

# ГЕРБЕРТ УЭЛЛС

AN ENGLISHMAN LOOKS  
AT THE WORLD

Герберт Уэллс

**An Englishman Looks at the World**

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**H. G. Wells**  
**An Englishman Looks at the World**  
**Being a Series of Unrestrained**  
**Remarks upon Contemporary Matters**  
**THE COMING OF BLÉRIOT**

**(July, 1909.)**

The telephone bell rings with the petulant persistence that marks a trunk call, and I go in from some ineffectual gymnastics on the lawn to deal with the irruption. There is the usual trouble in connecting up, minute voices in Folkestone and Dover and London call to one another and are submerged by buzzings and throbbings. Then in elfin tones the real message comes through: "Blériot has crossed the Channel... An article ... about what it means."

I make a hasty promise and go out and tell my friends.

From my garden I look straight upon the Channel, and there are white caps upon the water, and the iris and tamarisk are all asway with the south-west wind that was also blowing yesterday. M. Blériot has done very well, and Mr. Latham, his rival, had jolly bad luck. That is what it means to us first of all. It also, I reflect privately, means that I have under-estimated the possible stability of aeroplanes. I did not expect anything of the sort so soon. This is a good five years before my reckoning of the year before last.

We all, I think, regret that being so near we were not among the fortunate ones who saw that little flat shape skim landward out of the blue; surely they have an enviable memory; and then we fell talking and disputing about what that swift arrival may signify. It starts a swarm of questions.

First one remarks that here is a thing done, and done with an astonishing effect of ease, that was incredible not simply to ignorant people but to men well informed in these matters. It cannot be fifteen years ago since Sir Hiram Maxim made the first machine that could lift its weight from the ground, and I well remember how the clumsy quality of that success confirmed the universal doubt that men could ever in any effectual manner fly.

Since then a conspiracy of accidents has changed the whole problem; the bicycle and its vibrations developed the pneumatic tyre, the pneumatic tyre rendered a comfortable mechanically driven road vehicle possible, the motor-car set an enormous premium on the development of very light, very efficient engines, and at last the engineer was able to offer the experimentalists in gliding one strong enough and light enough for the new purpose. And here we are! Or, rather, M. Blériot is!

What does it mean for us?

One meaning, I think, stands out plainly enough, unpalatable enough to our national pride. This thing from first to last was made abroad. Of all that made it possible we can only claim so much as is due to the improvement of the bicycle. Gliding began abroad while our young men of muscle and courage were braving the dangers of the cricket field. The motor-car and its engine was being worked out "over there," while in this country the mechanically propelled road vehicle, lest it should frighten the carriage horses of the gentry, was going meticulously at four miles an hour behind a man with a red flag. Over there, where the prosperous classes have some regard for education and some freedom of imaginative play, where people discuss all sorts of things fearlessly, and have a respect for science, this has been achieved.

And now our insularity is breached by the foreigner who has got ahead with flying.

It means, I take it, first and foremost for us, that the world cannot wait for the English.

It is not the first warning we have had. It has been raining warnings upon us; never was a slacking, dull people so liberally served with warnings of what was in store for them. But this event – this foreigner-invented, foreigner-built, foreigner-steered thing, taking our silver streak as a bird soars across a rivulet – puts the case dramatically. We have fallen behind in the quality of our manhood. In the men of means and leisure in this island there was neither enterprise enough, imagination enough, knowledge nor skill enough to lead in this matter. I do not see how one can go into the history of this development and arrive at any other conclusion. The French and Americans can laugh at our aeroplanes, the Germans are ten years ahead of our poor navigables. We are displayed a soft, rather backward people. Either we are a people essentially and incurably inferior, or there is something wrong in our training, something benumbing in our atmosphere and circumstances. That is the first and gravest intimation in M. Blériot's feat.

The second is that, in spite of our fleet, this is no longer, from the military point of view, an inaccessible island.

So long as one had to consider the navigable balloon the aerial side of warfare remained unimportant. A Zeppelin is little good for any purpose but scouting and espionage. It can carry very little weight in proportion to its vast size, and, what is more important, it cannot drop things without sending itself up like a bubble in soda water. An armada of navigables sent against this island would end in a dispersed, deflated state, chiefly in the seas between Orkney and Norway – though I say it who should not. But these aeroplanes can fly all round the fastest navigable that ever drove before the wind; they can drop weights, take up weights, and do all sorts of able, inconvenient things. They are birds. As for the birds, so for aeroplanes; there is an upward limit of size. They are not going to be very big, but they are going to be very able and active. Within a year we shall have – or rather *they* will have – aeroplanes capable of starting from Calais, let us say, circling over London, dropping a hundredweight or so of explosive upon the printing machines of *The Times*, and returning securely to Calais for another similar parcel. They are things neither difficult nor costly to make. For the price of a Dreadnought one might have hundreds. They will be extremely hard to hit with any sort of missile. I do not think a large army of under-educated, under-trained, extremely unwilling conscripts is going to be any good against this sort of thing.

I do not think that the arrival of M. Blériot means a panic resort to conscription. It is extremely desirable that people should realise that these foreign machines are not a temporary and incidental advantage that we can make good by fussing and demanding eight, and saying we won't wait, and so on, and then subsiding into indolence again. They are just the first-fruits of a steady, enduring lead that the foreigner has won. The foreigner is ahead of us in education, and this is especially true of the middle and upper classes, from which invention and enterprise come – or, in our own case, do not come. He makes a better class of man than we do. His science is better than ours. His training is better than ours. His imagination is livelier. His mind is more active. His requirements in a novel, for example, are not kindly, sedative pap; his uncensored plays deal with reality. His schools are places for vigorous education instead of genteel athleticism, and his home has books in it, and thought and conversation. Our homes and schools are relatively dull and uninspiring; there is no intellectual guide or stir in them; and to that we owe this new generation of nicely behaved, unenterprising sons, who play golf and dominate the tailoring of the world, while Brazilians, Frenchmen, Americans and Germans fly.

That we are hopelessly behindhand in aeronautics is not a fact by itself. It is merely an indication that we are behindhand in our mechanical knowledge and invention M. Blériot's aeroplane points also to the fleet.

The struggle for naval supremacy is not merely a struggle in shipbuilding and expenditure. Much more is it a struggle in knowledge and invention. It is not the Power that has the most ships or the

biggest ships that is going to win in a naval conflict. It is the Power that thinks quickest of what to do, is most resourceful and inventive. Eighty Dreadnoughts manned by dull men are only eighty targets for a quicker adversary. Well, is there any reason to suppose that our Navy is going to keep above the general national level in these things? Is the Navy *bright*?

The arrival of M. Blériot suggests most horribly to me how far behind we must be in all matters of ingenuity, device, and mechanical contrivance. I am reminded again of the days during the Boer war, when one realised that it had never occurred to our happy-go-lucky Army that it was possible to make a military use of barbed wire or construct a trench to defy shrapnel. Suppose in the North Sea we got a surprise like that, and fished out a parboiled, half-drowned admiral explaining what a confoundedly slim, unexpected, almost ungentlemanly thing the enemy had done to him.

Very probably the Navy is the exception to the British system; its officers are rescued from the dull homes and dull schools of their class while still of tender years, and shaped after a fashion of their own. But M. Blériot reminds us that we may no longer shelter and degenerate behind these blue backs. And the keenest men at sea are none the worse for having keen men on land behind them.

Are we an awakening people?

It is the vital riddle of our time. I look out upon the windy Channel and think of all those millions just over there, who seem to get busier and keener every hour. I could imagine the day of reckoning coming like a swarm of birds.

Here the air is full of the clamour of rich and prosperous people invited to pay taxes, and beyond measure bitter. They are going to live abroad, cut their charities, dismiss old servants, and do all sorts of silly, vindictive things. We seem to be doing feeble next-to-nothings in the endowment of research. Not one in twenty of the boys of the middle and upper classes learns German or gets more than a misleading smattering of physical science. Most of them never learn to speak French. Heaven alone knows what they do with their brains! The British reading and thinking public probably does not number fifty thousand people all told. It is difficult to see whence the necessary impetus for a national renaissance is to come... The universities are poor and spiritless, with no ambition to lead the country. I met a Boy Scout recently. He was hopeful in his way, but a little inadequate, I thought, as a basis for confidence in the future of the Empire.

We have still our Derby Day, of course...

Apart from these patriotic solitudes, M. Blériot has set quite another train of thought going in my mind. The age of natural democracy is surely at an end through these machines. There comes a time when men will be sorted out into those who will have the knowledge, nerve, and courage to do these splendid, dangerous things, and those who will prefer the humbler level. I do not think numbers are going to matter so much in the warfare of the future, and that when organised intelligence differs from the majority, the majority will have no adequate power of retort. The common man with a pike, being only sufficiently indignant and abundant, could chase the eighteenth century gentleman as he chose, but I fail to see what he can do in the way of mischief to an elusive chevalier with wings. But that opens too wide a discussion for me to enter upon now.

## MY FIRST FLIGHT

(EASTBOURNE, August 5, 1912 – *three years later.*)

Hitherto my only flights have been flights of imagination but this morning I flew. I spent about ten or fifteen minutes in the air; we went out to sea, soared up, came back over the land, circled higher, planed steeply down to the water, and I landed with the conviction that I had had only the foretaste of a great store of hitherto unsuspected pleasures. At the first chance I will go up again, and I will go higher and further.

This experience has restored all the keenness of my ancient interest in flying, which had become a little fagged and flat by too much hearing and reading about the thing and not enough participation. Sixteen years ago, in the days of Langley and Lilienthal, I was one of the few journalists who believed and wrote that flying was possible; it affected my reputation unfavourably, and produced in the few discouraged pioneers of those days a quite touching gratitude. Over my mantel as I write hangs a very blurred and bad but interesting photograph that Professor Langley sent me sixteen years ago. It shows the flight of the first piece of human machinery heavier than air that ever kept itself up for any length of time. It was a model, a little affair that would not have lifted a cat; it went up in a spiral and came down unsmashed, bringing back, like Noah's dove, the promise of tremendous things.

That was only sixteen years ago, and it is amusing to recall how cautiously even we out-and-out believers did our prophesying. I was quite a desperate fellow; I said outright that in my lifetime we should see men flying. But I qualified that by repeating that for many years to come it would be an enterprise only for quite fantastic daring and skill. We conjured up stupendous difficulties and risks. I was deeply impressed and greatly discouraged by a paper a distinguished Cambridge mathematician produced to show that a flying machine was bound to pitch fearfully, that as it flew on its pitching *must* increase until up went its nose, down went its tail, and it fell like a knife. We exaggerated every possibility of instability. We imagined that when the aeroplane wasn't "kicking up ahind and afore" it would be heeling over to the lightest side wind. A sneeze might upset it. We contrasted our poor human equipment with the instinctive balance of a bird, which has had ten million years of evolution by way of a start...

The waterplane in which I soared over Eastbourne this morning with Mr. Grahame-White was as steady as a motor-car running on asphalt.

Then we went on from those anticipations of swaying insecurity to speculations about the psychological and physiological effects of flying. Most people who look down from the top of a cliff or high tower feel some slight qualms of dread, many feel a quite sickening dread. Even if men struggled high into the air, we asked, wouldn't they be smitten up there by such a lonely and reeling dismay as to lose all self-control? And, above all, wouldn't the pitching and tossing make them quite horribly sea-sick?

I have always been a little haunted by that last dread. It gave a little undertow of funk to the mood of lively curiosity with which I got aboard the waterplane this morning – that sort of faint, thin funk that so readily invades one on the verge of any new experience; when one tries one's first dive, for example, or pushes off for the first time down an ice run. I thought I should very probably be sea-sick – or, to be more precise, air-sick; I thought also that I might be very giddy, and that I might get thoroughly cold and uncomfortable. None of those things happened.

I am still in a state of amazement at the smooth steadfastness of the motion. There is nothing on earth to compare with that, unless – and that I can't judge – it is an ice yacht travelling on perfect ice. The finest motor-car in the world on the best road would be a joggling, quivering thing beside it.

To begin with, we went out to sea before the wind, and the plane would not readily rise. We went with an undulating movement, leaping with a light splashing pat upon the water, from wave to wave. Then we came about into the wind and rose, and looking over I saw that there were no longer those periodic flashes of white foam. I was flying. And it was as still and steady as dreaming. I watched the widening distance between our floats and the waves. It wasn't by any means a windless day; there was a brisk, fluctuating breeze blowing out of the north over the downs. It seemed hardly to affect our flight at all.

And as for the giddiness of looking down, one does not feel it at all. It is difficult to explain why this should be so, but it is so. I suppose in such matters I am neither exceptionally steady-headed nor is my head exceptionally given to swimming. I can stand on the edge of cliffs of a thousand feet or so and look down, but I can never bring myself right up to the edge nor crane over to look to the very bottom. I should want to lie down to do that. And the other day I was on that Belvedere place at the top of the Rotterdam sky-scraper, a rather high wind was blowing, and one looks down through the chinks between the boards one stands on upon the heads of the people in the streets below; I didn't like it. But this morning I looked directly down on a little fleet of fishing boats over which we passed, and on the crowds assembling on the beach, and on the bathers who stared up at us from the breaking surf, with an entirely agreeable exaltation. And Eastbourne, in the early morning sunshine, had all the brightly detailed littleness of a town viewed from high up on the side of a great mountain.

When Mr. Grahame-White told me we were going to plane down I will confess I tightened my hold on the sides of the car and prepared for something like the down-going sensation of a switchback railway on a larger scale. Just for a moment there was that familiar feeling of something pressing one's heart up towards one's shoulders, and one's lower jaw up into its socket and of grinding one's lower teeth against the upper, and then it passed. The nose of the car and all the machine was slanting downwards, we were gliding quickly down, and yet there was no feeling that one rushed, not even as one rushes in coasting a hill on a bicycle. It wasn't a tithe of the thrill of those three descents one gets on the great mountain railway in the White City. There one gets a disagreeable quiver up one's backbone from the wheels, and a real sense of falling.

It is quite peculiar to flying that one is incredulous of any collision. Some time ago I was in a motor-car that ran over and killed a small dog, and this wretched little incident has left an open wound upon my nerves. I am never quite happy in a car now; I can't help keeping an apprehensive eye ahead. But you fly with an exhilarating assurance that you cannot possibly run over anything or run into anything – except the land or the sea, and even those large essentials seem a beautifully safe distance away.

I had heard a great deal of talk about the deafening uproar of the engine. I counted a headache among my chances. There again reason reinforced conjecture. When in the early morning Mr. Travers came from Brighton in this Farman in which I flew I could hear the hum of the great insect when it still seemed abreast of Beachy Head, and a good two miles away. If one can hear a thing at two miles, how much the more will one not hear it at a distance of two yards? But at the risk of seeming too contented for anything I will assert I heard that noise no more than one hears the drone of an electric ventilator upon one's table. It was only when I came to speak to Mr. Grahame-White, or he to me, that I discovered that our voices had become almost infinitesimally small.

And so it was I went up into the air at Eastbourne with the impression that flying was still an uncomfortable experimental, and slightly heroic thing to do, and came down to the cheerful gathering crowd upon the sands again with the knowledge that it is a thing achieved for everyone. It will get much cheaper, no doubt, and much swifter, and be improved in a dozen ways – we *must* get self-starting engines, for example, for both our aeroplanes and motor-cars – but it is available to-day for anyone who can reach it. An invalid lady of seventy could have enjoyed all that I did if only one could have got her into the passenger's seat. Getting there was a little difficult, it is true; the waterplane was out in the surf, and I was carried to it on a boatman's back, and then had to clamber carefully

through the wires, but that is a matter of detail. This flying is indeed so certain to become a general experience that I am sure that this description will in a few years seem almost as quaint as if I had set myself to record the fears and sensations of my First Ride in a Wheeled Vehicle. And I suspect that learning to control a Farman waterplane now is probably not much more difficult than, let us say, twice the difficulty in learning the control and management of a motor-bicycle. I cannot understand the sort of young man who won't learn how to do it if he gets half a chance.

The development of these waterplanes is an important step towards the huge and swarming popularisation of flying which is now certainly imminent. We ancient survivors of those who believed in and wrote about flying before there was any flying used to make a great fuss about the dangers and difficulties of landing and getting up. We wrote with vast gravity about "starting rails" and "landing stages," and it is still true that landing an aeroplane, except upon a well-known and quite level expanse, is a risky and uncomfortable business. But getting up and landing upon fairly smooth water is easier than getting into bed. This alone is likely to determine the aeroplane routes along the line of the world's coastlines and lake groups and waterways. The airmen will go to and fro over water as the midges do. Wherever there is a square mile of water the waterplanes will come and go like hornets at the mouth of their nest. But there are much stronger reasons than this convenience for keeping over water. Over water the air, it seems, lies in great level expanses; even when there are gales it moves in uniform masses like the swift, still rush of a deep river. The airman, in Mr. Grahame-White's phrase, can go to sleep on it. But over the land, and for thousands of feet up into the sky, the air is more irregular than a torrent among rocks; it is – if only we could see it – a waving, whirling, eddying, flamboyant confusion. A slight hill, a ploughed field, the streets of a town, create riotous, rolling, invisible streams and cataracts of air that catch the airman unawares, make him drop disconcertingly, try his nerves. With a powerful enough engine he climbs at once again, but these sudden downfalls are the least pleasant and most dangerous experience in aviation. They exact a tiring vigilance.

Over lake or sea, in sunshine, within sight of land, this is the perfect way of the flying tourist. Gladly would I have set out for France this morning instead of returning to Eastbourne. And then coasted round to Spain and into the Mediterranean. And so by leisurely stages to India. And the East Indies...

I find my study unattractive to-day.

## OFF THE CHAIN

(December, 1910)

I was ill in bed, reading Samuel Warren's "Ten Thousand a Year," and noting how much the world can change in seventy years.

I had just got to the journey of Titmouse from London to Yorkshire in that ex-sheriff's coach he bought in Long Acre – where now the motor-cars are sold – when there came a telegram to bid me note how a certain Mr.

Holt was upon the ocean, coming back to England from a little excursion.

He had left London last Saturday week at midday; he hoped to be back by Thursday; and he had talked to the President in Washington, visited Philadelphia, and had a comparatively loitering afternoon in New York.

What had I to say about it?

Firstly, that I wish this article could be written by Samuel Warren. And failing that, I wish that Charles Dickens, who wrote in his "American Notes" with such passionate disgust and hostility about the first Cunarder, retailing all the discomfort and misery of crossing the Atlantic by steamship, could have shared Mr. Holt's experience.

Because I am chiefly impressed by the fact not that Mr. Holt has taken days where weeks were needed fifty years ago, but that he has done it very comfortably, without undue physical exertion, and at no greater expense, I suppose, than it cost Dickens, whom the journey nearly killed.

If Mr. Holt's expenses were higher, it was for the special trains and the sake of the record. Anyone taking ordinary trains and ordinary passages may do what he has done in eighteen or twenty days.

When I was a boy, "Around the World in Eighty Days" was still a brilliant piece of imaginative fiction. Now that is almost an invalid's pace. It will not be very long before a man will be able to go round the world if he wishes to do so ten times in a year. And it is perhaps forgivable if those who, like Jules Verne, saw all these increments in speed, motor-cars, and airships aeroplanes, and submarines, wireless telegraphy and what not, as plain and necessary deductions from the promises of physical science, should turn upon a world that read and doubted and jeered with "I told you so. *Now* will you respect a prophet?"

It was not that the prophets professed any mystical and inexplicable illumination at which a sceptic might reasonably mock; they were prepared with ample reasons for the things they foretold. Now, quite as confidently, they point on to a new series of consequences, high probabilities that follow on all this tremendous development of swift, secure, and cheapened locomotion, just as they followed almost necessarily upon the mechanical developments of the last century.

Briefly, the ties that bind men to place are being severed; we are in the beginning of a new phase in human experience.

For endless ages man led the hunting life, migrating after his food, camping, homeless, as to this day are many of the Indians and Esquimaux in the Hudson Bay Territory. Then began agriculture, and for the sake of securer food man tethered himself to a place. The history of man's progress from savagery to civilisation is essentially a story of settling down. It begins in caves and shelters; it culminates in a wide spectacle of farms and peasant villages, and little towns among the farms. There were wars, crusades, barbarous invasions, set-backs, but to that state all Asia, Europe, North Africa worked its way with an indomitable pertinacity. The enormous majority of human beings stayed at home at last; from the cradle to the grave they lived, married, died in the same district, usually in the

same village; and to that condition, law, custom, habits, morals, have adapted themselves. The whole plan and conception of human society is based on the rustic home and the needs and characteristics of the agricultural family. There have been gipsies, wanderers, knaves, knights-errant and adventurers, no doubt, but the settled permanent rustic home and the tenure of land about it, and the hens and the cow, have constituted the fundamental reality of the whole scene. Now, the really wonderful thing in this astonishing development of cheap, abundant, swift locomotion we have seen in the last seventy years – in the development of which Mauretania, aeroplanes, mile-a-minute expresses, tubes, motor-buses and motor cars are just the bright, remarkable points – is this: that it dissolves almost all the reason and necessity why men should go on living permanently in any one place or rigidly disciplined to one set of conditions. The former attachment to the soil ceases to be an advantage. The human spirit has never quite subdued itself to the laborious and established life; it achieves its best with variety and occasional vigorous exertion under the stimulus of novelty rather than by constant toil, and this revolution in human locomotion that brings nearly all the globe within a few days of any man is the most striking aspect of the unfettering again of the old restless, wandering, adventurous tendencies in man's composition.

Already one can note remarkable developments of migration. There is, for example, that flow to and fro across the Atlantic of labourers from the Mediterranean. Italian workmen by the hundred thousand go to the United States in the spring and return in the autumn. Again, there is a stream of thousands of prosperous Americans to summer in Europe. Compared with any European country, the whole population of the United States is fluid. Equally notable is the enormous proportion of the British prosperous which winters either in the high Alps or along the Riviera. England is rapidly developing the former Irish grievance of an absentee propertied class. It is only now by the most strenuous artificial banking back that migrations on a far huger scale from India into Africa, and from China and Japan into Australia and America are prevented.

All the indications point to a time when it will be an altogether exceptional thing for a man to follow one occupation in one place all his life, and still rarer for a son to follow in his father's footsteps or die in his father's house.

The thing is as simple as the rule of three. We are off the chain of locality for good and all. It was necessary heretofore for a man to live in immediate contact with his occupation, because the only way for him to reach it was to have it at his door, and the cost and delay of transport were relatively too enormous for him to shift once he was settled. *Now* he may live twenty or thirty miles away from his occupation; and it often pays him to spend the small amount of time and money needed to move – it may be half-way round the world – to healthier conditions or more profitable employment.

And with every diminution in the cost and duration of transport it becomes more and more possible, and more and more likely, to be profitable to move great multitudes of workers seasonally between regions where work is needed in this season and regions where work is needed in that. They can go out to the agricultural lands at one time and come back into towns for artistic work and organised work in factories at another. They can move from rain and darkness into sunshine, and from heat into the coolness of mountain forests. Children can be sent for education to sea beaches and healthy mountains.

Men will harvest in Saskatchewan and come down in great liners to spend the winter working in the forests of Yucatan.

People have hardly begun to speculate about the consequences of the return of humanity from a closely tethered to a migratory existence. It is here that the prophet finds his chief opportunity. Obviously, these great forces of transport are already straining against the limits of existing political areas. Every country contains now an increasing ingredient of unenfranchised Uitlanders. Every country finds a growing section of its home-born people either living largely abroad, drawing the bulk of their income from the exterior, and having their essential interests wholly or partially across the frontier.

In every locality of a Western European country countless people are found delocalised, uninterested in the affairs of that particular locality, and capable of moving themselves with a minimum of loss and a maximum of facility into any other region that proves more attractive. In America political life, especially State life as distinguished from national political life, is degraded because of the natural and inevitable apathy of a large portion of the population whose interests go beyond the State.

Politicians and statesmen, being the last people in the world to notice what is going on in it, are making no attempt whatever to re-adapt this hugely growing floating population of delocalised people to the public service. As Mr. Marriott puts it in his novel, "*Now*," they "drop out" from politics as we understand politics at present. Local administration falls almost entirely – and the decision of Imperial affairs tends more and more to fall – into the hands of that dwindling and adventurous moiety which sits tight in one place from the cradle to the grave. No one has yet invented any method for the political expression and collective direction of a migratory population, and nobody is attempting to do so. It is a new problem...

Here, then, is a curious prospect, the prospect of a new kind of people, a floating population going about the world, uprooted, delocalised, and even, it may be, denationalised, with wide interests and wide views, developing no doubt, customs and habits of its own, a morality of its own, a philosophy of its own, and yet from the point of view of current politics and legislation unorganised and ineffective.

Most of the forces of international finance and international business enterprise will be with it. It will develop its own characteristic standards of art and literature and conduct in accordance with its new necessities. It is, I believe, the mankind of the future. And the last thing it will be able to do will be to legislate. The history of the immediate future will, I am convinced, be very largely the history of the conflict of the needs of this new population with the institutions, the boundaries the laws, prejudices, and deep-rooted traditions established during the home-keeping, localised era of mankind's career.

This conflict follows as inevitably upon these new gigantic facilities of locomotion as the *Mauretania* followed from the discoveries of steam and steel.

## OF THE NEW REIGN

(June, 1911.)

The bunting and the crimson vanish from the streets. Already the vast army of improvised carpenters that the Coronation has created set themselves to the work of demolition, and soon every road that converges upon Central London will be choked again with great loads of timber – but this time going outward – as our capital emerges from this unprecedented inundation of loyalty. The most elaborately conceived, the most stately of all recorded British Coronations is past.

What new phase in the life of our nation and our Empire does this tremendous ceremony inaugurate? The question is inevitable. There is nothing in all the social existence of men so full of challenge as the crowning of a king. It is the end of the overture; the curtain rises. This is a new beginning-place for histories.

To us, the great mass of common Englishmen, who have no place in the hierarchy of our land, who do not attend Courts nor encounter uniforms, whose function is at most spectacular, who stand in the street and watch the dignitaries and the liveries pass by, this sense of critical expectation is perhaps greater than it is for those more immediately concerned in the spectacle. They have had their parts to play, their symbolic acts to perform, they have sat in their privileged places, and we have waited at the barriers until their comfort and dignity was assured. I can conceive many of them, a little fatigued, preparing now for social dispersal, relaxing comfortably into gossip, discussing the detail of these events with an air of things accomplished. They will decide whether the Coronation has been a success and whether everything has or has not passed off very well. For us in the great crowd nothing has as yet succeeded or passed off well or ill. We are intent upon a King newly anointed and crowned, a King of whom we know as yet very little, but who has, nevertheless, roused such expectation as no King before him has done since Tudor times, in the presence of gigantic opportunities.

There is a conviction widespread among us – his own words, perhaps, have done most to create it – that King George is inspired, as no recent predecessor has been inspired, by the conception of kingship, that his is to be no rôle of almost indifferent abstinence from the broad processes of our national and imperial development. That greater public life which is above party and above creed and sect has, we are told, taken hold of his imagination; he is to be no crowned image of unity and correlation, a layer of foundation-stones and a signature to documents, but an actor in our drama, a living Prince.

Time will test these hopes, but certainly we, the innumerable democracy of individually unimportant men, have felt the need for such a Prince. Our consciousness of defects, of fields of effort untilled, of vast possibilities neglected and slipping away from us for ever, has never really slumbered again since the chastening experiences of the Boer War. Since then the national spirit, hampered though it is by the traditions of party government and a legacy of intellectual and social heaviness, has been in uneasy and ineffectual revolt against deadness, against stupidity and slackness, against waste and hypocrisy in every department of life. We have come to see more and more clearly how little we can hope for from politicians, societies and organised movements in these essential things. It is this that has invested the energy and manhood, the untried possibilities of the new King with so radiant a light of hope for us.

Think what it may mean for us all – I write as one of that great ill-informed multitude, sincerely and gravely patriotic, outside the echoes of Court gossip and the easy knowledge of exalted society – if our King does indeed care for these wider and profounder things! Suppose we have a King at last who cares for the advancement of science, who is willing to do the hundred things that are so easy

in his position to increase research, to honour and to share in scientific thought. Suppose we have a King whose head rises above the level of the Court artist, and who not only can but will appeal to the latent and discouraged power of artistic creation in our race. Suppose we have a King who understands the need for incessant, acute criticism to keep our collective activities intelligent and efficient, and for a flow of bold, unhampered thought through every department of the national life, a King liberal without laxity and patriotic without pettiness or vulgarity. Such, it seems to us who wait at present almost inexpressively outside the immediate clamours of a mere artificial loyalty, are the splendid possibilities of the time.

For England is no exhausted or decaying country. It is rich with an unmeasured capacity for generous responses. It is a country burthened indeed, but not overwhelmed, by the gigantic responsibilities of Empire, a little relaxed by wealth, and hampered rather than enslaved by a certain shyness of temperament, a certain habitual timidity, slovenliness and insincerity of mind. It is a little distrustful of intellectual power and enterprise, a little awkward and ungracious to brave and beautiful things, a little too tolerant of dull, well-meaning and industrious men and arrogant old women. It suffers hypocrites gladly, because its criticism is poor, and it is wastefully harsh to frank unorthodoxy. But its heart is sound if its judgments fall short of acuteness and if its standards of achievement are low. It needs but a quickening spirit upon the throne, always the traditional centre of its respect, to rise from even the appearance of decadence. There is a new quality seeking expression in England like the rising of sap in the spring, a new generation asking only for such leadership and such emancipation from restricted scope and ungenerous hostility as a King alone can give it...

When in its turn this latest reign comes at last to its reckoning, what will the sum of its achievement be? What will it leave of things visible? Will it leave a London preserved and beautified, or will it but add abundantly to the lumps of dishonest statuary, the scars and masses of ill-conceived rebuilding which testify to the aesthetic degradation of the Victorian period? Will a great constellation of artists redeem the ambitious sentimentalities and genteel skilfulness that find their fitting mausoleum in the Tate Gallery? Will our literature escape at last from pretentiousness and timidity, our philosophy from the foolish cerebrations of university "characters" and eminent politicians at leisure, and our starved science find scope and resources adequate to its gigantic needs? Will our universities, our teaching, our national training, our public services, gain a new health from the reviving vigour of the national brain? Or is all this a mere wild hope, and shall we, after perhaps some small flutterings of effort, the foundation of some ridiculous little academy of literary busybodies and hangers-on, the public recognition of this or that sociological pretender or financial "scientist," and a little polite jobbery with picture-buying, relapse into lassitude and a contented acquiescence in the rivalry of Germany and the United States for the moral, intellectual and material leadership of the world?

The deaths and accessions of Kings, the changing of names and coins and symbols and persons, a little force our minds in the marking off of epochs. We are brought to weigh one generation against another, to reckon up our position and note the characteristics of a new phase. What lies before us in the next decades? Is England going on to fresh achievements, to a renewed and increased predominance, or is she falling into a secondary position among the peoples of the world?

The answer to that depends upon ourselves. Have we pride enough to attempt still to lead mankind, and if we have, have we the wisdom and the quality? Or are we just the children of Good Luck, who are being found out?

Some years ago our present King exhorted this island to "wake up" in one of the most remarkable of British royal utterances, and Mr. Owen Seaman assures him in verse of an altogether laureate quality that we are now

"Free of the snare of slumber's silken bands," though I have not myself observed it. It is interesting to ask, Is England really waking up? and if she is, what sort of awakening is she likely to have?

It is possible, of course, to wake up in various different ways. There is the clear and beautiful dawn of new and balanced effort, easy, unresting, planned, assured, and there is also the blundering-up of a still half-somnolent man, irascible, clumsy, quarrelsome, who stubs his toe in his first walk across the room, smashes his too persistent alarm clock in a fit of nerves, and cuts his throat while shaving. All patriotic vehemence does not serve one's country. Exertion is a more critical and dangerous thing than inaction, and the essence of success is in the ability to develop those qualities which make action effective, and without which strenuousness is merely a clumsy and noisy protest against inevitable defeat. These necessary qualities, without which no community may hope for pre-eminence to-day, are a passion for fine and brilliant achievement, relentless veracity of thought and method, and richly imaginative fearlessness of enterprise. Have we English those qualities, and are we doing our utmost to select and develop them?

I doubt very much if we are. Let me give some of the impressions that qualify my assurance in the future of our race.

I have watched a great deal of patriotic effort during the last decade, I have seen enormous expenditures of will, emotion and material for the sake of our future, and I am deeply impressed, not indeed by any effect of lethargy, but by the second-rate quality and the shortness and weakness of aim in very much that has been done. I miss continually that sharply critical imaginativeness which distinguishes all excellent work, which shines out supremely in Cromwell's creation of the New Model, or Nelson's plan of action at Trafalgar, as brightly as it does in Newton's investigation of gravitation, Turner's rendering of landscape, or Shakespeare's choice of words, but which cannot be absent altogether if any achievement is to endure. We seem to have busy, energetic people, no doubt, in abundance, patient and industrious administrators and legislators; but have we any adequate supply of really creative ability?

Let me apply this question to one matter upon which England has certainly been profoundly in earnest during the last decade. We have been almost frantically resolved to keep the empire of the sea. But have we really done all that could have been done? I ask it with all diffidence, but has our naval preparation been free from a sort of noisy violence, a certain massive dullness of conception? Have we really made anything like a sane use of our resources? I do not mean of our resources in money or stuff. It is manifest that the next naval war will be beyond all precedent a war of mechanisms, giving such scope for invention and scientifically equipped wit and courage as the world has never had before. Now, have we really developed any considerable proportion of the potential human quality available to meet the demand for wits? What are we doing to discover, encourage and develop those supreme qualities of personal genius that become more and more decisive with every new weapon and every new complication and unsuspected possibility it introduces? Suppose, for example, there was among us to-day a one-eyed, one-armed adulterer, rather fragile, prone to sea-sickness, and with just that one supreme quality of imaginative courage which made Nelson our starry admiral. Would he be given the ghost of a chance now of putting that gift at his country's disposal? I do not think he would, and I do not think he would because we underrate gifts and exceptional qualities, because there is no quickening appreciation for the exceptional best in a man, and because we overvalue the good behaviour, the sound physique, the commonplace virtues of mediocrity.

I have but the knowledge of the man in the street in these things, though once or twice I have chanced on prophecy, and I am uneasily apprehensive of the quality of all our naval preparations. We go on launching these lumping great Dreadnoughts, and I cannot bring myself to believe in them. They seem vulnerable from the air above and the deep below, vulnerable in a shallow channel and in a fog (and the North Sea is both foggy and shallow), and immensely costly. If I were Lord High Admiral of England at war I would not fight the things. I would as soon put to sea in St. Paul's Cathedral. If I were fighting Germany, I would stow half of them away in the Clyde and half in the Bristol Channel, and take the good men out of them and fight with mines and torpedoes and destroyers and airships and submarines.

And when I come to military matters my persuasion that things are not all right, that our current hostility to imaginative activity and our dull acceptance of established methods and traditions is leading us towards grave dangers, intensifies. In South Africa the Boers taught us in blood and bitterness the obvious fact that barbed wire had its military uses, and over the high passes on the way to Lhasa (though, luckily, it led to no disaster) there was not a rifle in condition to use because we had not thought to take glycerine. The perpetual novelty of modern conditions demands an imaginative alertness we eliminate. I do not believe that the Army Council or anyone in authority has worked out a tithe of the essential problems of contemporary war. If they have, then it does not show. Our military imagination is half-way back to bows and arrows. The other day I saw a detachment of the Legion of Frontiersmen disporting itself at Totteridge. I presume these young heroes consider they are preparing for a possible conflict in England or Western Europe, and I presume the authorities are satisfied with them. It is at any rate the only serious war of which there is any manifest probability. Western Europe is now a network of railways, tramways, high roads, wires of all sorts; its chief beasts of burthen are the railway train and the motor car and the bicycle; towns and hypertrophied villages are often practically continuous over large areas; there is abundant water and food, and the commonest form of cover is the house. But the Legion of Frontiersmen is equipped for war, oh! – in Arizona in 1890, and so far as I am able to judge the most modern sections of the army extant are organised for a colonial war in (say) 1899 or 1900. There is, of course, a considerable amount of vague energy demanding conscription and urging our youth towards a familiarity with arms and the backwoodsman's life, but of any thought-out purpose in our arming widely understood, of any realisation of what would have to be done and where it would have to be done, and of any attempts to create an instrument for that novel unprecedented undertaking, I discover no trace.

In my capacity of devil's advocate pleading against national over-confidence, I might go on to the quality of our social and political movements. One hears nowadays a vast amount of chatter about efficiency – that magic word – and social organisation, and there is no doubt a huge expenditure of energy upon these things and a widespread desire to rush about and make showy and startling changes. But it does not follow that this involves progress if the enterprise itself is dully conceived and most of it does seem to me to be dully conceived. In the absence of penetrating criticism, any impudent industrious person may set up as an "expert," organise and direct the confused good intentions at large, and muddle disastrously with the problem in hand. The "expert" quack and the bureaucratic intriguer increase and multiply in a dull-minded, uncritical, strenuous period as disease germs multiply in darkness and heat.

I find the same doubts of our quality assail me when I turn to the supreme business of education. It is true we all seem alive nowadays to the need of education, are all prepared for more expenditure upon it and more, but it does not follow necessarily in a period of stagnating imagination that we shall get what we pay for. The other day I discovered my little boy doing a subtraction sum, and I found he was doing it in a slower, clumsier, less businesslike way than the one I was taught in an old-fashioned "Commercial Academy" thirty odd years ago. The educational "expert," it seems, has been at work substituting a bad method for a good one in our schools because it is easier of exposition. The educational "expert," in the lack of a lively public intelligence, develops all the vices of the second-rate energetic, and he is, I am only too disposed to believe, making a terrible mess of a great deal of our science teaching and of the teaching of mathematics and English...

I have written enough to make clear the quality of my doubts. I think the English mind cuts at life with a dulled edge, and that its energy may be worse than its somnolence. I think it undervalues gifts and fine achievement, and overvalues the commonplace virtues of mediocre men. One of the greatest Liberal statesmen in the time of Queen Victoria never held office because he was associated with a divorce case a quarter of a century ago. For him to have taken office would have been regarded as a scandal. But it is not regarded as a scandal that our Government includes men of no more ability than any average assistant behind a grocer's counter. These are your gods, O England! – and with

every desire to be optimistic I find it hard under the circumstances to anticipate that the New Epoch is likely to be a blindingly brilliant time for our Empire and our race.

## WILL THE EMPIRE LIVE?

What will hold such an Empire as the British together, this great, laxly scattered, sea-linked association of ancient states and new-formed countries, Oriental nations, and continental colonies? What will enable it to resist the endless internal strains, the inevitable external pressures and attacks to which it must be subjected This is the primary question for British Imperialism; everything else is secondary or subordinated to that.

There is a multitude of answers. But I suppose most of them will prove under examination either to be, or to lead to, or to imply very distinctly this generalisation that if most of the intelligent and active people in the Empire want it to continue it will, and that if a large proportion of such active and intelligent people are discontented and estranged, nothing can save it from disintegration. I do not suppose that a navy ten times larger than ours, or conscription of the most irksome thoroughness, could oblige Canada to remain in the Empire if the general will and feeling of Canada were against it, or coerce India into a sustained submission if India presented a united and resistant front. Our Empire, for all its roll of battles, was not created by force; colonisation and diplomacy have played a far larger share in its growth than conquest; and there is no such strength in its sovereignty as the rule of pride and pressure demand. It is to the free consent and participation of its constituent peoples that we must look for its continuance.

A large and influential body of politicians considers that in preferential trading between the parts of the Empire, and in the erection of a tariff wall against exterior peoples, lies the secret of that deepened emotional understanding we all desire. I have never belonged to that school. I am no impassioned Free Trader – the sacred principle of Free Trade has always impressed me as a piece of party claptrap; but I have never been able to understand how an attempt to draw together dominions so scattered and various as ours by a network of fiscal manipulation could end in anything but mutual inconvenience mutual irritation, and disruption.

In an open drawer in my bureau there lies before me now a crumpled card on which are the notes I made of a former discussion of this very issue, a discussion between a number of prominent politicians in the days before Mr. Chamberlain's return from South Africa and the adoption of Tariff Reform by the Unionist Party; and I decipher again the same considerations, unanswered and unanswerable, that leave me sceptical to-day.

Take a map of the world and consider the extreme differences in position and condition between our scattered states. Here is Canada, lying along the United States, looking eastward to Japan and China, westward to all Europe. See the great slashes of lake, bay, and mountain chain that cut it meridionally. Obviously its main routes and trades and relations lie naturally north and south; obviously its full development can only be attained with those ways free, open, and active. Conceivably, you may build a fiscal wall across the continent; conceivably, you may shut off the east and half the west by impossible tariffs, and narrow its trade to one artificial duct to England, but only at the price of a hampered development It will be like nourishing the growing body of a man with the heart and arteries of a mouse.

Then here, again, are New Zealand and Australia, facing South America and the teeming countries of Eastern Asia; surely it is in relation to these vast proximities that their economic future lies. Is it possible to believe that shipping mutton to London is anything but the mere beginning of their commercial development Look at India, again, and South Africa. Is it not manifest that from the economic and business points of view each of these is an entirely separate entity, a system apart, under distinct necessities, needing entire freedom to make its own bargains and control its trade in its own way in order to achieve its fullest material possibilities?

Nor can I believe that financial entanglements greatly strengthen the bonds of an empire in any case. We lost the American colonies because we interfered with their fiscal arrangements, and it was Napoleon's attempt to strangle the Continental trade with Great Britain that began his downfall.

I do not find in the ordinary relations of life that business relations necessarily sustain intercourse. The relations of buyer and seller are ticklish relations, very liable to strains and conflicts. I do not find people grow fond of their butchers and plumbers, and I doubt whether if one were obliged by some special taxation to deal only with one butcher or one plumber, it would greatly endear the relationship. Forced buying is irritated buying, and it is the forbidden shop that contains the coveted goods. Nor do I find, to take another instance, among the hotel staffs of Switzerland and the Riviera – who live almost entirely upon British gold – those impassioned British imperialist views the economic link theory would lead me to expect.

And another link, too, upon which much stress is laid but about which I have very grave doubts, is the possibility of a unified organisation of the Empire for military defence. We are to have, it is suggested, an imperial Army and an imperial Navy, and so far, no doubt, as the guaranteeing of a general peace goes, we may develop a sense of participation in that way. But it is well in these islands to remember that our extraordinary Empire has no common enemy to weld it together from without.

It is too usual to regard Germany as the common enemy. We in Great Britain are now intensely jealous of Germany. We are intensely jealous of Germany not only because the Germans outnumber us, and have a much larger and more diversified country than ours, and lie in the very heart and body of Europe, but because in the last hundred years, while we have fed on platitudes and vanity, they have had the energy and humility to develop a splendid system of national education, to toil at science and art and literature, to develop social organisation, to master and better our methods of business and industry, and to clamber above us in the scale of civilisation. This has humiliated and irritated rather than chastened us, and our irritation has been greatly exacerbated by the swaggering bad manners, the talk of "Blood and Iron" and Mailed Fists, the Welt-Politik rubbish that inaugurated the new German phase.

The British middle-class, therefore, is full of an angry, vague disposition to thwart that expansion which Germans regard very reasonably as their natural destiny; there are all the possibilities of a huge conflict in that disposition, and it is perhaps well to remember how insular – or, at least, how European – the essentials of this quarrel are. We have lost our tempers, but Canada has not. There is nothing in Germany to make Canada envious and ashamed of wasted years. Canada has no natural quarrel with Germany, nor has India, nor South Africa, nor Australasia. They have no reason to share our insular exasperation. On the other hand, all these states have other special preoccupations. New Zealand, for example, having spent half a century and more in sheep-farming, land legislation, suppressing its drink traffic, lowering its birth-rate, and, in short, the achievement of an ideal preventive materialism, is chiefly consumed by hate and fear of Japan, which in the same interval has made a stride from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, and which teems with art and life and enterprise and offspring. Now Japan in Welt-Politik is our ally.

You see, the British Empire has no common economic interests and no natural common enemy. It is not adapted to any form of Zollverein or any form of united aggression. Visibly, on the map of the world it has a likeness to open hands, while the German Empire – except for a few ill-advised and imitative colonies – is clenched into a central European unity.

Physically, our Empire is incurably scattered, various, and divided, and it is to quite other links and forces, it seems to me, than fiscal or military unification that we who desire its continuance must look to hold it together. There never was anything like it before. Essentially it is an adventure of the British spirit, sanguine, discursive, and beyond comparison insubordinate, adaptable, and originating. It has been made by odd and irregular means by trading companies, pioneers, explorers, unauthorised seamen, adventurers like Clive, eccentrics like Gordon, invalids like Rhodes. It has been made, in spite of authority and officialdom, as no other empire was ever made. The nominal rulers of Britain

never planned it. It happened almost in spite of them. Their chief contribution to its history has been the loss of the United States. It is a living thing that has arisen, not a dead thing put together. Beneath the thin legal and administrative ties that hold it together lies the far more vital bond of a traditional free spontaneous activity. It has a common medium of expression in the English tongue, a unity of liberal and tolerant purpose amidst its enormous variety of localised life and colour. And it is in the development and strengthening, the enrichment the rendering more conscious and more purposeful, of that broad creative spirit of the British that the true cement and continuance of our Empire is to be found.

The Empire must live by the forces that begot it. It cannot hope to give any such exclusive prosperity as a Zollverein might afford; it can hold out no hopes of collective conquests and triumphs – its utmost military rôle must be the guaranteeing of a common inaggressive security; but it can, if it is to survive, it must, give all its constituent parts such a civilisation as none of them could achieve alone, a civilisation, a wealth and fullness of life increasing and developing with the years. Through that, and that alone, can it be made worth having and worth serving.

And in the first place the whole Empire must use the English language. I do not mean that any language must be stamped out, that a thousand languages may not flourish by board and cradle and in folk-songs and village gossip – Erse, the Taal, a hundred Indian and other Eastern tongues, Canadian French – but I mean that also English must be available, that everywhere there must be English teaching. And everyone who wants to read science or history or philosophy, to come out of the village life into wider thoughts and broader horizons, to gain appreciation in art, must find ready to hand, easily attainable in English, all there is to know and all that has been said thereon. It is worth a hundred Dreadnoughts and a million soldiers to the Empire, that wherever the imperial posts reach, wherever there is a curious or receptive mind, there in English and by the imperial connection the full thought of the race should come. To the lonely youth upon the New Zealand sheep farm, to the young Hindu, to the trapper under a Labrador tilt, to the half-breed assistant at a Burmese oil-well, to the self-educating Scottish miner or the Egyptian clerk, the Empire and the English language should exist, visibly and certainly, as the media by which his spirit escapes from his immediate surroundings and all the urgencies of every day, into a limitless fellowship of thought and beauty.

Now I am not writing this in any vague rhetorical way; I mean specifically that our Empire has to become the medium of knowledge and thought to every intelligent person in it, or that it is bound to go to pieces. It has no economic, no military, no racial, no religious unity. Its only conceivable unity is a unity of language and purpose and outlook. If it is not held together by thought and spirit, it cannot be held together. No other cement exists that can hold it together indefinitely.

Not only English literature, but all other literatures well translated into English, and all science and all philosophy, have to be brought within the reach of everyone capable of availing himself of such reading. And this must be done, not by private enterprise or for gain, but as an Imperial function. Wherever the Empire extends there its presence must signify all that breadth of thought and outlook no localised life can supply.

Only so is it possible to establish and maintain the wide understandings, the common sympathy necessary to our continued association. The Empire, mediately or immediately, must become the universal educator, news-agent, book-distributor, civiliser-general, and vehicle of imaginative inspiration for its peoples, or else it must submit to the gravitation of its various parts to new and more invigorating associations.

No empire, it may be urged, has ever attempted anything of this sort, but no empire like the British has ever yet existed. Its conditions and needs are unprecedented, its consolidation is a new problem, to be solved, if it is solved at all, by untried means. And in the English language as a vehicle of thought and civilisation alone is that means to be found.

Now it is idle to pretend that at the present time the British Empire is giving its constituent peoples any such high and rewarding civilisation as I am here suggesting. It gives them a certain

immunity from warfare, a penny post, an occasional spectacular coronation, a few knighthoods and peerages, and the services of an honest, unsympathetic, narrow-minded, and unattractive officialism. No adequate effort is being made to render the English language universal throughout its limits, none at all to use it as a medium of thought and enlightenment. Half the good things of the human mind are outside English altogether, and there is not sufficient intelligence among us to desire to bring them in. If one would read honest and able criticism, one must learn French; if one would be abreast of scientific knowledge and philosophical thought, or see many good plays or understand the contemporary European mind, German.

And yet it would cost amazingly little to get every good foreign thing done into English as it appeared. It needs only a little understanding and a little organisation to ensure the immediate translation of every significant article, every scientific paper of the slightest value. The effort and arrangement needed to make books, facilities for research, and all forms of art accessible throughout the Empire, would be altogether trivial in proportion to the consolidation it would effect.

But English people do not understand these things. Their Empire is an accident. It was made for them by their exceptional and outcast men, and in the end it will be lost, I fear, by the intellectual inertness of their commonplace and dull-minded leaders. Empire has happened to them and civilisation has happened to them as fresh lettuces come to tame rabbits. They do not understand how they got, and they will not understand how to keep. Art, thought, literature, all indeed that raises men above locality and habit, all that can justify and consolidate the Empire, is nothing to them. They are provincials mocked by a world-wide opportunity, the stupid legatees of a great generation of exiles. They go out of town for the "shootin'," and come back for the fooleries of Parliament, and to see what the Censor has left of our playwrights and Sir Jesse Boot of our writers, and to dine in restaurants and wear clothes.

Mostly they call themselves Imperialists, which is just their harmless way of expressing their satisfaction with things as they are. In practice their Imperialism resolves itself into a vigorous resistance to taxation and an ill-concealed hostility to education. It matters nothing to them that the whole next generation of Canadians has drawn its ideas mainly from American publications, that India and Egypt, in despite of sounder mental nourishment, have developed their own vernacular Press, that Australia and New Zealand even now gravitate to America for books and thought. It matters nothing to them that the poverty and insularity of our intellectual life has turned American art to France and Italy, and the American universities towards Germany. The slow starvation and decline of our philosophy and science, the decadence of British invention and enterprise, troubles them not at all, because they fail to connect these things with the tangible facts of empire. "The world cannot wait for the English." ... And the sands of our Imperial opportunity twirl through the neck of the hour-glass.

## THE LABOUR UNREST

(May, 1912.)

Sec. 1 Our country is, I think, in a dangerous state of social disturbance. The discontent of the labouring mass of the community is deep and increasing. It may be that we are in the opening phase of a real and irreparable class war.

Since the Coronation we have moved very rapidly indeed from an assurance of extreme social stability towards the recognition of a spreading disorganisation. It is idle to pretend any longer that these Labour troubles are the mere give and take of economic adjustment. No adjustment is in progress. New and strange urgencies are at work in our midst, forces for which the word "revolutionary" is only too faithfully appropriate. Nothing is being done to allay these forces; everything conspires to exasperate them.

Whither are these forces taking us? What can still be done and what has to be done to avoid the phase of social destruction to which we seem to be drifting?

Hitherto, in Great Britain at any rate, the working man has shown himself a being of the most limited and practical outlook. His narrowness of imagination, his lack of general ideas, has been the despair of the Socialist and of every sort of revolutionary theorist. He may have struck before, but only for definite increments of wages or definite limitations of toil; his acceptance of the industrial system and its methods has been as complete and unquestioning as his acceptance of earth and sky. Now, with an effect of suddenness, this ceases to be the case. A new generation of workers is seen replacing the old, workers of a quality unfamiliar to the middle-aged and elderly men who still manage our great businesses and political affairs. The worker is beginning now to strike for unprecedented ends – against the system, against the fundamental conditions of labour, to strike for no defined ends at all, perplexingly and disconcertingly. The old-fashioned strike was a method of bargaining, clumsy and violent perhaps, but bargaining still; the new-fashioned strike is far less of a haggle, far more of a display of temper. The first thing that has to be realised if the Labour question is to be understood at all is this, that the temper of Labour has changed altogether in the last twenty or thirty years. Essentially that is a change due to intelligence not merely increased but greatly stimulated, to the work, that is, of the board schools and of the cheap Press. The outlook of the workman has passed beyond the works and his beer and his dog. He has become – or, rather, he has been replaced by – a being of eyes, however imperfect, and of criticism, however hasty and unjust. The working man of to-day reads, talks, has general ideas and a sense of the round world; he is far nearer to the ruler of to-day in knowledge and intellectual range than he is to the working man of fifty years ago. The politician or business magnate of to-day is no better educated and very little better informed than his equals were fifty years ago. The chief difference is golf. The working man questions a thousand things his father accepted as in the very nature of the world, and among others he begins to ask with the utmost alertness and persistence why it is that he in particular is expected to toil. The answer, the only justifiable answer, should be that that is the work for which he is fitted by his inferior capacity and culture, that these others are a special and select sort, very specially trained and prepared for their responsibilities, and that at once brings this new fact of a working-class criticism of social values into play. The old workman might and did quarrel very vigorously with his specific employer, but he never set out to arraign all employers; he took the law and the Church and Statecraft and politics for the higher and noble things they claimed to be. He wanted an extra shilling or he wanted an hour of leisure, and that was as much as he wanted. The young workman, on the other hand, has put the whole social system upon its trial, and seems quite disposed to give an adverse verdict. He

looks far beyond the older conflict of interests between employer and employed. He criticises the good intentions of the whole system of governing and influential people, and not only their good intentions, but their ability. These are the new conditions, and the middle-aged and elderly gentlemen who are dealing with the crisis on the supposition that their vast experience of Labour questions in the 'seventies and 'eighties furnishes valuable guidance in this present issue are merely bringing the gunpowder of misapprehension to the revolutionary fort.

The workman of the new generation is full of distrust the most demoralising of social influences. He is like a sailor who believes no longer either in the good faith or seamanship of his captain, and, between desperation and contempt, contemplates vaguely but persistently the assumption of control by a collective fore-castle. He is like a private soldier obsessed with the idea that nothing can save the situation but the death of an incompetent officer. His distrust is so profound that he ceases not only to believe in the employer, but he ceases to believe in the law, ceases to believe in Parliament, as a means to that tolerable life he desires; and he falls back steadily upon his last resource of a strike, and – if by repressive tactics we make it so – a criminal strike. The central fact of all this present trouble is that distrust. There is only one way in which our present drift towards revolution or revolutionary disorder can be arrested, and that is by restoring the confidence of these alienated millions, who visibly now are changing from loyalty to the Crown, from a simple patriotism, from habitual industry, to the more and more effective expression of a deepening resentment.

This is a psychological question, a matter of mental states. Feats of legal subtlety are inopportune, arithmetical exploits still more so. To emerge with the sum of 4s. 6-1/2d. as a minimum, by calculating on the basis of the mine's present earnings, from a conference which the miners and everybody else imagined was to give a minimum of 5s., may be clever, but it is certainly not politic in the present stage of Labour feeling. To stamp violently upon obscure newspapers nobody had heard of before and send a printer to prison, and to give thereby a flaming advertisement to the possible use of soldiers in civil conflicts and set every barrack-room talking, may be permissible, but it is certainly very ill-advised. The distrust deepens.

The real task before a governing class that means to go on governing is not just at present to get the better of an argument or the best of a bargain, but to lay hold of the imaginations of this drifting, sullen and suspicious multitude, which is the working body of the country. What we prosperous people, who have nearly all the good things of life and most of the opportunity, have to do now is to justify ourselves. We have to show that we are indeed responsible and serviceable, willing to give ourselves, and to give ourselves generously for what we have and what we have had. We have to meet the challenge of this distrust.

The slack days for rulers and owners are over. If there are still to be rulers and owners and managing and governing people, then in the face of the new masses, sensitive, intelligent, critical, irritable, as no common people have ever been before, these rulers and owners must be prepared to make themselves and display themselves wise, capable and heroic – beyond any aristocratic precedent. The alternative, if it is an alternative, is resignation – to the Social Democracy.

And it is just because we are all beginning to realise the immense need for this heroic quality in those who rule and are rich and powerful, as the response and corrective to these distrusts and jealousies that are threatening to disintegrate our social order, that we have all followed the details of this great catastrophe in the Atlantic with such intense solicitude. It was one of those accidents that happen with a precision of time and circumstance that outdoes art; not an incident in it all that was not supremely typical. It was the penetrating comment of chance upon our entire social situation. Beneath a surface of magnificent efficiency was – slap-dash. The third-class passengers had placed themselves on board with an infinite confidence in the care that was to be taken of them, and they went down, and most of their women and children went down with the cry of those who find themselves cheated out of life.

In the unfolding record of behaviour it is the stewardesses and bandsmen and engineers – persons of the trade-union class – who shine as brightly as any. And by the supreme artistry of Chance it fell to the lot of that tragic and unhappy gentleman, Mr. Bruce Ismay, to be aboard and to be caught by the urgent vacancy in the boat and the snare of the moment. No untried man dare say that he would have behaved better in his place. He escaped. He thought it natural to escape. His class thinks it was right and proper that he did escape. It is not the man I would criticise, but the manifest absence of any such sense of the supreme dignity of his position as would have sustained him in that crisis. He was a rich man and a ruling man, but in the test he was not a proud man. In the common man's realisation that such is indeed the case with most of those who dominate our world, lies the true cause and danger of our social indiscipline. And the remedy in the first place lies not in social legislation and so forth, but in the consciences of the wealthy. Heroism and a generous devotion to the common good are the only effective answer to distrust. If such dominating people cannot produce these qualities there will have to be an end to them, and the world must turn to some entirely different method of direction.

Sec. 2 The essential trouble in our growing Labour disorder is the profound distrust which has grown up in the minds of the new generation of workers of either the ability or the good faith of the property owning, ruling and directing class. I do not attempt to judge the justice or not of this distrust; I merely point to its existence as one of the striking and essential factors in the contemporary Labour situation.

This distrust is not, perhaps, the proximate cause of the strikes that now follow each other so disconcertingly, but it embitters their spirit, it prevents their settlement, and leads to their renewal. I have tried to suggest that, whatever immediate devices for pacification might be employed, the only way to a better understanding and co-operation, the only escape from a social slide towards the unknown possibilities of Social Democracy, lies in an exaltation of the standard of achievement and of the sense of responsibility in the possessing and governing classes. It is not so much "Wake up, England!" that I would say as "Wake up, gentlemen!" – for the new generation of the workers is beyond all question quite alarmingly awake and critical and angry. And they have not merely to wake up, they have to wake up visibly and ostentatiously if those old class reliances on which our system is based are to be preserved and restored.

We need before anything else a restoration of class confidence. It is a time when class should speak with class very frankly.

There is too much facile misrepresentation, too ready a disposition on either side to accept caricatures as portraits and charges as facts. However tacit our understandings were in the past, with this new kind of Labour, this young, restive Labour of the twentieth century, which can read, discuss and combine, we need something in the nature of a social contract. And it is when one comes to consider by what possible means these suspicious third-class passengers in our leaking and imperilled social liner can be brought into generous co-operation with the second and the first that one discovers just how lamentably out of date and out of order our political institutions, which should supply the means for just this inter-class discussion, have become. Between the busy and preoccupied owning and employing class on the one hand, and the distressed, uneasy masses on the other, intervenes the professional politician, not as a mediator, but as an obstacle, who must be propitiated before any dealings are possible. Our national politics no longer express the realities of the national life; they are a mere impediment in the speech of the community. With our whole social order in danger, our Legislature is busy over the trivial little affairs of the Welsh Established Church, whose endowment probably is not equal to the fortune of any one of half a dozen *Titanic* passengers or a tithe of the probable loss of another strike among the miners. We have a Legislature almost antiquarian, compiling a museum of Gladstonian legacies rather than governing our world to-day.

Law is the basis of civilisation, but the lawyer is the law's consequence, and, with us at least, the legal profession is the political profession. It delights in false issues and merely technical politics. Steadily with the ascendancy of the House of Commons the barristers have ousted other types of men

from political power. The decline of the House of Lords has been the last triumph of the House of Lawyers, and we are governed now to a large extent not so much by the people for the people as by the barristers for the barristers. They set the tone of political life. And since they are the most specialised, the most specifically trained of all the professions, since their training is absolutely antagonistic to the creative impulses of the constructive artist and the controlled experiments of the scientific man, since the business is with evidence and advantages and the skilful use of evidence and advantages, and not with understanding, they are the least statesmanlike of all educated men, and they give our public life a tone as hopelessly discordant with our very great and urgent social needs as one could well imagine. They do not want to deal at all with great and urgent social needs. They play a game, a long and interesting game, with parties as sides, a game that rewards the industrious player with prominence, place, power and great rewards, and the less that game involves the passionate interests of other men, the less it draws them into participation and angry interference, the better for the steady development of the politician's career. A distinguished and active fruitlessness, leaving the world at last as he found it, is the political barrister's ideal career. To achieve that, he must maintain legal and political monopolies, and prevent the invasion of political life by living interests. And so far as he has any views about Labour beyond the margin of his brief, the barrister politician seems to regard getting men back to work on any terms and as soon as possible as the highest good.

And it is with such men that our insurgent modern Labour, with its vaguely apprehended wants, its large occasions and its rapid emotional reactions, comes into contact directly it attempts to adjust itself in the social body. It is one of the main factors in the progressive embitterment of the Labour situation that whatever business is afoot – arbitration, conciliation, inquiry – our contemporary system presents itself to Labour almost invariably in a legal guise. The natural infirmities of humanity rebel against an unimaginative legality of attitude, and the common workaday man has no more love for this great and necessary profession to-day than he had in the time of Jack Cade. Little reasonable things from the lawyers' point of view – the rejection, for example, of certain evidence in the *Titanic* inquiry because it might amount to a charge of manslaughter, the constant interruption and checking of a Labour representative at the same tribunal upon trivial points – irritate quite disproportionately.

Lawyer and working man are antipathetic types, and it is a very grave national misfortune that at this time, when our situation calls aloud for statecraft and a certain greatness of treatment, our public life should be dominated as it has never been dominated before by this most able and illiberal profession.

Now for that great multitude of prosperous people who find themselves at once deeply concerned in our present social and economic crisis, and either helplessly entangled in party organisation or helplessly outside politics, the elimination and cure of this disease of statecraft, the professional politician, has become a very urgent matter. To destroy him, to get him back to his law courts and keep him there, it is necessary to destroy the machinery of the party system that sustains him, and to adopt some electoral method that will no longer put the independent representative man at a hopeless disadvantage against the party nominee. Such a method is to be found in proportional representation with large constituencies, and to that we must look for our ultimate liberation from our present masters, these politician barristers. But the Labour situation cannot wait for this millennial release, and for the current issue it seems to me patent that every reasonable prosperous man will, even at the cost to himself of some trouble and hard thinking, do his best to keep as much of this great and acute controversy as he possibly can out of the lawyer's and mere politician's hands and in his own. Leave Labour to the lawyers, and we shall go very deeply into trouble indeed before this business is over. They will score their points, they will achieve remarkable agreements full of the possibility of subsequent surprises, they will make reputations, and do everything Heaven and their professional training have made them to do, and they will exasperate and exasperate!

Lawyers made the first French Revolution, and now, on a different side, they may yet bring about an English one. These men below there are still, as a class, wonderfully patient and reasonable,

quite prepared to take orders and recognise superior knowledge, wisdom and nobility. They make the most reasonable claims for a tolerable life, for certain assurances and certain latitudes. Implicit rather than expressed is their demand for wisdom and right direction from those to whom the great surplus and freedom of civilisation are given. It is an entirely reasonable demand if man is indeed a social animal. But we have got to treat them fairly and openly. This patience and reasonableness and willingness for leadership is not limitless. It is no good scoring our mean little points, for example, and accusing them of breach of contract and all sorts of theoretical wrongs because they won't abide by agreements to accept a certain scale of wages when the purchasing power of money has declined. When they made that agreement they did not think of that possibility. When they said a pound they thought of what was then a poundsworth of living. The Mint has since been increasing its annual output of gold coins to two or three times the former amount, and we have, as it were, debased the coinage with extraordinary quantities of gold. But we who know and own did nothing to adjust that; we did not tell the working man of that; we have let him find it out slowly and indirectly at the grocer's shop. That may be permissible from the lawyer's point of view, but it certainly isn't from the gentleman's, and it is only by the plea that its inequalities give society a gentleman that our present social system can claim to endure.

I would like to accentuate that, because if we are to emerge again from these acute social dissensions a reunited and powerful people, there has to be a change of tone, a new generosity on the part of those who deal with Labour speeches, Labour literature, Labour representatives, and Labour claims. Labour is necessarily at an enormous disadvantage in discussion; in spite of a tremendous inferiority in training and education it is trying to tell the community its conception of its needs and purposes. It is not only young as a participator in the discussion of affairs; it is actually young. The average working man is not half the age of the ripe politicians and judges and lawyers and wealthy organisers who trip him up legally, accuse him of bad faith, mark his every inconsistency. It isn't becoming so to use our forensic advantages. It isn't – if that has no appeal to you – wise.

The thing our society has most to fear from Labour is not organised resistance, not victorious strikes and raised conditions, but the black resentment that follows defeat. Meet Labour half-way, and you will find a new co-operation in government; stick to your legal rights, draw the net of repressive legislation tighter, then you will presently have to deal with Labour enraged. If the anger burns free, that means revolution; if you crush out the hope of that, then sabotage and a sullen general sympathy for anarchistic crime.

Sec. 3 In the preceding pages I have discussed certain aspects of the present Labour situation. I have tried to show the profound significance in this discussion of the distrust which has grown up in the minds of the workers, and how this distrust is being exacerbated by our entirely too forensic method of treating their claims. I want now to point out a still more powerful set of influences which is steadily turning our Labour struggles from mere attempts to adjust hours and wages into movements that are gravely and deliberately revolutionary.

This is the obvious devotion of a large and growing proportion of the time and energy of the owning and ruling classes to pleasure and excitement, and the way in which this spectacle of amusement and adventure is now being brought before the eyes and into the imagination of the working man.

The intimate psychology of work is a thing altogether too little considered and discussed. One asks: "What keeps a workman working properly at his work?" and it seems a sufficient answer to say that it is the need of getting a living. But that is not the complete answer. Work must to some extent interest; if it bores, no power on earth will keep a man doing it properly. And the tendency of modern industrialism has been to subdivide processes and make work more boring and irksome. Also the workman must be satisfied with the living he is getting, and the tendency of newspaper, theatre, cinematograph show and so forth is to fill his mind with ideas of ways of living infinitely more agreeable and interesting than his own. Habit also counts very largely in the regular return of

the man to his job, and the fluctuations of employment, the failure of the employing class to provide any alternative to idleness during slack time, break that habit of industry. And then, last but not least, there is self-respect. Men and women are capable of wonders of self-discipline and effort if they feel that theirs is a meritorious service, if they imagine the thing they are doing is the thing they ought to do. A miner will cut coal in a different spirit and with a fading zest if he knows his day's output is to be burnt to waste secretly by a lunatic. Man is a social animal; few men are naturally social rebels, and most will toil very cheerfully in subordination if they feel that the collective end is a fine thing and a great thing.

Now, this force of self-respect is much more acutely present in the mind of the modern worker than it was in the thought of his fathers. He is intellectually more active than his predecessors, his imagination is relatively stimulated, he asks wide questions. The worker of a former generation took himself for granted; it is a new phase when the toilers begin to ask, not one man here or there, but in masses, in battalions, in trades: "Why, then, are *we* toilers, and for what is it that we toil?"

What answer do we give them?

I ask the reader to put himself in the place of a good workman, a young, capable miner, let us say, in search of an answer to that question. He is, we will suppose, temporarily unemployed through the production of a glut of coal, and he goes about the world trying to see the fine and noble collective achievements that justify the devotion of his whole life to humble toil. I ask the reader: What have we got to show that man? What are we doing up in the light and air that justifies our demand that he should go on hewing in narrow seams and cramped corners until he can hew no more? Where is he to be taken to see these crowning fruits of our release from toil? Shall we take him to the House of Commons to note which of the barristers is making most headway over Welsh Disestablishment, or shall we take him to the *Titanic* inquiry to hear the latest about those fifty-five third-class children (out of eighty-three) who were drowned? Shall we give him an hour or so among the portraits at the Royal Academy, or shall we make an enthusiastic tour of London sculpture and architecture and saturate his soul with the beauty he makes possible? The new Automobile Club, for example. "Without you and your subordination we could not have had that." Or suppose we took him the round of the West-End clubs and restaurants and made him estimate how many dinners London can produce at a pinch at the price of his local daily minimum, say, and upward; or borrow an aeroplane at Hendon and soar about counting all the golfers in the Home Counties on any week-day afternoon. "You suffer at the roots of things, far below there, but see all this nobility and splendour, these sweet, bright flowers to which your rootlet life contributes." Or we might spend a pleasant morning trying to get a passable woman's hat for the price of his average weekly wages in some West-End shop...

But indeed this thing is actually happening. The older type of miner was illiterate, incurious; he read nothing, lived his own life, and if he had any intellectual and spiritual urgencies in him beyond eating and drinking and dog-fighting, the local little Bethel shunted them away from any effective social criticism. The new generation of miners is on an altogether different basis. It is at once less brutal and less spiritual; it is alert, informed, sceptical, and the Press, with photographic illustrations, the cinema, and a score of collateral forces, are giving it precisely that spectacular view of luxury, amusement, aimlessness and excitement, taunting it with just that suggestion that it is for that, and that alone, that the worker's back aches and his muscles strain. Whatever gravity and spaciousness of aim there may be in our prosperous social life does not appear to him. He sees, and he sees all the more brightly because he is looking at it out of toil and darkness, the glitter, the delight for delight's sake, the show and the pride and the folly. Cannot you understand how it is that these young men down there in the hot and dangerous and toilsome and inglorious places of life are beginning to cry out, "We are being made fools of," and to fling down their tools, and cannot you see how futile it is to dream that Mr. Asquith or some other politician by some trick of a Conciliation Act or some claptrap of Compulsory Arbitration, or that any belated suppression of discussion and strike organisations by the law, will avert this gathering storm? The Spectacle of Pleasure, the parade of clothes, estates,

motor-cars, luxury and vanity in the sight of the workers is the culminating irritant of Labour. So long as that goes on, this sombre resolve to which we are all awakening, this sombre resolve rather to wreck the whole fabric than to continue patiently at work, will gather strength. It does not matter that such a resolve is hopeless and unseasonable; we are dealing here with the profounder impulses that underlie reason. Crush this resentment; it will recur with accumulated strength.

It does not matter that there is no plan in existence for any kind of social order that could be set up in the place of our present system; no plan, that is, that will endure half an hour's practical criticism. The cardinal fact before us is that the workers do not intend to stand things as they are, and that no clever arguments, no expert handling of legal points, no ingenious appearances of concession, will stay that progressive embitterment.

But I think I have said enough to express and perhaps convey my conviction that our present Labour troubles are unprecedented, and that they mean the end of an epoch. The supply of good-tempered, cheap labour – upon which the fabric of our contemporary ease and comfort is erected – is giving out. The spread of information and the means of presentation in every class and the increase of luxury and self-indulgence in the prosperous classes are the chief cause of that. In the place of that old convenient labour comes a new sort of labour, reluctant, resentful, critical, and suspicious. The replacement has already gone so far that I am certain that attempts to baffle and coerce the workers back to their old conditions must inevitably lead to a series of increasingly destructive outbreaks, to stresses and disorder culminating in revolution. It is useless to dream of going on now for much longer upon the old lines; our civilisation, if it is not to enter upon a phase of conflict and decay, must begin to adapt itself to the new conditions of which the first and foremost is that the wage-earning labouring class as a distinctive class, consenting to a distinctive treatment and accepting life at a disadvantage is going to disappear. Whether we do it soon as the result of our reflections upon the present situation, or whether we do it presently through the impoverishment that must necessarily result from a lengthening period of industrial unrest, there can be little doubt that we are going to curtail very considerably the current extravagance of the spending and directing classes upon food, clothing, display, and all the luxuries of life. The phase of affluence is over. And unless we are to be the mere passive spectators of an unprecedented reduction of our lives, all of us who have leisure and opportunity have to set ourselves very strenuously to the problem not of reconciling ourselves to the wage-earners, for that possibility is over, but of establishing a new method of co-operation with those who seem to be definitely decided not to remain wage-earners for very much longer. We have, as sensible people, to realise that the old arrangement which has given us of the fortunate minority so much leisure, luxury, and abundance, advantages we have as a class put to so vulgar and unprofitable a use, is breaking down, and that we have to discover a new, more equable way of getting the world's work done.

Certain things stand out pretty obviously. It is clear that in the times ahead of us there must be more economy in giving trouble and causing work, a greater willingness to do work for ourselves, a great economy of labour through machinery and skilful management. So much is unavoidable if we are to meet these enlarged requirements upon which the insurgent worker insists. If we, who have at least some experience of affairs, who own property, manage businesses, and discuss and influence public organisation, if we are not prepared to undertake this work of discipline and adaptation for ourselves, then a time is not far distant when insurrectionary leaders, calling themselves Socialists or Syndicalists, or what not, men with none of our experience, little of our knowledge, and far less hope of success, will take that task out of our hands.<sup>1</sup>

We have, in fact, to "pull ourselves together," as the phrase goes, and make an end to all this slack, extravagant living, this spectacle of pleasure, that has been spreading and intensifying in every civilised community for the last three or four decades. What is happening to Labour is

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<sup>1</sup> Larkinism comes to endorse me since this was written.

indeed, from one point of view, little else than the correlative of what has been happening to the more prosperous classes in the community. They have lost their self-discipline, their gravity, their sense of high aims, they have become the victims of their advantages and Labour, grown observant and intelligent, has discovered itself and declares itself no longer subordinate. Just what powers of recovery and reconstruction our system may have under these circumstances the decades immediately before us will show.

Sec. 4 Let us try to anticipate some of the social developments that are likely to spring out of the present Labour situation.

It is quite conceivable, of course, that what lies before us is not development but disorder. Given sufficient suspicion on one side and sufficient obstinacy and trickery on the other, it may be impossible to restore social peace in any form, and industrialism may degenerate into a wasteful and incurable conflict. But that distressful possibility is the worst and perhaps the least probable of many. It is much more acceptable to suppose that our social order will be able to adjust itself to the new outlook and temper and quality of the labour stratum that elementary education, a Press very cheap and free, and a period of great general affluence have brought about.

One almost inevitable feature of any such adaptation will be a changed spirit in the general body of society. We have come to a serious condition of our affairs, and we shall not get them into order again without a thorough bracing-up of ourselves in the process. There can be no doubt that for a large portion of our comfortable classes existence has been altogether too easy for the last lifetime or so. The great bulk of the world's work has been done out of their sight and knowledge; it has seemed unnecessary to trouble much about the general conduct of things, unnecessary, as they say, to "take life too seriously." This has not made them so much vicious as slack, lazy, and over-confident; there has been an elaboration of trivial things and a neglect of troublesome and important things. The one grave shock of the Boer War has long been explained and sentimentalised away. But it will not be so easy to explain away a dislocated train service and an empty coal cellar as it was to get a favourable interpretation upon some demonstration of national incompetence half the world away.

It is indeed no disaster, but a matter for sincere congratulation that the British prosperous and the British successful, to whom warning after warning has rained in vain from the days of Ruskin, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, should be called to account at last in their own household. They will grumble, they will be very angry, but in the end, I believe, they will rise to the opportunities of their inconvenience. They will shake off their intellectual lassitude, take over again the public and private affairs they have come to leave so largely in the hands of the political barrister and the family solicitor, become keen and critical and constructive, bring themselves up to date again.

That is not, of course, inevitable, but I am taking now the more hopeful view.

And then? What sort of working arrangements are our renascent owning and directing classes likely to make with the new labouring class? How is the work going to be done in the harder, cleaner, more equalised, and better managed State that, in one's hopeful mood, one sees ahead of us?

Now after the experiences of the past twelve months it is obvious that the days when most of the directed and inferior work of the community will be done by intermittently employed and impecunious wage-earners is drawing to an end. A large part of the task of reconstruction ahead of us will consist in the working out of schemes for a more permanent type of employment and for a direct participation of the worker in the pride, profits, and direction of the work. Such schemes admit of wide variations between a mere bonus system, a periodic tipping of the employees to prevent their striking and a real and honest co-partnership.

In the latter case a great enterprise, forced to consider its "hands" as being also in their degree "heads," would include a department of technical and business instruction for its own people. From such ideas one passes very readily to the conception of guild-managed businesses in which the factor of capital would no longer stand out as an element distinct from and contrasted with the proprietorship of the workers. One sees the worker as an active and intelligent helper during the great portion of

his participation, and as an annuitant and perhaps, if he has devised economies and improvements, a receiver of royalties during his declining years.

And concurrently with the systematic reconstruction of a large portion of our industries upon these lines there will have to be a vigorous development of the attempts that are already being made, in garden cities, garden suburbs, and the like, to re-house the mass of our population in a more civilised and more agreeable manner. Probably that is not going to pay from the point of view of the money-making business man, but we prosperous people have to understand that there are things more important and more profitable than money-making, and we have to tax ourselves not merely in money, but in time, care, and effort in the matter. Half the money that goes out of England to Switzerland and the Riviera ought to go to the extremely amusing business of clearing up ugly corners and building jolly and convenient workmen's cottages – even if we do it at a loss. It is part of our discharge for the leisure and advantages the system has given us, part of that just give and take, over and above the solicitor's and bargain-hunter's and money-lender's conception of justice, upon which social order ultimately rests. We have to do it not in a mood of patronage, but in a mood of attentive solicitude. If not on high grounds, then on low grounds our class has to set to work and make those other classes more interested and comfortable and contented. It is what we are for. It is quite impossible for workmen and poor people generally to plan estates and arrange their own homes; they are entirely at the mercy of the wealthy in this matter. There is not a slum, not a hovel, not an eyesore upon the English landscape for which some well-off owner is not ultimately to be blamed or excused, and the less we leave of such things about the better for us in that day of reckoning between class and class which now draws so near.

It is as plain now as the way from Calais to Paris that if the owning class does not attend to these amenities the mass of the people, doing its best to manage the thing through the politicians, presently will. They may make a frightful mess of it, but that will never bring back things again into the hands that hold them and neglect them. Their time will have passed for ever.

But these are the mere opening requirements of this hope of mine of a quickened social consciousness among the more fortunate and leisurely section of the community I believe that much profounder changes in the conditions of labour are possible than those I have suggested I am beginning to suspect that scarcely any of our preconceptions about the way work must be done, about the hours of work and the habits of work, will stand an exhaustive scientific analysis. It is at least conceivable that we could get much of the work that has to be done to keep our community going in far more toil-saving and life-saving ways than we follow at the present time. So far scientific men have done scarcely anything to estimate under what conditions a man works best, does most work, works more happily. Suppose it turns out to be the case that a man always following one occupation throughout his lifetime, working regularly day after day for so many hours, as most wage-earners do at the present time, does not do nearly so much or nearly so well as he would do if he followed first one occupation and then another, or if he worked as hard as he possibly could for a definite period and then took holiday? I suspect very strongly, indeed I am convinced, that in certain occupations, teaching, for example, or surgery, a man begins by working clumsily and awkwardly, that his interest and skill rise rapidly, that if he is really well suited in his profession he may presently become intensely interested and capable of enormous quantities of his very best work, and that then his interest and vigour rapidly decline I am disposed to believe that this is true of most occupations, of coal-mining or engineering, or brick-laying or cotton-spinning. The thing has never been properly thought about. Our civilisation has grown up in a haphazard kind of way, and it has been convenient to specialise workers and employ them piecemeal. But if it is true that in respect of any occupation a man has his period of maximum efficiency, then we open up a whole world of new social possibilities. What we really want from a man for our social welfare in that case is not regular continuing work, but a few strenuous years of high-pressure service. We can as a community afford to keep him longer at education and training before he begins, and we can release him with a pension while he is still full of life and the capacity for

enjoying freedom. But obviously this is impossible upon any basis of weekly wages and intermittent employment; we must be handling affairs in some much more comprehensive way than that before we can take and deal with the working life of a man as one complete whole.

That is one possibility that is frequently in my thoughts about the present labour crisis. There is another, and that is the great desirability of every class in the community having a practical knowledge of what labour means. There is a vast amount of work which either is now or is likely to be in the future within the domain of the public administration – road-making, mining, railway work, post-office and telephone work, medical work, nursing, a considerable amount of building for example. Why should we employ people to do the bulk of these things at all? Why should we not as a community do them ourselves? Why, in other words, should we not have a labour conscription and take a year or so of service from everyone in the community, high or low? I believe this would be of enormous moral benefit to our strained and relaxed community. I believe that in making labour a part of everyone's life and the whole of nobody's life lies the ultimate solution of these industrial difficulties.

Sec. 5 It is almost a national boast that we "muddle through" our troubles, and I suppose it is true and to our credit that by virtue of a certain kindliness of temper, a humorous willingness to make the best of things, and an entirely amiable forgetfulness, we do come out of pressures and extremities that would smash a harder, more brittle people only a little chipped and damaged. And it is quite conceivable that our country will, in a measure, survive the enormous stresses of labour adjustment that are now upon us, even if it never rises to any heroic struggle against these difficulties. But it may survive as a lesser country, as an impoverished and second-rate country. It will certainly do no more than that, if in any part of the world there is to be found a people capable of taking up this gigantic question in a greater spirit. Perhaps there is no such people, and the conflicts and muddles before us will be world-wide. Or suppose that it falls to our country in some strange way to develop a new courage and enterprise, and to be the first to go forward into this new phase of civilisation I foresee, from which a distinctive labouring class, a class that is of expropriated wage-earners, will have almost completely disappeared.

Now hitherto the utmost that any State, overtaken by social and economic stresses, has ever achieved in the way of adapting itself to them has been no more than patching.

Individuals and groups and trades have found themselves in imperfectly apprehended and difficult times, and have reluctantly altered their ways and ideas piecemeal under pressure. Sometimes they have succeeded in rubbing along upon the new lines, and sometimes the struggle has submerged them, but no community has ever yet had the will and the imagination to recast and radically alter its social methods as a whole. The idea of such a reconstruction has never been absent from human thought since the days of Plato, and it has been enormously reinforced by the spreading material successes of modern science, successes due always to the substitution of analysis and reasoned planning for trial and the rule of thumb. But it has never yet been so believed in and understood as to render any real endeavour to reconstruct possible. The experiment has always been altogether too gigantic for the available faith behind it, and there have been against it the fear of presumption, the interests of all advantaged people, and the natural sloth of humanity. We do but emerge now from a period of deliberate happy-go-lucky and the influence of Herbert Spencer, who came near raising public shiftlessness to the dignity of a national philosophy. Everything would adjust itself – if only it was left alone.

Yet some things there are that cannot be done by small adjustments, such as leaping chasms or killing an ox or escaping from the roof of a burning house. You have to decide upon a certain course on such occasions and maintain a continuous movement. If you wait on the burning house until you scorch and then turn round a bit or move away a yard or so, or if on the verge of a chasm you move a little in the way in which you wish to go, disaster will punish your moderation. And it seems to me that the establishment of the world's work upon a new basis – and that and no less is what this Labour Unrest demands for its pacification – is just one of those large alterations which will

never be made by the collectively unconscious activities of men, by competitions and survival and the higgling of the market. Humanity is rebelling against the continuing existence of a labour class as such, and I can see no way by which our present method of weekly wages employment can change by imperceptible increments into a method of salary and pension – for it is quite evident that only by reaching that shall we reach the end of these present discontents. The change has to be made on a comprehensive scale or not at all. We need nothing less than a national plan of social development if the thing is to be achieved.

Now that, I admit, is, as the Americans say, a large proposition. But we are living in a time of more and more comprehensive plans, and the mere fact that no scheme so extensive has ever been tried before is no reason at all why we should not consider one. We think nowadays quite serenely of schemes for the treatment of the nation's health as one whole, where our fathers considered illness as a blend of accident with special providences; we have systematised the community's water supply, education, and all sorts of once chaotic services, and Germany and our own infinite higgledy-piggledy discomfort and ugliness have brought home to us at last even the possibility of planning the extension of our towns and cities. It is only another step upward in scale to plan out new, more tolerable conditions of employment for every sort of worker and to organise the transition from our present disorder.

The essential difficulty between the employer and the statesman in the consideration of this problem is the difference in the scope of their view. The employer's concern with the man who does his work is day-long or week-long; the statesman's is life-long. The conditions of private enterprise and modern competition oblige the employer to think only of the worker as a hand, who appears and does his work and draws his wages and vanishes again. Only such strikes as we have had during the past year will rouse him from that attitude of mind. The statesman at the other extremity has to consider the worker as a being with a beginning, a middle, an end – and offspring. He can consider all these possibilities of deferring employment and making the toil of one period of life provide for the leisure and freedom of another, which are necessarily entirely out of the purview of an employer pure and simple. And I find it hard to see how we can reconcile the intermittency of competitive employment with the unremitting demands of a civilised life except by the intervention of the State or of some public organisation capable of taking very wide views between the business organiser on the one hand and the subordinate worker on the other. On the one hand we need some broader handling of business than is possible in the private adventure of the solitary proprietor or the single company, and on the other some more completely organised development of the collective bargain. We have to bring the directive intelligence of a concern into an organic relation with the conception of the national output as a whole, and either through a trade union or a guild, or some expansion of a trade union, we have to arrange a secure, continuous income for the worker, to be received not directly as wages from an employer but intermediately through the organisation. We need a census of our national production, a more exhaustive estimate of our resources, and an entirely more scientific knowledge of the conditions of maximum labour efficiency. One turns to the State... And it is at this point that the heart of the patriotic Englishman sinks, because it is our national misfortune that all the accidents of public life have conspired to retard the development of just that body of knowledge, just that scientific breadth of imagination which is becoming a vital necessity for the welfare of a modern civilised community.

We are caught short of scientific men just as in the event of a war with Germany we shall almost certainly be caught short of scientific sailors and soldiers. You cannot make that sort of thing to order in a crisis. Scientific education – and more particularly the scientific education of our owning and responsible classes – has been crippled by the bitter jealousy of the classical teachers who dominate our universities, by the fear and hatred of the Established Church, which still so largely controls our upper-class schools, and by the entire lack of understanding and support on the part of those able barristers and financiers who rule our political life. Science has been left more and more to men

of modest origin and narrow outlook, and now we are beginning to pay in internal dissensions, and presently we may have to pay in national humiliation for this almost organised rejection of stimulus and power.

But however thwarted and crippled our public imagination may be, we have still got to do the best we can with this situation; we have to take as comprehensive views as we can, and to attempt as comprehensive a method of handling as our party-ridden State permits. In theory I am a Socialist, and were I theorising about some nation in the air I would say that all the great productive activities and all the means of communication should be national concerns and be run as national services. But our State is peculiarly incapable of such functions; at the present time it cannot even produce a postage stamp that will stick; and the type of official it would probably evolve for industrial organisation, slowly but unsurely, would be a maddening combination of the district visitor and the boy clerk. It is to the independent people of some leisure and resource in the community that one has at last to appeal for such large efforts and understandings as our present situation demands. In the default of our public services, there opens an immense opportunity for voluntary effort. Deference to our official leaders is absurd; it is a time when men must, as the phrase goes, "come forward."

We want a National Plan for our social and economic development which everyone may understand and which will serve as a unifying basis for all our social and political activities. Such a plan is not to be flung out hastily by an irresponsible writer. It can only come into existence as the outcome of a wide movement of inquiry and discussion. My business in these pages has been not prescription but diagnosis. I hold it to be the clear duty of every intelligent person in the country to do his utmost to learn about these questions of economic and social organisation and to work them out to conclusions and a purpose. We have come to a phase in our affairs when the only alternative to a great, deliberate renaissance of will and understanding is national disorder and decay.

Sec. 6 I have attempted a diagnosis of this aspect of our national situation. I have pointed out that nearly all the social forces of our time seem to be in conspiracy to bring about the disappearance of a labour class as such and the rearrangement of our work and industry upon a new basis. That rearrangement demands an unprecedented national effort and the production of an adequate National Plan. Failing that, we seem doomed to a period of chronic social conflict and possibly even of frankly revolutionary outbreaks that may destroy us altogether or leave us only a dwarfed and enfeebled nation...

And before we can develop that National Plan and the effective realisation of such a plan that is needed to save us from that fate, two things stand immediately before us to be done, unavoidable preliminaries to that more comprehensive work. The first of these is the restoration of representative government, and the second a renaissance of our public thought about political and social things.

As I have already suggested, a main factor in our present national inability to deal with this profound and increasing social disturbance is the entirely unrepresentative and unbusinesslike nature of our parliamentary government.

It is to a quite extraordinary extent a thing apart from our national life. It becomes more and more so. To go into the House of Commons is to go aside out of the general stream of the community's vitality into a corner where little is learnt and much is concocted, into a specialised Assembly which is at once inattentive to and monstrously influential in our affairs. There was a period when the debates in the House of Commons were an integral, almost a dominant, part of our national thought, when its speeches were read over in tens of thousands of homes, and a large and sympathetic public followed the details of every contested issue. Now a newspaper that dared to fill its columns mainly with parliamentary debates, with a full report of the trivialities the academic points, the little familiar jokes, and entirely insincere pleadings which occupy that gathering would court bankruptcy.

This diminishing actuality of our political life is a matter of almost universal comment to-day. But it is extraordinary how much of that comment is made in a tone of hopeless dissatisfaction, how rarely it is associated with any will to change a state of affairs that so largely stultifies our national

purpose. And yet the causes of our present political ineptitude are fairly manifest, and a radical and effective reconstruction is well within the wit of man.

All causes and all effects in our complex modern State are complex, but in this particular matter there can be little doubt that the key to the difficulty lies in the crudity and simplicity of our method of election, a method which reduces our apparent free choice of rulers to a ridiculous selection between undesirable alternatives, and hands our whole public life over to the specialised manipulator. Our House of Commons could scarcely misrepresent us more if it was appointed haphazard by the Lord Chamberlain or selected by lot from among the inhabitants of Netting Hill. Election of representatives in one-member local constituencies by a single vote gives a citizen practically no choice beyond the candidates appointed by the two great party organisations in the State. It is an electoral system that forbids absolutely any vote splitting or any indication of shades of opinion. The presence of more than two candidates introduces an altogether unmanageable complication, and the voter is at once reduced to voting not to secure the return of the perhaps less hopeful candidate he likes, but to ensure the rejection of the candidate he most dislikes. So the nimble wire-puller slips in. In Great Britain we do not have Elections any more; we have Rejections. What really happens at a general election is that the party organisations – obscure and secretive conclaves with entirely mysterious funds – appoint about 1,200 men to be our rulers, and all that we, we so-called self-governing people, are permitted to do is, in a muddled, angry way, to strike off the names of about half of these selected gentlemen.

Take almost any member of the present Government and consider his case. You may credit him with a lifelong industrious intention to get there, but ask yourself what is this man's distinction, and for what great thing in our national life does he stand? By the complaisance of our party machinery he was able to present himself to a perplexed constituency as the only possible alternative to Conservatism and Tariff Reform, and so we have him. And so we have most of his colleagues.

Now such a system of representation is surely a system to be destroyed at any cost, because it stifles our national discussion and thwarts our national will. And we can leave no possible method of alteration untried. It is not rational that a great people should be baffled by the mere mechanical degeneration of an electoral method too crudely conceived. There exist alternatives, and to these alternatives we must resort. Since John Stuart Mill first called attention to the importance of the matter there has been a systematic study of the possible working of electoral methods, and it is now fairly proved that in proportional representation, with large constituencies returning each many members, there is to be found a way of escape from this disastrous embarrassment of our public business by the party wire-puller and the party nominee.

I will not dwell upon the particulars of the proportional representation system here. There exists an active society which has organised the education of the public in the details of the proposal. Suffice it that it does give a method by which a voter may vote with confidence for the particular man he prefers, with no fear whatever that his vote will be wasted in the event of that man's chance being hopeless. There is a method by which the order of the voter's subsequent preference is effectively indicated. That is all, but see how completely it modifies the nature of an election. Instead of a hampered choice between two, you have a free choice between many. Such a change means a complete alteration in the quality of public life.

The present immense advantage of the party nominee – which is the root cause, which is almost the sole cause of all our present political ineptitude – would disappear. He would be quite unable to oust any well-known and representative independent candidate who chose to stand against him. There would be an immediate alteration in type in the House of Commons. In the place of these specialists in political getting-on there would be few men who had not already gained some intellectual and moral hold upon the community; they would already be outstanding and distinguished men before they came to the work of government. Great sections of our national life, science, art, literature, education, engineering, manufacture would cease to be under-represented, or misrepresented by the energetic barrister and political specialist, and our Legislature would begin to serve, as we have now

such urgent need of its serving, as the means and instrument of that national conference upon the social outlook of which we stand in need.

And it is to the need and nature of that Conference that I would devote myself. I do not mean by the word Conference any gathering of dull and formal and inattentive people in this dusty hall or that, with a jaded audience and intermittently active reporters, such as this word may conjure up to some imaginations. I mean an earnest direction of attention in all parts of the country to this necessity for a studied and elaborated project of conciliation and social co-operation. We cannot afford to leave such things to specialised politicians and self-appointed, self-seeking "experts" any longer. A modern community has to think out its problems as a whole and co-operate as a whole in their solution. We have to bring all our national life into this discussion of the National Plan before us, and not simply newspapers and periodicals and books, but pulpit and college and school have to bear their part in it. And in that particular I would appeal to the schools, because there more than anywhere else is the permanent quickening of our national imagination to be achieved.

We want to have our young people filled with a new realisation that History is not over, that nothing is settled, and that the supreme dramatic phase in the story of England has still to come. It was not in the Norman Conquest, not in the flight of King James II, nor the overthrow of Napoleon; it is here and now. It falls to them to be actors not in a reminiscent pageant but a living conflict, and the sooner they are prepared to take their part in that the better our Empire will acquit itself. How absurd is the preoccupation of our schools and colleges with the little provincialisms of our past history before A.D. 1800! "No current politics," whispers the schoolmaster, "no religion – except the coldest formalities *Some parent might object.*" And he pours into our country every year a fresh supply of gentlemanly cricketing youths, gapingly unprepared – unless they have picked up a broad generalisation or so from some surreptitious Socialist pamphlet – for the immense issues they must control, and that are altogether uncontrollable if they fail to control them. The universities do scarcely more for our young men. All this has to be altered, and altered vigorously and soon, if our country is to accomplish its destinies. Our schools and colleges exist for no other purpose than to give our youths a vision of the world and of their duties and possibilities in the world. We can no longer afford to have them the last preserves of an elderly orthodoxy and the last repository of a decaying gift of superseded tongues. They are needed too urgently to make our leaders leader-like and to sustain the active understandings of the race.

And from the labour class itself we are also justified in demanding a far more effectual contribution to the National Conference than it is making at the present time. Mere eloquent apologies for distrust, mere denunciations of Capitalism and appeals for a Socialism as featureless as smoke, are unsatisfactory when one regards them as the entire contribution of the ascendant worker to the discussion of the national future. The labour thinker has to become definite in his demands and clearer upon the give and take that will be necessary before they can be satisfied. He has to realise rather more generously than he has done so far the enormous moral difficulty there is in bringing people who have been prosperous and at an advantage all their lives to the pitch of even contemplating a social reorganisation that may minimise or destroy their precedence. We have all to think, to think hard and think generously, and there is not a man in England to-day, even though his hands are busy at work, whose brain may not be helping in this great task of social rearrangement which lies before us all.

## SOCIAL PANACEAS

(June, 1912.)

To have followed the frequent discussions of the Labour Unrest in the Press is to have learnt quite a lot about the methods of popular thought. And among other things I see now much better than I did why patent medicines are so popular. It is clear that as a community we are far too impatient of

detail and complexity, we want overmuch to simplify, we clamour for panaceas, we are a collective invitation to quacks.

Our situation is an intricate one, it does not admit of a solution neatly done up in a word or a phrase. Yet so powerful is this wish to simplify that it is difficult to make it clear that one is not oneself a panacea-monger. One writes and people read a little inattentively and more than a little impatiently, until one makes a positive proposal Then they jump. "So *that's* your Remedy!" they say. "How absurdly inadequate!" I was privileged to take part in one such discussion in 1912, and among other things in my diagnosis of the situation I pointed out the extreme mischief done to our public life by the futility of our electoral methods. They make our whole public life forensic and ineffectual, and I pointed out that this evil effect, which vitiates our whole national life, could be largely remedied by an infinitely better voting system known as Proportional Representation. Thereupon the *Westminster Gazette* declared in tones of pity and contempt that it was no Remedy – and dismissed me. It would be as intelligent to charge a doctor who pushed back the crowd about a broken-legged man in the street with wanting to heal the limb by giving the sufferer air.

The task before our community, the task of reorganising labour on a basis broader than that of employment for daily or weekly wages, is one of huge complexity, and it is as entirely reasonable as it is entirely preliminary to clean and modernise to the utmost our representative and legislative machinery.

It is remarkable how dominant is this disposition to get a phrase, a word, a simple recipe, for an undertaking so vast in reality that for all the rest of our lives a large part of the activities of us, forty million people, will be devoted to its partial accomplishment. In the presence of very great issues people become impatient and irritated, as they would not allow themselves to be irritated by far more limited problems. Nobody in his senses expects a panacea for the comparatively simple and trivial business of playing chess. Nobody wants to be told to "rely wholly upon your pawns," or "never, never move your rook"; nobody clamours "give me a third knight and all will be well"; but that is exactly what everybody seems to be doing in our present discussion And as another aspect of the same impatience, I note the disposition to clamour against all sorts of necessary processes in the development of a civilisation. For example, I read over and over again of the failure of representative government, and in nine cases out of ten I find that this amounts to a cry against any sort of representative government. It is perfectly true that our representative institutions do not work well and need a vigorous overhauling, but while I find scarcely any support for such a revision, the air is full of vague dangerous demands for aristocracy, for oligarchy, for autocracy. It is like a man who jumps out of his automobile because he has burst a tyre, refuses a proffered Stepney, and bawls passionately for anything – for a four-wheeler, or a donkey, as long as he can be free from that exploded mechanism. There are evidently quite a considerable number of people in this country who would welcome a tyrant at the present time, a strong, silent, cruel, imprisoning, executing, melodramatic sort of person, who would somehow manage everything while they went on – being silly. I find that form of impatience cropping up everywhere. I hear echoes of Mr. Blatchford's "Wanted, a Man," and we may yet see a General Boulanger prancing in our streets. There never was a more foolish cry. It is not a man we want, but just exactly as many million men as there are in Great Britain at the present time, and it is you, the reader, and I, and the rest of us who must together go on with the perennial task of saving the country by *firstly*, doing our own jobs just as well as ever we can, and *secondly* – and this is really just as important as *firstly* – doing our utmost to grasp our national purpose, doing our utmost, that is, to develop and carry out our National Plan. It is Everyman who must be the saviour of the State in a modern community; we cannot shift our share in the burthen; and here again, I think, is something that may well be underlined and emphasised. At present our "secondly" is unduly subordinated to our "firstly"; our game is better individually than collectively; we are like a football team that passes badly, and our need is not nearly so much to change the players as to broaden their style. And this

brings me, in a spirit entirely antagonistic, up against Mr. Galsworthy's suggestion of an autocratic revolution in the methods of our public schools.

But before I go on to that, let me first notice a still more comprehensive cry that has been heard again and again in this discussion, and that is the alleged failure of education generally. There is never any remedial suggestion made with this particular outcry; it is merely a gust of abuse and insult for schools, and more particularly board schools, carrying with it a half-hearted implication that they should be closed, and then the contribution concludes. Now there is no outcry at the present time more unjust or – except for the "Wanted, a Man" clamour – more foolish. No doubt our educational resources, like most other things, fall far short of perfection, but of all this imperfection the elementary schools are least imperfect; and I would almost go so far as to say that, considering the badness of their material, the huge, clumsy classes they have to deal with, the poorness of their directive administration, their bad pay and uncertain outlook, the elementary teachers of this country are amazingly efficient. And it is not simply that they are good under their existing conditions, but that this service has been made out of nothing whatever in the course of scarcely forty years. An educational system to cover an Empire is not a thing that can be got for the asking, it is not even to be got for the paying; it has to be grown; and in the beginning it is bound to be thin, ragged, forced, crammy, text-bookish, superficial, and all the rest of it. As reasonable to complain that the children born last year were immature. A little army of teachers does not flash into being at the passing of an Education Act. Not even an organisation for training those teachers comes to anything like satisfactory working order for many years, without considering the delays and obstructions that have been caused by the bickerings and bitterness of the various Christian Churches. So that it is not the failure of elementary education we have really to consider, but the continuance and extension of its already almost miraculous results.

And when it comes to the education of the ruling and directing classes, there is kindred, if lesser reason, for tempering zeal with patience. This upper portion of our educational organisation needs urgently to be bettered, but it is not to be bettered by trying to find an archangel who will better it dictatorially. For the good of our souls there are no such beings to relieve us of our collective responsibility. It is clear that appointments in this field need not only far more care and far more insistence upon creative power than has been shown in the past, but for the rest we have to do with the men we have and the schools we have. We cannot have an educational purge, if only because we have not the new men waiting. Here again the need is not impatience, not revolution, but a sustained and penetrating criticism, a steadfast, continuous urgency towards effort and well-planned reconstruction and efficiency.

And as a last example of the present hysterical disposition to scrap things before they have been fairly tried is the outcry against examinations, which has done so much to take the keenness off the edge of school work in the last few years. Because a great number of examiners chosen haphazard turned out to be negligent and incompetent as examiners, because their incapacity created a cynical trade in cramming, a great number of people have come to the conclusion, just as examinations are being improved into efficiency, that all examinations are bad. In particular that excellent method of bringing new blood and new energy into the public services and breaking up official gangs and cliques, the competitive examination system, has been discredited, and the wire-puller and the influential person are back again tampering with a steadily increasing proportion of appointments...

But I have written enough of this impatience, which is, as it were, merely the passion for reconstruction losing its head and defeating its own ends. There is no hope for us outside ourselves. No violent changes, no Napoleonic saviours can carry on the task of building the Great State, the civilised State that rises out of our disorders. That is for us to do, all of us and each one of us. We have to think clearly, and study and consider and reconsider our ideas about public things to the very utmost of our possibilities. We have to clarify our views and express them and do all we can to stir up thinking and effort in those about us.

I know it would be more agreeable for all of us if we could have some small pill-like remedy for all the troubles of the State, and take it and go on just as we are going now. But, indeed, to say a word for that idea would be a treason. We are the State, and there is no other way to make it better than to give it the service of our lives. Just in the measure of the aggregate of our devotions and the elaborated and criticised sanity of our public proceedings will the world mend.

I gather from a valuable publication called "Secret Remedies," which analyses many popular cures, that this hasty passion for simplicity, for just one thing that will settle the whole trouble, can carry people to a level beyond an undivided trust in something warranted in a bottle. They are ready to put their faith in what amounts to practically nothing in a bottle. And just at present, while a number of excellent people of the middle class think that only a "man" is wanted and all will be well with us, there is a considerable wave of hopefulness among the working class in favour of a weak solution of nothing, which is offered under the attractive label of Syndicalism. So far I have been able to discuss the present labour situation without any use of this empty word, but when one finds it cropping up in every other article on the subject, it becomes advisable to point out what Syndicalism is not. And incidentally it may enable me to make clear what Socialism in the broader sense, constructive Socialism, that is to say, is.

### **SYNDICALISM OR CITIZENSHIP**

"Is a railway porter a railway porter first and a man afterwards, or is he a man first and incidentally a railway porter?"

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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