon, doing the works of perdition and bringing on the battle of Armageddon. Again you find him standing on his future foot beside Mr. Frank P. Walsh in the War Labor Board, ranging himself with Mr. Walsh in practically all the close decisions. Again you see him when all the fine forward looking of the war was over, scurrying from the Russian revolution as fast as President Wilson or all the rest of us. And once more on his future foot with Mr. Wilson for the League of Nations and on his past foot with President Harding against the League of Nations.

Let us be Freudian and say that the unconscious political self of the whole nation is responsible for the selection of Mr. Harding and Mr. Taft. As we shrink back into the past we are aware that it is for the take-off into the future, and so we have Mr. Taft. We both eat our cake and have it in the new Chief Justice.

The United States, like Zekle, is "standing a while on one foot fust, then standing a while on t'other," moving forward or backward. But not for long, too large and secure to be permanently

cautious, with too much well-being to be permanently bold, thinking, but with a certain restraining contempt for thought, instinctive rather than intellectual. Vast, eupeptic, assimilative, generous, adaptable, the Chief Justice typifies the American people in its more permanent characteristics.

Mr. Harding as President, Mr. Taft as Chief Justice, the agricultural bloc, the enfeebled Congress, the one million or so Democratic majority which becomes in four years a seven-million Republican majority, are only manifestations. The reality is the man, many millions strong, whose mental state produces the symptoms at Washington. It will be profitable to examine the content of his mind as it was in those days before momentous decisions had to be made about daylight saving, and as it is today when he hesitates between saving daylight and saving the clock, and perhaps decides to save both.

I can not better describe his political consciousness as it was than by saying that it contained three governments – the government of the clock, the government of the clock-winders, and the government of those who lived by the clock as religiously minded by the clock-winders. It was an orderly age, beautifully sure of itself, and the area of these three governments was nicely delimited. There was only a small place for the third of these governments.

For the purposes of more common understanding I shall sometimes refer to the government of the clock as the government of Progress, and the government of the clock-winders as the government of business, and to the third government as the government at Washington.

Before the war the American was sure that with each tick of the clock the world grew richer and better, especially richer. Progress went inevitably on and on. It never turned backward or rested. Its mechanical process relieved man of many responsibilities. No one would think of touching the mechanism; turning back the hands of the clock might rob us of some boon that was intended in the beginning whose moment of arrival might be lost by interfering with God's Time.

Born on a continent which only a few years before was a wilderness but which now was the richest and one of the finest civilizations on the earth, the American could not fail to believe in progress. The visible evidences of it were on every hand. His father had been a poor immigrant seeking the mere chance to live; he was a farmer possessed of many acres, a business man who had an increasing income already in five figures, a rising young attorney, or physician. Even from generation to generation everything got better.

The past had had its unhappy moments. The American looked back at the past mainly to measure how far he had come and to guess how far moving forward at a geometrical ratio of increased speed he would go in the not distant future. History flattered him.

Before his eyes went on the steady conquest over Nature, or perhaps it is better to say, the steady surrender of Nature. Always there were new discoveries of science. Always there were new inventions. Forces which a little while ago were beyond control, whose existence even was unsuspected, were harnessed to everyday uses. He saw progress in statistics. Things which were reckoned in millions began to be reckoned in hundreds of millions, began to be reckoned in billions. We loved to read the long figures where, in the pleasing extension of ciphers, wealth grew, debts grew – even debts were a source of pride before they called for income taxes to meet the annual payments upon them.

Progress would never stop. Tomorrow we should set the sun's rays to some more practical use than making the earth green and pleasant to look at and its fruits good to eat. We should employ them like the waters of Niagara Falls, to turn the wheels of machinery by day and to light soap and automobile signs on Broadway by night. We should split atoms apart and release the mighty forces that had held them together since the beginning, for the production of commodities in greater and greater quantities at less and less cost.

"We should," I say, but I do our inmost thought a vast injustice. Rather, Progress would, scientists and inventors being only the instruments of a Fate which went steadily forward to the accomplishment of its beneficent purposes. At the right moment, at the appointed hour, the man would appear. Progress kept the prompter's book and gave him the cue.

To a people with all these evidences of an irresistible forward movement in Nature before its eyes, came a prophet who gave it its law, the law of evolution, the law by which once the monocellular organism had acquired the mysterious gift of life out of combination and recombination inevitably came man. It was all the unfolding of the inevitable, the unrolling of time; the working out of a law.

Now, law has a quite extraordinary effect upon men's minds. The more Law there is the less Man there is. The more man spells Law with a capital letter the more he spells himself with a small letter. Man was no longer the special creation of God. God, instead of making Adam and Eve his wife, fashioned a grain of star dust and gave it a grain of star dust to wife, leaving the rest to Progress. Man who had been a little lower than the angels became, by an immense act of faith, a little higher than the earthworm. The old doctrine of the Fall of Man took on a reverse twist. Man had not fallen but he had risen from such debased beginnings that he had not got far. He was in about the same place where he would have been if he had fallen.

It was easy to turn upside down our belief in the Fall of Man. We always knew there was something wrong with him, but we did not know what it was until evolution explained his unregenerate character so satisfactorily. Still the thought that Man did not move forward as fast as things, was less the special ward of Progress than automobiles, elevators and bathtubs, was vaguely disturbing.

The Greeks had left us records which showed that the human mind was as good three thousand years ago as it is today, or better. We shut our eyes to this bit of evidence by abandoning the study of the classics and excluding all allusion to them in the oratory of our Congress. And Mr. Wells in his History has since justified us by proving that the Greeks were after all only the common run of small-town folk – over-press-agented, perhaps, by some fellows in the Middle Ages who had got tired of the Church and who therefore pretended that there was something bigger and better in the world than it was.

So we pinned our hopes on the Martians and spent our time frantically signalling to the nearby planet, asking whether, when the earth grew as cold as King David when his physicians "prescribed by way of poultice a young belle," and responded only weakly to the caress of the Sun, when its oceans dried up and only a trickle of water came down through its valleys from the melting ice at its poles, we should not, like the fancied inhabitants of the nearest celestial body, have evolved at last into super-beings. We wanted some evidence from our neighbors that, in spite of the Greeks, by merely watching the clock we should arrive at a higher estate.

The point I am trying to make is that we have been conducting the most interesting of Time's experiments in the government of men at a period when Man has been at a greater discount than usual in his own mind, when self-government faced too much competition from government by the clock.

When I speak of government by the clock, I should, perhaps, use capital letters to indicate that I have in mind that timepiece on which is recorded God's Time; whose ticking is the forward march of progress. Clocks as they touch our lives require human intervention. The winders of these clocks perform something that may be described as an office.

You recall the place the clock filled in our households a generation ago. Father wound it once a week, at a stated time, as regularly as he went to church. The winding of it was a function. No other hand but father's touched the key; if one had, the whole institution of family life would have been imperiled. Father is a symbol for the government of the clock-winders, those sacred persons who translated Progress into terms of common utility.

When we descended from the regions of theocratic power to those of human institutions, we found ourselves in America to be workers in one vast countrywide workshop. The workshop touches us more directly and more importantly than does the nation. Out of the workshop comes our bread and butter. When the workshop closes down we suffer and form on line at the soup kitchens.

Three meals a day concern us more than do post-offices and federal buildings, of however white marble or however noble façades. What we have to eat and to wear, what we may put in the

bank, what real freedom we enjoy, our position in the eyes of men, our happiness and unhappiness, depend on our relations to the national workshop, not on our relations to the national government.

We conceived of it vaguely as a thing which produced prosperity, not prosperity in its larger and more permanent aspects – that was ours through the beneficence of Progress and the immortal luck of our country – but prosperity in its more immediate details.

A lot of confused thinking in which survived political ideas as old as the race, converted into modern forms, entered into our conception of it. It was a thing of gods and demigods, with legends of golden fleeces and of Hercules holding up the skies. It was feudal in its privileges and immunities. It enjoyed the divine right of kings. Yet it operated under laws not made by man.

When it failed to effect prosperity, it was because of a certain law that at the end of ever so many years of fatness it must produce a famine. At such times men, demigods, stepped out of banks with sacks of gold on their shoulders and mitigated the rigors of its failure.

And these splendid personages might set going again that which law stopped. We bowed patiently and unquestioningly to its periodic eccentricity as part of the Fate that fell upon the original sinner, and watched hopefully the powerful men who might in their pleasure or their wisdom end our sufferings.

We were taught to regard it as a thing distinct from political authority, so that the less governors and lawmakers interfered with it the better for the general welfare. Back in our past is a thorough contempt for human intelligence which relates somehow to the religious precept against questioning the wisdom of God. Whatever ordinary men did in the field of economics was sure to be wrong and to check the flow of goods upon which the well-being of society depended. We were all, except the familiars of the great forces, impotent pieces of the game economic law played upon this checker-board of nights and days.

I have said that this government of the national workshop in which we were all laborers or foremen or superintendents or masters sometimes seemed to our consciousness a government of laws and sometimes a government of men. In any primitive faith priests played a large part, and probably the primitive worshippers before them much of the time did not think beyond the priests, while sometimes they did – when it was convenient for the priests that they should.

When famines or plagues came it was because the gods were angry. When they are averted it is the priests who have averted them. When economic panics came it was because we had sinned against economic law; when they were averted it was because men had averted them, men who lived on intimate terms with economic law and understood its mysterious ways, and enjoyed its favor, as their great possessions testified.

Naturally, we are immensely more directly and more constantly concerned with this government than with the government at Washington. Besides, we were mostly business men, or hoped to be. It was our government more truly than was the government at Washington.

Only a limited area in the political consciousness was left for self-government. You descended from the heights to the broad flat plain of man's contempt for man. It was there, rooted firmly in the constitution, that the government at Washington reared its head. Self-government is a new thing; no myth has gathered about it. It was established among men who believed in the doctrine of the original sin, and it had been carried by their successors, who had abandoned the sinner Adam as the progenitor of their kind for the sinless but inglorious earthworm. The inferiority complex which is the race's most persistent heritage from the past was written all over it.

I suppose it was Adam Smith who made self-government possible by discovering that the things really essential to our welfare would take care of themselves if we only let them alone and that the more we let them alone the better they would take care of themselves, under eternal and immutable laws. Ah, the happy thought occurred, if the really essential things are thus beneficially regulated why shouldn't we have the fun of managing the non-essentials ourselves?

Progress ruled the world kindly and well. It might be trusted to see that all went for the best. The government of business functioned effectively for the general weal. The future was in the hands of a force that made the world richer and better. The present, in all that concerned man most vitally with regards food and shelter, was directed by enlightened self-interest represented by men who personified success.

It was impossible not to be optimistic when existence was so well ordered. There was no sorry scheme of things to be seized entire. Life was a sort of tropics without tropical discomforts. The tropics do not produce men. They produce things.

The Mechanism worked, as it seemed to us, in those happy days. We were satisfied with the clock and the clock-winders. We were not divided in our minds as to whether we should turn back its hands. The less men meddled the better. There was little work for human government to do. There was no call for men.

The picture in our heads, to use Mr. Graham Wallas's phrase, was of a world well ruled by a will from the beginning, whose purpose was increase; of some superior men having semi-sacred relations with the will who acted as intermediaries between the will and the rest of us; and of the rest of us as being rewarded by the will, through its intermediaries, according to our timidity and submissiveness.

It was, the world, over the great age of the racial inferiority complex, for which Science had furnished a new and convincing basis. I might maintain that the Great War was modern society's effort to compensate for the evolution complex; man wanted to show what he could do, in spite of his slimy origin. Anyway, it broke the picture in our heads. Being economical, like Mr. Harding, we are trying both to save the pieces of the picture and put them together again, and to form, out of them unfortunately, a new picture; which accounts for our confusion.

But the picture in our heads before the war, such as it was, is the reason for our present inadequacy. You could not form much of a self-government or develop men for one, with that complex in your soul.

CHAPTER II
GOD'S TIME AS IT IS; AN INGERSOLL THAT REQUIRES MUCH WINDING

How many of us believe in Progress with the unquestioning faith we had before that day in July, 1914, when Austria's declaration of war upon Serbia started the ruin of all that centuries had built up in Europe? Most of us have not stopped to analyze what has happened since to our belief that the world ever moved by an irresistible primal impulse forward to more and better things, that the song which the morning stars sang together was "It shall be multiplied unto you," that increment is inevitable and blessed. But how many of us really believe that in the unqualified way we once did?

The world had many pleasant illusions about Progress before the great catastrophe of 1914 came to shatter them. And nowhere were these illusions more cheerfully accepted than in this country of ours, where a wilderness had become a great civilization in the space of a century and where the evidences of rapid, continuous advancement were naturally strong.

The first pleasant illusion was that modern progress had made war impossible, at least war between the great nations of the earth, which, profiting by the examples we had set them, enjoyed more or less free governments, where production mounted from year to year, where wealth was ever increasing. Destiny plainly meant more and more iron dug from the ground and turned into steel machinery, larger, more powerful automobiles, taller and taller buildings, swifter and swifter elevators, more and more capacious freight cars, and destiny would not tolerate stopping all this for the insanity of destruction.

Moreover – how good were the ways of Progress – the ever increasing mastery over the forces of nature which had been fate's latest and best gift to humanity, approaching a sort of millennium of machinery, while creating vaster engines of industry had brought into being more and monstrous weapons of warfare.

Life with benignant irony was making man peaceful in spite of himself. His bigger and bigger cannon, his more and more lethal explosives were destroying his capacity for destruction. War was being hoist by its own petard. The bigger the armies, the more annihilating the shells piled up in the arsenals, the less the chance of their ever being used.

Progress, infinitely good toward man, had found a way out of war, the plague that had blighted the earth since the beginning. What religion could not do, the steel foundries and the chemical laboratories had done. They had made war too deadly to be endured. In effect they had abolished it. Peace was a by-product of the Bessemer oven and the dye vat. Man's conquest of himself was an unconsidered incident of his conquest of nature.

Then there were the costs of war. Progress had done something more than make fighting intolerably destructive of men and cities; it had made it intolerably destructive of money. Even if we would go to war, we could not since no nation could face the vast expenditures.

Two little wars of brief duration, the Boer War and the Balkan War, had left great debts to be paid and had brought in their train financial disturbances affecting the entire world. A European war would destroy immensely more capital and involve vastly greater burdens. No nation with such a load on its shoulders could meet the competition of its peace keeping rivals for the world's trade. No government in its senses would provoke such consequences, and governments were, of course, always in their senses.

You did not have to accept this as an act of faith; you could prove it. Shells, thanks to Progress, cost so many hundreds of dollars each. Cannon to fire them cost so many thousands of dollars each and could only be used a very few times. Armies such as the nations of Europe trained, cost so

much a day to feed and to move. The demonstration was perfect. Progress had rendered war virtually impossible.

If in spite of all a war between great modern nations did start, it could last only a few weeks. No people could stand the strain. Bankruptcy lay at the end of a short campaign. A month would disclose the folly of it, and bring the contestants to their senses; if it did not, exhaustion would. Credit would quickly disappear. Nations could not borrow on the scale necessary to prolong the struggle.

The wisest said all these things as governments began to issue orders of mobilization in 1914. Emperors were merely shaking their shining armor at each other. There would be no war. It was impossible. The world had progressed too far. Anachronistic monarchies might not know it, but it had. Their armies belonged as much to the past as their little titles, as all the middle-age humbug of royalty, their high-wheeled coaches, their out-riders in their bright uniform, their debilitating habit of marrying cousins, their absurdities about their own divine rights. They had armies, as they wore upturned mustachios, to make themselves look imposing. They were as unreal as the pictured kings in children's story books or on a deck of cards. Forces mightier than they had settled forever the question of war.

And when hostilities actually began an incredulous America knew they would be over in three months. Anybody with a piece of paper and a pencil could prove that they could not last. It took all of Kitchener's prestige to persuade society that the fighting would keep on through the winter, and his prediction that it would continue three years was received as the error of a reporter or the opinion of a professional soldier who overlooked the economic impossibility of a long war.

It is worth while recalling these cheerful illusions to estimate what has happened to the idea of Progress in seven swiftly changing years. We did not give up readily the illusion that the world had been vastly and permanently changed for the better. As it was proved that there could be a war and a long one and as the evidence multiplied that this war was the most devastating in all history, we merely changed our idea of Progress, which became in our minds a force that sometimes produced evil in order that good might result.

The Great War itself was assimilated to our idea of a beneficent fate. Whom Progress loveth it chasteneth. Instead of rendering war impossible by making it destructive and costly, it visited the earth with the greatest war of all time in order to make war impossible. This was the war to end all war. The ways of progress were past finding out but they were good.

Paper demonstrations had gone wrong. Governments did not go bankrupt after a few months but could still borrow at the end of five years. Humanity did not sicken and turn away from the destruction, but the greater the carnage the more eager were the nations still at peace to have a hand in it. Still it could never happen again. It was a lesson sent of fate. Men must co-operate with progress and not leave to that force the sole responsibility for a permanently peaceful future. They had sinned against the light in allowing such unprogressive things, as autocracies upon the earth. They must remove the abominations of the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns. Once they had set up that brightest flower of Progress, modern democracy, in place of the ancient empires, there would be no more wars. Democracy had one great merit. It was rather stupid and lacking in foresight. It did not prepare for war and being forever unready would not fight.

The war had been sent by Progress to call man's attention to their duties regarding certain anachronisms with which Progress was otherwise unable to deal.

You will observe that the idea of Progress took three forms in as many years. First it was a pure force moving straight ahead toward a goal of unimaginable splendor, even whose questionable products like bigger cannon and higher explosives accomplished by one of its larger ironies benefits that were the opposite of their purposes.

Then assuming the aspects of a more personal deity, it became capable of intentions and could choose courses utterly inconsistent with itself in order to achieve ends that would be splendidly consistent with itself. It made larger demands upon faith.

Then it began to require a little aid from man himself, on the principle that God helps them that help themselves, the cleaning up by men of the human rubbish heap, the purging of autocracy by democracy. Human responsibility began to emerge. The picture in our heads was changing.

Then, as the war came to a close it became apparent that President Wilson's happy idea that democracies, being stupid and unready to fight, would live together in eternal peace, was inadequate. The treaty would leave the three great democracies armed as the autocracies never had been armed. They might elect to remain so and use their weapons as provocatively as any Hapsburg or Hohenzollern ever did. Men must organize, must league themselves together, must govern themselves internationally in order to have peace, which was no longer an accidental by-product of the modern factory, but must be created by men themselves, deliberately acting to that end. Men must work out their own salvation, aided and admonished of course by such perfect works of progress as a war to end war.

Men make the attempt. The peoples of the earth assemble and write a treaty which keeps the chief democratic nations on the continent of Europe armed against each other, which provides endless subjects of dispute among the smaller countries; and they sign a covenant which the unanimous opinion of mankind rejects as an effective safeguard against future wars and which many regard as dividing the earth into two hostile camps. "It was humanity's failure," declares General Smuts. "There will always be war," asserts President Harding, calling a conference not to end war but to lessen the cost of preparing for war.

Not only has material progress failed to produce peace as its by-product, but moral progress has failed to produce peace as its deliberate product.

And Progress is in reality moving forward to wars more deadly and more ruinous than the last. Weapons were developed toward the end of the Great War capable of vastly worse havoc than any used during its course. And only a beginning has been made. If we may come to use the power that holds atoms together in the driving of engines, we may also use it in war to blast whole cities from the face of the earth. Conquest of the air means larger bombs from the air. Greater knowledge of chemistry means industrial advancement and also deadlier poison gases. Material gains bring compensating material ills or the possibility of them.

Even the material gains, great as they have been, seem somewhat smaller today than they once were thought to be. In our most optimistic moments before the war we had the pleasant illusion of steadily decreasing hours of labor and steadily lowering costs. Men had worked twelve, ten, and finally eight hours a day, and it was predicted that this process would go on until six, perhaps four hours a day would be sufficient to supply the needs of the race.

We paid five cent fares on the street cars and were hopeful that they would become three cent fares; three cents was established by law in many cities as the maximum charge. The railroads collected a little over two cents a mile for carrying passengers and in many states statutes were enacted establishing two cents a mile as the legal rate. We were impressed by striking examples of lowering prices, in the automobile industry for example, and were confident that this was the rule of modern life.

Prices, except of food products, were steadily decreasing; there might be an end to this movement but we were nowhere near the end. The wonders of modern inventions, and if not these, the economics of concentrated organization, and if not these, the use of by-products, were steadily lowering costs. The standard of living was rising. What was the rich man's luxury in one generation was the poor man's necessity in the next. It would always be so. That was Progress.

We now pay seven or eight cents to ride on street cars and more than three cents a mile to travel on trains. All prices have advanced. The standard of living has declined and we ask ourselves if it will not have to decline still further. No one now talks of a six-hour day. We recognize a check in the process toward increasing well-being at less effort. Life has become more difficult. Progress is no longer a simple and steady movement onward in a single direction. Like evolution sometimes it

seems to stand still or perhaps go back. Like evolution it requires a *vital élan*; it is a thing of leaps and rests. We are less enthusiastic about it when it rests.

We blame our discomfiture, the higher prices and the lower standard of living on the war, but much of it was inevitable, war or no war. The idea that the struggle for existence would grow steadily easier was largely a conclusion from appearances. We were raising our standard of living by skimming the cream of our natural resources. When our original forests were cut, when the most easily mined veins of iron and coal were exhausted, when oil wells ceased to gush and had to be pumped, unless substitutes were found, all the basic costs of production would advance. Ultimately they would advance to the point where economies of organization, of quantity production, of by-product development, so far as they have been realized, would no longer serve to keep down final prices. We were rapidly reaching that point when the war came.

We lived under an illusion. What we called the results of progress was the rapid exhaustion of easily available resources. We used our capital and thought ourselves rich. And we lie under a burden of debt made much heavier by the weapons which progress put into our hands. Progress had not made war too expensive to fight but it had made peace too expensive to be borne. We forgot the law of diminishing returns. We ignored the lessons of history that all ages come to an end, when the struggle for existence once more grows severe until new instruments are found equal to the further conquest over nature. Useful inventions have not kept pace with increasing consumption and rapidly disappearing virgin resources. The process of steadily lowering costs of production has stopped and reverse process has set in. Spectacular inventions like the airplane have deluded us into the belief that Progress, always blessing us, we had the world by the tail. But coal and iron became harder and costlier to mine. Oil neared exhaustion. Timber grew scarcer. Agricultural lands smaller in proportion to population.

Immense possibilities lie before us. So they did before the man with the stone hatchet in his hand, but he waited long for the steam, saw and drill and crusher. An invention which would mean as much in the conquest of nature as did the steam engine would make the war debt as easily borne as the week's account at the grocery store. But when will progress vouchsafe it? Converting coal into power we waste 85 per cent of its energy in coal and call that efficient. But does Progress always respond instantly to our needs with new methods and devices, like a nurse responding to a hungry child? A few years ago we were sure it did, but now we look anxiously at the skies for a sign.

We had another characteristic pleasant illusion during the war. Progress, like the Lord, in all previous conflicts was on our side. Here was a great need of humanity. Surely, according to rule, it should be met by some great invention that would blast the Germans out of their places in the earth and give the sons of light an easy and certain victory. All the familiars of the deity sat about in boards watching for the indication that the engine to meet the needs of civilization had been granted. But it never was.

I do not write this to suggest that men, especially American men, have ceased to believe in Progress. They would be fools if they had. I write to suggest that they have ceased to believe in Progress. They would be fools if they had not. A great illusion is gone, one of the chief dislocations wrought by the war.

What the war has done to our way of thinking has been to lay a new stress upon man as a free and responsible agent. After all the battles were won not by guns, or tanks or gas or airplanes, but as always by the common man offering his breast to the shots of the enemy. The hope of the future is all in human organizations, in societies of nations, in councils and conferences. Men's minds turn once more to governments with renewed expectation. Not only do we think for the first time seriously of a government of the world but we focus more attention on the government at Washington. Groups with special interests to serve reach out openly to control it.

The war laid a new emphasis on government. Not only did the government have our persons and our lives at its command but it assumed authority over our food, it directed our factories and our

railroads, it told us what we could manufacture and ship, it decided who could borrow of the general credit and for what purposes, it fixed the prices at which we could buy and sell. It came to occupy a new place in the national consciousness and one which it will never wholly lose. One rival to it, – the belief, having its roots in early religious ideas, and strengthened by scientific theory and the outward results of the great inventions, that moved by some irresistible impulse, life went steadily forward to higher and higher planes, and that man had but little to do but pluck the fruits of progress – has been badly shattered by events.

But men do not change beliefs suddenly. Perhaps after all the war was only the way of progress – to usher in a new and brilliant day. Perhaps the unfolding future has something near in store far greater and better than went before. We shall not trust men too far, men with their obstinate blindness, men with their originally sinful habit of thinking they know better than the forces which rule the world. We want not leaders but weather cocks, who will veer to the kindlier wind that may blow when it is yet only a zephyr.

We turn to men yet, we cling a little to the hope that fate will yet save us. This division in us accounts for Lloyd George and Harding, our own commonplace "best we have on hand" substitute for the infinitely variable Englishman, adjusted to every breath that blows, who having no set purpose of his own offers no serious obstacle to any generous design of fate.

Senator Borah once said to me, "The Administration has no definite policies." And it is not Mr. Harding's fault. If he wanted to form any the people wouldn't let him. They elected him not to have any. They desired in the White House some one who would not look further ahead than the next day until the future became clearer. If he had purposes events might prove them to be wrong.

The same fundamental idea underlay the remark of a member of the Cabinet, at the outset of the recent disarmament and Far Eastern Conference, that "Lloyd George was the hope of the gathering because he had no principles."

The war destroyed many men but it half restored Man. You see how inevitable optimism is. The ways of Progress are indeed past finding out. Governments during it performed the impossible. They even took in hand the vast industrial mechanism which we ordinarily leave to the control of the "forces." We half suspect they might do the impossible in peace but we half hope that some kindlier fate is in store for us than to trust ourselves to human intelligence. We don't know whether to put our money on Man or on Progress; so we put it on Mr. Harding.

CHAPTER III
GOLDEN WORDS TURN TO BRASS

Unlike government by Progress, government by business, by the semi-sacred intermediaries between the will to increase and the rest of us, began to disintegrate before the war; which merely completed the process.

Let us consider what has happened in the last few years to government by business, that government which the smoking compartment philosopher has in mind when he says so hopefully of Mr. Harding: "*They* will see to it that he gets along all right."

The first manifestation of nationality in this country was the nationality of business. Before industry became national nothing was national. The United States was a pleasant congeries of localities. It was held together by reading everywhere the story of the Battle of Bunker Hill in the same school history, which sometimes bore a different author's name but which was always the same history. "Don't fire till you can see the whites of their eyes" and "If we don't hang together we shall all hang separately" were the unifying bond, and they were enough. We had the same sense of identity as an infant has when it becomes aware that the delightful toe and the delightful mouth where it is inserted appertain vaguely to the one ego. The local factory and the local bank subtended the entire arc of economic consciousness. There was one single-track railroad which ran from Podunk to Peopack and another from Peopack to Peoria, unrelated, discontinuous.

In those simple times when business was local the local factory owner, banker, or railroad builder was the hero of his neighborhood. It was he who "put the town on the map." He gave it prosperity. He built it by attracting labor into his employment. He gave it contact with the outside world. If you owned town lots it was he who gave them value and it was he who might take away their value if he was offended. If you had a general store it was he who added to its patronage by adding to the population. If you raised farm products nearby it was he who improved your market. He built the fine house which it was your pride to show visitors. Your success and happiness was bound up in his. He conferred his blessings for a consideration, for you were careful to make no laws which restricted the freedom of his operations. You permitted him a vast unofficial "say" in your local government; you gave him a little the best of it in the assessment for taxes. You felt a little lifted up by his condescension in calling you by your first name and stopping to ask about your family on the street corner. You were jealous of his rights because after all the value of your own depended upon his use of his.

When business figures arose upon the national horizon they were merely these local figures vastly multiplied. As a people we called them "Jim" and "Jay," and "Dan'l," just as we had called the local manufacturer and banker by their first names. All the good will that went to the local business leaders went to them. They put money into our pockets, when they didn't happen to take it out of our pockets; on the whole they were doing the great work of making this country a richer and better land. Some who did not conceive the resources of the printing press in the issuance of new securities had to suffer, but that was their lookout; suffering for some was the way of the world.

Business began to be national in the tying together into systems the little dislocated railroads that local enterprise had laid down and in the creation of a national securities market for the distribution of ownership in the new combinations.

A new era opened when Gould and Fisk and Drew started at full speed their rival printing presses in Wall Street. Look over our whole drab political story from the death of Lincoln to the arrival of Roosevelt, more than a generation, and, if we did not preserve the names of our Presidents in our histories, how many names are there worth remembering? Garfield was shot, which was dramatic.

Cleveland was a fat man who used long Latin words. He was also the first Democratic chief executive in more than thirty years. What else? Who else?

Meanwhile an amazing array of business personages diverted attention from the inconspicuous Hayeses, Arthurs, and McKinleys, who were the flower of our public life. Gould, Fisk, Drew, Hill, Carnegie, the Rockefellers, Harriman, Morgan, Ryan – business was fertile of men, politics sterile; you have to go back to the foundation of the government for a period so prolific in men, of the other sort, or to the age of Elizabeth or of Pericles for another as prolific in men, of still another kind. How could the dull sideshow in Washington compete with the big spectacle in New York?

These demigods of business were not only shining personalities; they were doing the work of making America great and rich; we all shared in the prosperity they were creating. To go back to the small town again, who was it increased the opportunities of the storekeeper, the neighboring farmer, or real estate holder? Was it the mayor and the common council by passing ordinances about street signs and sidewalk encumbrances? Or the manufacturer or railroad builder who put the town on the map, giving employment to labor or an outlet for its products?

The government at Washington occupied a place in our consciousness similar to that of the government of the small town. It was charged with our national defense, a function of such little importance that we had hardly an army or a navy. It conducted our economic defense, against the foreigner, with laws written, however, by business itself, which naturally knew best how it wanted to be defended; you could not, in your proper senses, suppose that the Hayeses, Arthurs, and McKinleys were wiser than the Carnegies, Hills, Morgans, or Harrimans. For the rest it was told severely to let well enough alone. To make assurance doubly sure that it would do so it was rather openly given over to the great men who were creating the national wealth.

Starting with the combination of the little speculatively built railroads into systems and the development of a security market to float the shares of stock in the new companies, business took on rapidly a more and more national character. Great bankers arose to finance the consolidations. An investing public with a wider horizon than that which used to put its money in local enterprises entrusted its funds in the hands of the great bankers or took its chances in the market for stocks. Industry went through a similar concentration. Stronger companies absorbed their weaker and less successful rivals. The same bankers who sat in the boards of directors of the railroads representing their investing public took their places in the directorate of manufacturing combinations.

The railroads seeking the business of the big industrial companies and the big industrial companies desiring favors from the railroads placed representatives in each others' boards. This interlocking created a national organization of business dominated by a few striking and spectacular figures.

The popular imagination was as much heated over the discovery of the United States as a single field of enterprise as the imagination of Europe had been centuries earlier over the discovery of the new world.

The psychology of the local industry period carried over into this new period of national industry. The whole country became one vast small town. The masters of industry, banking, and the railroads were the leading citizens. They were "putting the United States on the map," as the local creator of wealth had put the small town on the map. They were doing something vast, from which we all undoubtedly benefited. Perhaps we could not trace our advantage so immediately as we could to the enterprise of the man who brought population to our town, swelling the price of our real estate or increasing the sales at our stores. But what had been a matter of experience on a small scale was a matter of belief on a large scale. The same consequences must follow, with manifold abundance. And the nation was demonstrably growing rapidly, immensely richer; surely cause and effect.

Business had from the first taken on among us, as Mr. Lowes Dickinson remarks, a religious character; and when by a great thrust it overreached the bounds of locality and became national, its major prophets emerged. Mr. Van Wyck Brooks quotes Mark Twain as writing: "The words of a

proprietor of a rich coal mine have a golden sound, and his common sayings are as if they were solid wisdom." How much more of this sacred character inhered in the heroes who created nationwide railroad systems, vast steelmaking consolidations, monopolies of oil and coal!

When a New York lawyer said of E. H. Harriman that he moved in spheres which no one else dare tread, he was putting, a little late, into words the national awe of the men who had overleapt the bounds of locality and bestrode the continent industrially, the heads of the vast business hierarchy. When Mr. Baer said that he operated the Reading Railroad by divine right he said only what a worshipping people had taught him to think. Those men did not use this half-religious language by accident; they crystallized into phrases the feeling of the country toward those who had done God's work of making it rich, making it successful.

Each like an unconscious Cervantes helped to laugh our industrial chivalry away.

How easy it is to believe about yourself what everyone believes about you! How hard not to! How easy to believe that you rule railroads by "divine right," or walk in "higher spheres," when the whole unexpressed consciousness of a hundred million people assigns you just such hieratic appurtenances and privileges. How doubt in the face of all this evidence? They identified themselves with Progress, and Progress was what ruled the world. If you have faith and if you are fortified with the faith of others, self-identification with one of the larger forces is not difficult. Was not what they were doing Progress, was it not the realization of that benignant will to the utter blossoming of chaos into utility which was planned in the beginning? Were they not instruments rather than mere men, instruments of the greater purpose of which America was the perfect work? If you believe in theocratic forces you believe also in chosen human agencies for carrying them out.

They were more than instruments of Progress. I have spoken of government by economic law as having challenged political government in the consciousness of the people. As a country we perhaps believe in economic law more firmly than any nation in the world. Wasn't America being produced in accordance with economic law and wasn't America one of the marvels of the earth? I asked a salesman recently, a man with no personal interests which would give him the prejudices of the business world, why he hated Henry Ford. "Because," he replied instantly and without hesitation, "he defies economic law." He spoke like a true American. To defy economic law and make money at it is like selling the Savior for twenty pieces of silver.

"The physical laws," says De Gourmont, "promulgated or established by the scientists, are confessions of ignorance. When they cannot explain a mechanism they declare its movements are due to a law. Bodies fall by virtue of the law of gravitation. This has precisely the same value in the serious order as the comic *virtus dormitiva*." In the promulgation of economic law our interest perverts the simple and just operation of our ignorance. In the field of physical phenomena we perceive a series of uniform events and call that uniformity a law. In the field of economic phenomena we perceive a series of events uniformly serving our interests and call that uniformity a law.

These greater business men of the past fruitful generation operated on the whole over a long period of falling prices. Wealth accumulated. You read about it in the government reports, dividing the total by the total population. The division thus effected was mighty assuring. Labor was better paid. Higher institutions of learning multiplied. Libraries housed in marble grew upon every crossroads. Intellectual as well as material needs were in process of being better satisfied. We were approaching an age when ink upon white paper, now so cheap, cheaper than ever in the pitiful past, should lift humanity to a new and higher level.

The evidence was conclusive. These greater business men were in supreme, in conspicuous direction of the country's development. The happiest results followed. They worked in harmony with economic law, for they prospered gloriously and one could no more break economic law and prosper than one could break criminal law and keep out of jail. Until Ford came no one could defy economic law with impunity.

And law and justice being two ideas that associate themselves together in the human mind, in a binder of optimism perhaps, like the disparate elements that form clinkers in a furnace, they were accomplishing that perfect work of the justice which inhered in things at the beginning, when tiny atoms with the urge to produce an earth fit for man to live on, to produce America in short, began to discover affinities for each other. No wonder they penetrated "higher spheres" ruled by "divine right," and that "golden words" dropped from their mouths. Progress, destiny, an instinct for economic law, it was much to unite one man.

Again, they were more than this. Men cannot be so universally looked to for the welfare of the nation as they were, without becoming in effect the government of that nation. Business and the government were one. Public opinion at that time would have regarded an administration which defied the great commercial interests as dangerous to the country's advancement. Lawyers like Mr. Knox or Mr. Root, who had proved their value to them, went to the Senate as their spokesmen. Able and ambitious men in both Houses of Congress, wishing power and influence, became their agents. The chairmen of the important committees of both houses were in their confidence and spoke with authority because of what they represented. Some of the virtue of the great, some shadow of divine right, descended upon them. Among valets the valet of the king is king.

We forget, in the great outcry that was raised a few years ago over the "invisible government," that the invisible government was once sufficiently visible, almost consciously recognized, and fully accepted. It seemed the most natural thing in the world that the men who were making the country rich, making it a nation economically, should work their will freely at Washington. We jealously guarded their liberties. Woe unto the legislator who would interfere with their freedom to contract, for example, for the labor of children, which we described as the freedom of children to sell their labor advantageously. Adult labor banding together to arrange terms of its own sale was felt to be a public enemy. Every age has its fetish; the medicine man who could exorcise the evil spirit in stone and bush was not a more privileged character than his successor at whose touch prosperity sprang out of the earth, at whose word the mysterious economic forces which might in their wrath prove so destructive, bowed and became kind.

Make a few individuals the embodiment of a national purpose that has long existed, unconscious and unquestioned, give them as you inevitably do in such a case the utmost freedom that is possible on this earth, let them be limited enough mentally so that they are blind to any other possible purpose; do all these things and you produce great men. It was an age of great men, Rockefellers, Carnegies, Morgans, Hills, Ryans, Harrimans, and a host of others, richer in personalities than any other period of American life except that which produced Washington, Hamilton, Franklin, Jefferson, and Marshall. They were the flowering of the whole pioneer civilization.

One hundred and fifty years of freedom has produced few free men. Perhaps these were all. They may not have been free intellectually. Charles Francis Adams writes of their kind: "I have known, and known tolerably well, a good many successful men, – 'big' financially, men famous during the last half century; and a less interesting crowd I do not care to encounter. Not one that I have ever known would I care to meet again, nor is one of them associated in my mind with the idea of humor, thought, or refinement."

Never mind. They were free in all the essential ways. The men of whom Adams wrote had no such sense of their limitations as he expressed. Only an Adams would then have had it, and the Adamses were not what M. Galtier of *Le Temps* suggested when, hastily absorbing the American spirit at Washington, he said to me: "I am reading *The Education of Henry Adams*: He was what you would call a typical American, was he not?"

An Adams, even Charles Francis Adams, writing of that time, was untypical enough, to have missed the point, which was not whether these men "'big' financially" were interesting, witty, thoughtful, or refined, but whether they were free. And they were; they were so sure of themselves,

and public opinion was so sure of them, that they concentrated on the one great aim of that simple day, and did not waste themselves upon non-essentials like "humor, thought, or refinement."

I have a theory that we are wrong in ascribing the poverty of American literature and statesmanship to the richness of our business life. "All our best and ablest minds went into commerce," we say. We flatter ourselves. Mr. Carnegie, born in the days of Elizabeth, might not have been Shakespeare. Mr. Harriman was perhaps, after all, no mute Milton, Mr. Morgan no Michaelangelo.

These brave spirits developed in business not so much perhaps because of the national urge to "conquer a continent" as because in business, enjoying the immunity it then did, they found the utmost opportunity for self-expression, the one great measure of freedom which this free country afforded. A jealous public guarded their divine right from impious hands. They believed in themselves. The people believed in them. So the flowering of the pioneer age came, in such a race of men as are not on the earth today, and the rule of business reached its climax.

It was an autumn flowering, rich and golden like the Indian summer of New England culture, a sign that a cycle was run. Adams sniffing from the transcendental heights of Boston wrote: "a race of mere money-getters and traders." Remember the sneers in our cocksure press of those days at the "culture" of Boston? Boston has had its revenge. The words "mere money-getters" bit in. There were other objects in life beside pioneering the industrial opportunities of a whole continent just brought together into commercial unity. Mr. Morgan began to buy art. Mr. Carnegie began to buy libraries and started authorship himself. The men "'big' financially" began to look over their shoulders and see the shadows – as we all do now – where they a little before kept their eyes straight forward and saw the one clear vision, the truth, such as it was, that made them free.

I have traced that element in the American political consciousness, government by business, to its highest moment.

"Divine right" is only safe when it is implicit. When you begin to avow it, as Mr. Baer did, it is already in question. The national passion for equality began to work. Had not Mr. Carnegie confessed the weakness in his soul's fortress by writing a book? Had not Mr. Morgan by buying art suggested the one aim of pioneering on a grand scale might not be life's sole end?

Mr. Baer with his avowal, Mr. Carnegie and Mr. Morgan with their seeking of the broader satisfactions, Mr. Schwab behaving like a king in exile at the gaming tables of Monte Carlo, may have invited what followed. But they were only expressing in their own way the sense becoming general that pioneering was over and that its ideals were too narrow and too few – even if no clear sense was coming of what state and what ideals were to take their place. Men turn from leaders whose day of greatest usefulness is past and set up new leaders against them. Against the government by business the first great national unity that entered the American consciousness they began to erect the state, the national government at Washington.

No one meant to end government by business and substitute for it government by the people. Not for a moment. We devised a new set of checks and balances, like that between the various branches provided for in our Constitution, a new political organism which should equal and coexist with the one we already had. The government personified by Mr. Roosevelt was the check and balance to the government personified by Mr. Harriman and Mr. Morgan. Governments never die but merely recede in the national consciousness, like the old clothes which we keep in the attic. Thus revolutions never effect a revolution; democracy is only a Troy built upon nine other prehistoric Troys: beneath, you find aristocracy, rule by divine right, despotism, theocracy, and every other governance on which men in their invincible optimism have pinned their faith.

The revolution which Mr. Roosevelt brought about was the kind which exclaims loudly "malefactors of great wealth" while writing to Mr. Harriman "we are both practical men." It was the kind of revolution this country desired. The nation wished to eat its cake and have it, to retain government by business and have alongside it another government, as powerful, as interesting, as colorful, as rich in personalities, as the late autumn of pioneering had brought into gorgeous bloom.

Mr. Roosevelt's method with the new government was this: Senator Aldrich and Speaker Cannon representing the still powerful coexistent government by business in Congress, would call at the White House and tell the President just how far he could go and no further. They would emerge. A moment later the press in response to a summons would arrive. Mr. Roosevelt would say: "I have just sent for Mr. Aldrich and Mr. Cannon and forced them to accept my policy, etc." Nobody was deceived. Unlike the philosopher who made all knowledge his province, Mr. Roosevelt made all knowledge his playground, and not only all knowledge but all the arts, including the art of government.

In Mr. Roosevelt's day the two governments, government by business and political government, existed side by side, of about equal proportions; and no one really wished either to overtop the other. We were indulging in revolution with our customary prudence.

The human passion for equality which had risen against the last of those dominant figures, the last and greatest of the pioneers, and started to set up representatives of the public as great as they were, was singularly fortunate in its first manifestations. It "found a man," in that most amazing jack-of-all-trades, Mr. Roosevelt.

If business had its array of extraordinary personalities, the rival establishment had its Roosevelt, who surrounded himself with a shining group of amateurs, Mr. Root, Mr. Knox, General Wood, James Garfield, Mr. Pinchot, Mr. Knox Smith, the "Tennis Cabinet," to all of whom he succeeded in imparting some vividness from his own abounding personality. If pioneers from the days of Daniel Boone on have been romantic, amateurs are equally romantic. It was romance against romance.

The balance between the two governments did not last long. Government by business was declining. It was being extruded from the control of political affairs. Political government was rising. It was reaching out to control certain phases of business itself. The great pioneers of national industry were growing old. They were becoming self-conscious, vaguely aware of changing circumstances, casting about for solider foundations than "mere money getting," buying art and writing books, establishing foundations, talking foolishly about their "divine right," about the crime of "dying rich."

A race of gamblers came in their train who caricatured their activities. The great figures who were passing took long chances magnificently, pioneer fashion, "to strike it rich," to found industries or magnify avenues of trade. Their imitators, the Gateses, Morses, Heinzes, and – took long chances vulgarly for the excitement there was in them.

Railroads had to be "rescued" from them. Wall Street had to organize its Vigilantes against them.

I went as a reporter to see – once in New York and found him in his library drinking. He sent for his servant, ordered six bottles of champagne at once, and after his man had gone opened the whole six, one after another, on his library rug. He had to exhibit in some way his large manner of doing things, and this was the best way he could think of at the moment. He belonged to a fevered race, intoxicated with the idea of bigness, juggling millions about to no more useful end than that of pouring champagne on a carpet. They were the *reductio ad absurdum* of the pioneer.

The public no longer put its faith blindly as before in those romantic figures, the great industrial pioneers, those Mississippi River pilots who knew every rock and reef in the river. Stripped of much power and prestige, no longer looked to without question for the safety of the country, that magnificent species, the great pioneer, disappeared. It is as dead and gone as that equally magnificent species the Mississippi pilot of Mark Twain's day.

The legitimate succession was the dynasty – it was the dynasty that destroyed belief in the divine right of kings – of the second generation, of the younger Stillman, of the younger Rockefeller, competent but unremarkable, of the younger Morgan, more capable than the rest, doubtless, but compare his countenance with the eagle mien of his predecessor.

I used often to discuss with Mr. Roosevelt the members of the dynasty. He had no illusions. We both knew well a second-generation newspaper proprietor, a young man of excellent character, as prudent as the earlier generation had been daring, a petty King who always had an aspiring Mayor

of the palace at his elbow, inclined to go to sleep at his post from excessive watching of his property. As we would go over the names in the dynasty, Mr. Roosevelt would say almost invariably: "I can't describe him better to you than to say he's another – ," naming our mutual acquaintance, one of the many of his sort into whose hands by inheritance the control of business has descended.

Whatever the reason is, whether the inertia of large organization and the weakening of competition have favored the remaining in power of the second generation, whether we have evolved but one great type, the pioneer, whose day is past, and have not yet differentiated the true business man any more than we have differentiated the true statesman; whether that psychological change which I have sought to trace, that denial of freedom which once was the pioneers' – the new laws, the hard restraints operating now upon business as upon everything else and enforcing conformity – there are today no Titans, no one stealing fire from the heaven of Progress for the benefit of the human race – unless Henry Ford – no Carnegies, Morgans, Rockefellers, Harrimans, of the blessed nineties.

The old sureness is gone. The great pioneers were never assailed by doubts: they went straight forward, wearing the blinkers of a single aim, which kept their eyes like those of harnessed horses in the narrow road; God was with them, Progress was with them, Public Opinion was with them, the government at Washington was with them.

But their successors, like everyone else, look over their shoulders and see the shadows: see the government at Washington and attach a comic importance to that bewildered figure; just as the government at Washington looks over its shoulder and sees at New York the government by business, its traditional master, and wishing a master, is unaware that the twilight of the gods is come. And both see that greatest of all shadows, Public Opinion, the new monster of Frankenstein which everyone feeds with propaganda, and fears. These three things were all one in the bright days of the great pioneers, and in that perfect unity everyone was sure, so sure, and the few were free, so free!

Business no longer imposes itself up on the imagination through its extraordinary personalities. In vain do we seek to recover the past. In vain does the popular magazine fiction strive to furnish what life no longer does – the pioneer ideal, the hero who overcomes fire and flood and the machination of enemies and moves irresistibly forward to success, who believes in himself, whose motto is that the will is not to be gainsaid, whose life is one long Smile Week.

Vast propaganda exists to hold us true to the old faith; we read it as we used to read Sunday School fiction; but religion only sought its way into hearts within the covers of E. P. Roe when other channels began to close. We beat the bushes for the great, the kings that should come after Agamemnon. Monthlies of vast circulation tell us of every jack-of-all-trades who hits upon a million dollars. This one found out how to sell patches for automobile tires. That one was an office boy who never knew when it became five o'clock in the afternoon. Our faith requires vast stirring.

To the gradual weakening of the idea that business was all-wise and all-powerful, the war greatly contributed. Before 1914 men would say confidently, "Ah, but business, the bankers, will not let the nations fight. They have only to pull the strings of the purse and there will be no money for the fighters." After hostilities began they would say with equal confidence: "It will be all over in six weeks. The bankers will not let it go on."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.